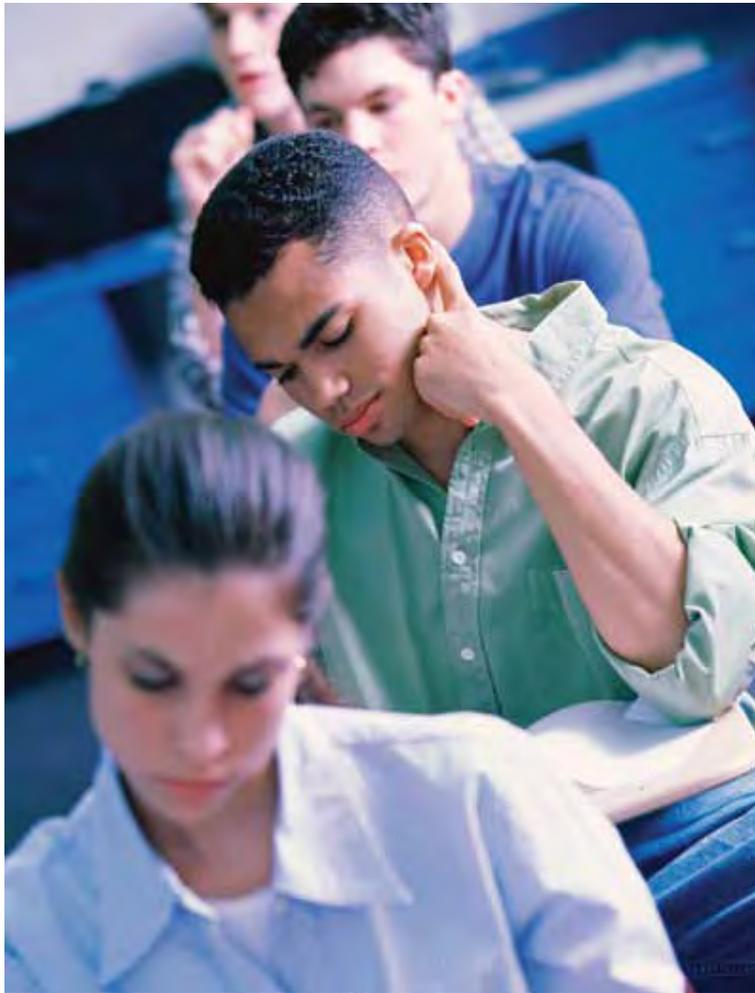


Joining Forces: The Fairfax County ADHD Partnership

by Mark Katz, PhD



FOR MORE INFO

Visit
adhdpartnership.com
or email
Maureen Gill, LCSW, at
mrngill@netscape.net
to learn more about
the ADHD
Partnership model.

The ADHD Partnership brings together parents, teachers, school psychologists, local doctors, and mental health professionals. They meet roughly six times per year to assess the needs of students with ADHD, and to determine how best to train school personnel and others in the community to address these needs. ADHD Partnership members offer trainings to schools and other local professionals at minimal or no fee. All members serve as volunteers, with program costs shared by the Fairfax County Public Schools and CHADD of Northern Virginia.

Maureen Gill, LCSW, a founding member, frequently presents at regional and national CHADD conferences. Gill provides those interested in replicating the model with the many lessons learned over the years since the program was founded in 1992. Among the points she makes:

- Support from principals and school leadership is key if collaborations like these are to work.
- Teachers will actively seek out and attend trainings they feel offer practical, hands-on tools and strategies that can be implemented in the classroom.
- It's important to keep costs low. Sponsors are out there if you look.
- Tape record trainings so that others can benefit from them in the future.
- The field of ADHD is

TO BEST SERVE the educational and emotional needs of children and adolescents impacted by ADHD, experts know how important it is to establish a strong collaborative team. How do you create open lines of communication, where families, teachers, and professionals can share their thoughts, prioritize goals, address

problems, and resolve differences?

An increasing number of people are looking to the Fairfax County Public Schools ADHD Partnership, recognized by many in the field as a model for how schools, families, and community professionals can join forces to help children and teens with ADHD.

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constantly evolving. Stay abreast of new research and new and effective practices.

- Choose collaboration over confrontation. Relationships between schools and families of children with ADHD can be trusting, open, and collaborative.
- Teens with ADHD can be excellent spokespeople for other teens with ADHD. They can also be extremely helpful in providing their teachers with tools and strategies that can really help.

The ADHD Partnership recently developed a training video called *ADHD Teens Talk*. High school students with ADHD speak candidly about the nature of their struggles, their range of strengths (which can easily be overlooked), and the different strategies and tools that help them manage their symptoms and succeed at school. Teachers share what they've learned about ADHD over the years and describe the accommodations they use to help their students succeed.

Twenty-eight minutes long, the video covers an impressive range of important topics. Viewers see and hear how high school students, with the help of their teachers, overcome common trouble spots—organizing assignments, managing time, forgetting important things (such as doing homework but forgetting to turn it in), retrieving information from memory during exams, finishing exams on time, getting started on assignments, staying focused for the entire class period, even ways to recover from a bad day.

The video highlights the role of the school study team. Viewers learn how a team can work effectively with families and students to create comprehensive plans when ADHD co-occurs with other issues. Teens talk openly about medication and its role in managing symptoms. Both teens and teachers emphasize the important role that strong relationships—between students and teachers and between teachers and parents—play in the process.

While it is focused on teens, Gill finds the video proving to be very helpful at the elementary level as well. The program concludes with a list of websites where viewers can go to learn more. It is available for purchase in either DVD or VHS form; visit adhdpartnership.com for details. A brief training overview accompanies the program and is recommended viewing before or after the program.

Another resource available on the ADHD Partnership website is a Power-Point workshop on the role that executive functions play in performing daily tasks, and the many strategies, tools, and accommodations that help students with executive-function delays succeed at school.

School psychologist Joan Mayer is a

long-time member of the ADHD Partnership. She says that in years past parents felt they had to fight for services. She no longer feels this to be the case. "As an authorized group within our school system," says Mayer, "it's really helped us all come together around our common interest—helping students with ADHD." ●