

Helping Students with ADHD in the Classroom

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How can teachers help students with inattentiveness in the classroom?

Inattention usually manifests with students having difficulty at the end of a task. The task is too long and they get bored. The best way to adjust for this is to use shorter and more interesting tasks. One way to make tasks more interesting is to let students have choice in their assignments, such as choosing projects and books to read. Giving them choices can help them sustain their attention because they are more invested.

You can also give students options for movement while they are focusing. This could be something like giv-

ing them a pipe cleaner to play with, which allows their hands to move. Movement options often help students focus better.

How can teachers help students who get good grades, but have difficulty with listening and following instructions?

Giftedness is highly co-occurring with ADHD, so it is not uncommon for students with ADHD to get good grades. However, listening and paying attention are boring tasks whether a student is gifted or not. Providing more high-level kinds of tasks can help with students who struggle with paying attention. These tasks could be special projects or a leadership role. Also, children with ADHD have difficulty holding information. For example, the time it takes to hold five numbers in their mind while coming up with a calculation is very hard for children with ADHD. Following directions, especially if they are all verbal, is going to be difficult for any child who has ADHD no matter how bright they are. One option to try to help with following directions is to use pictures. You can provide directions with pictures or have the children create pictures as you give instructions.

What are some strategies teachers can use to help students who struggle with fine motor skills and handwriting?

Difficulty with handwriting is a fairly common problem because it is part of ADHD and is expected. Writing is not only difficult because it's a fine motor skill, but also difficult because children with ADHD have a fast association of ideas. It's hard to write and keep up with all the ideas going through their head.





Typing and teaching students how to type at a young age is one strategy. You can also teach them how to provide verbal responses to someone else. Both of these strategies will allow them to avoid the difficulties of handwriting.

One strategy that is not helpful for students who have ADHD and struggle with handwriting is practice. Practice and repetition is one of the deadly poisons to ADHD. They don't like repetition because it gets more and more boring every time they do it. Often, with handwriting practice, every time a child rewrites something because it is messy it is going to get worse.

How can you help students who rush through tests and work?

A student not taking the time to complete all the work or rushing through it is a part of impulsivity. For some assignments, maybe there's a way of breaking a task down into parts. You might identify an additional task in between "getting it done" that students can use to help them slow down and improve the quality of their work. For example, after completing five math problems a student might then go back and check each of the problems with a calculator before moving on to the next five problems.

Another strategy for teachers is to refocus on the quality of work. Children want to get work done and are often taught that the amount of work they complete is better than quality. They become concerned

with how much they can produce. Making quality over quantity a priority in your classroom may also help students who rush through tests and work.

How can you help students regulate their emotions when they react to things very emotionally?

Children with ADHD are more emotional. It's not just about bad or frustrating events in their life, it's also about good things. One good thing can make their whole week; one bad thing will destroy a whole week. They can have an overemotional response to any situation.

If you can help them wait and come back to the situation where they are reacting very emotionally, that will help. You can also help them see events in the con-

text of other events in their life. You can help them create a list of worst things in their life and best things in their life. Then help them rank them. You can then use this chart to help them put current events into context. This teaches them to think about how they felt during other events and relate it to their current situation. **A**

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