

School Success and ADHD

DID THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR start off well for your family? Many students with ADHD are excited to go back to school but find they start to struggle after the first few weeks.

Last semester, our Ask the Expert webinar series featured educators and practitioners who focus on student success. We've highlighted some of the information they shared.

You can watch the full recording for each of these webinars on the CHADD website. You can also register for upcoming live webinars or find other previous webinars that discuss education, social, and workplace issues.

How to select the best school accommodations for your child with ADHD

Featuring Jennifer Engel Fisher, MS



"Before looking at specific accommodations, it's important to take a step back and look at more globally at areas of impact," says Jennifer Engel Fisher, MS. "What are areas that my child is struggling in, and how are they impacting my child's ability to access curriculum? These include academic, social and behavioral areas of his life."

Q: How do I know if we should be asking for an IEP or a 504 Plan when we meet with the education team?

A: The question you want answered is, "Does my child need direct specialized instruction to access the curriculum? Does he need specific interventions?" Consider how your child is impacted at school in all areas, not just in academic ones. If you feel that yes, he does need more direct specialized instruction, then you will request an IEP meeting. This starts a legal timeline and procedural safeguards. I typically recommend parents start here.

How to build self-motivation in teens with ADHD

Featuring Margaret Sibley, PhD



"When teens with ADHD don't self-start, we see it as a motivation deficit," says Margaret Sibley, PhD. "Our goals as adults working with teens are often boiled down to this idea regarding motivation. We need to rethink that."

Instead, she says we should look at where teens are motivated and where their interests are, when helping them develop skills for motivation.

"We want kids to find their own motivations," Dr. Sibley says. "We don't want it to be because everyone says they should. We want students to have goals for themselves and to pursue those goals on their own. We want to do our part, as parents and teachers, to create environments for kids that make them more naturally motivated."

Think of motivation in the same way you think of a car, she says. Many different things go into making a car run smoothly down the road toward its destination.

"Motivation isn't just one thing," she says. "Like a car, our motivation has a lot of different systems and parts that go into our desire to move forward. ADHD tends to impact multiple parts of this motivation system. So we need to address each those parts."



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Past procrastination—get your kids organized, focused, and motivated

Featuring Ann Dolin, MEd



“One thing parents have in common is that they are feeling stressed out when it comes to their children’s academics,” says Ann Dolin, MEd. “Their children are students who get behind in class because they can’t focus. When they get home and start to do their homework, they’re not sure how to do it. They’re feeling incredibly anxious and stressed out by all the pressure. They try to avoid it. Parents then often feel like they’ve become the homework police.”

Dolin reminds parents it’s not that a student doesn’t want to do homework; it is often executive function challenges that get in the way of getting started on homework.

“Another thing we see is that getting started is really hard for them,” she says. “Then sustaining the effort to stay with the homework is almost always difficult. You have a kid who is perfectly smart but not always performing on level. When we

see this disconnect between ability and performance, that’s a situation that is ripe for conflict. And that’s when parents become the homework police.”

Q: *As a parent, how can I know or understand what my high school student’s priorities should be regarding homework?*

A: They won’t always know what their priorities are. We, as parents, want to help them with a couple of things. Do they have a place and time to study? Then I would ask your child, “What are your priorities?” If they can’t tell you, ask, “Where can you find that information?” Schools often have that information online.

I’ve also use the sorting system: *Must Do, Should Do, and Could Do*. I have kids go through their assignments and put each one into one of these categories. For a lot of our kids that are feeling overwhelmed, *Could Do* can just go away and they can focus on the *Must Do* or *Should Do*. **A**

Karen Sampson Hoffman, MA, is the webinar series coordinator for CHADD’s National Resource Center on ADHD. She is also the editor of the ADHD Weekly newsletter.

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