

ATOM: Advanced Tools for Organization Management

A 2021 RECIPIENT of CHADD's Young Scientist Research Award, Melissa Dvorsky, PhD, MS, has been drawing upon mobile technology to develop and pilot a program that incorporates tools designed to help middle and high schoolers with ADHD. Known as ATOM—Advanced Tools for Organization—the program is specifically designed to teach students with attentional and organization difficulties how to organize materials, record assignments, plan ahead, and effectively manage their time.

School staff who are trained to implement the ATOM program meet with students once or twice a week for fifteen to twenty minutes over the course of ten weeks to help them learn these skills. Parents are also invited to join these weekly meetings in order to help promote these skills at home.



Melissa Dvorsky

At the start of the program, students learn to use ATOM's online platform between check-ins with staff to practice organization skills and monitor progress. The students earn points for their efforts, which they can cash in for rewards.

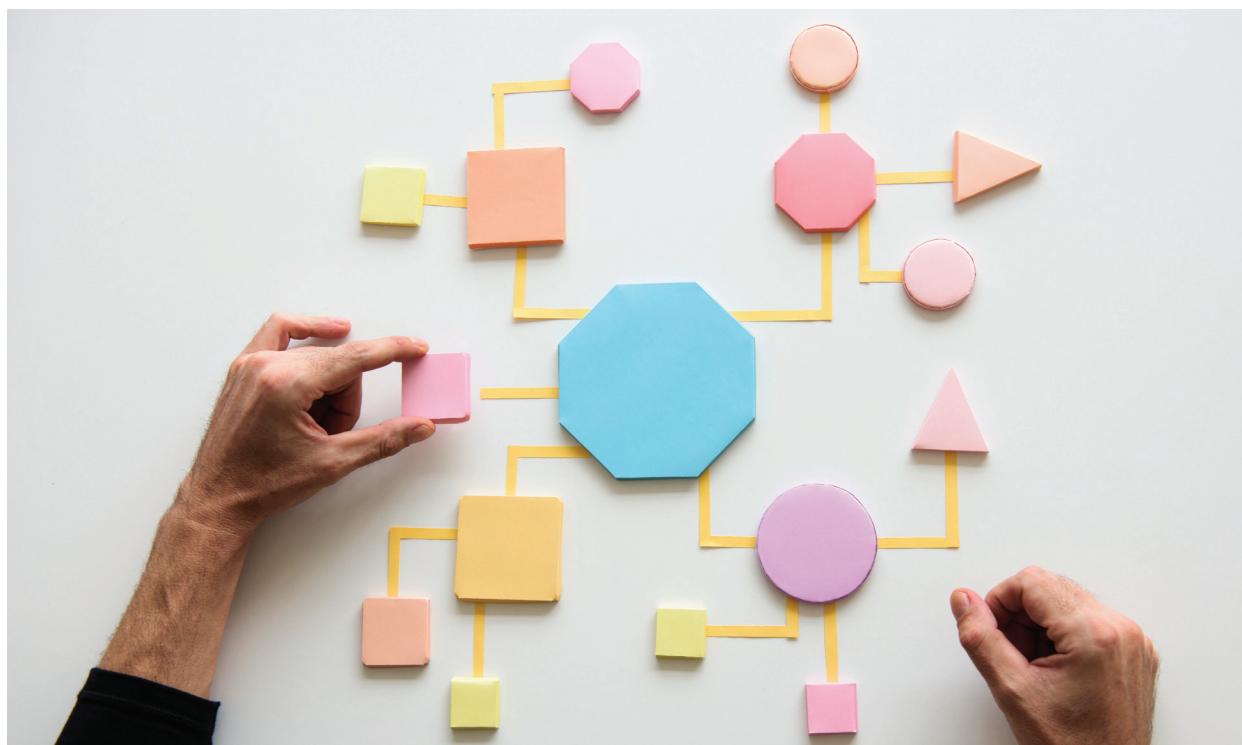
Implementation of the ATOM program involves the following three-step process:

Step one: School staff members who agree to participate in ATOM training meet with Dr. Dvorsky and ATOM team members to gain an overview of the program, learn key principles, and receive

program materials.

Step two: Students, teachers, and parents complete pre- and post-measures designed to assist the ATOM team in assessing the program's effectiveness.

Step three: Students receive access to the ATOM online platform to use during the intervention. As a federally fund-



ed project designed to assess ATOM's effectiveness, half of the students receive the ATOM online platform, while the other half receives the organization skills intervention without the ATOM tool.

Should additional needs arise, Dr. Dvorsky and ATOM team members remain accessible to students, teachers, and parents throughout the ten weeks. They provide consultation and troubleshooting to the school staff delivering the intervention in school.

ATOM was recently piloted in DC Metro-area schools. Findings showed improved homework performance, improved organizational skills, and improved grades among students participating in the ten-week program.

Thanks to a new four-year federal grant, Dr. Dvorsky is now studying how the ATOM team can actually improve on the program's effectiveness. The grant will allow the ATOM team to study ways to better engage students in using skills learned in the program, as well as how to make it easier to implement and sustainable both for schools and families,

While ATOM is not quite ready for national dissemination, Dr. Dvorsky hopes that the program will be available to middle and high schools around the United States sometime in the near future. **A**

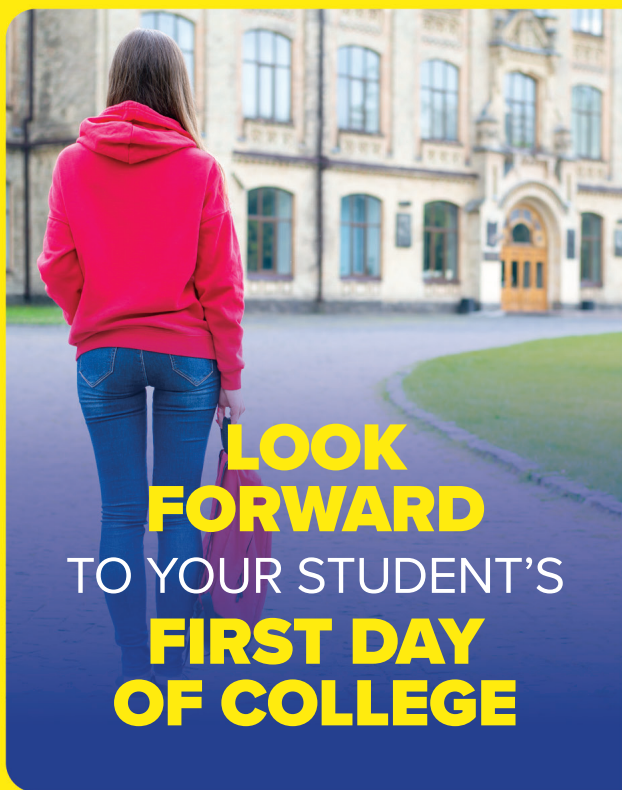


A clinical and consulting psychologist, **Mark Katz, PhD**, is the director of Learning Development Services, an educational, psychological, and neuropsychological center in San Diego, California. As a contributing editor to *Attention* magazine, he writes the *Promising Practices* column and serves on the editorial advisory board. He is also a former member of CHADD's professional advisory board and a recipient of the CHADD Hall of Fame Award.

LEARN MORE

Learn more about ATOM at theatomprogram.com. Website visitors can gain access to a wide range of resources designed to help schools and teens with ADHD, along with their families (theatomprogram.com/resources). Among other items, the online resources include helpful handouts and short informative videos for youth and families.

You can reach Dr. Dvorsky at melissadvorsky.com/.



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