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Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), currently the most studied condition in childhood, is defined as “a condition of the brain that makes it difficult for children to control their behavior in school and social settings” (Lerner and Johns, p.219). 4% to 12% of all school children have it (218). Interestingly, boys with ADHD far outnumber girls by a ratio of 3 to 1 (219). 30% and 65% of children with ADHD have it with other learning disabilities (Lerner and Johns, 218). In this paper, I will outline the characteristics of children with ADHD, explain what needs to be done in the classroom to accommodate individuals with this condition, and list what students with ADHD need to do to be successful.

ADHD is characterized by inattention, impulsivity and hyperactivity, although not all cases manifest all three of these attributes. The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition (DSM-IV-TR)* published by the American Psychiatric Association, divides ADHD into three categories (223):

ADHD-IA Primarily inattentive

ADHD-HI Primarily hyperactive and impulsive

ADHD-C: Combination

Inattention, of course, means having trouble staying tuned-in and focusing on an activity. Even though physically present, their minds seem to be “somewhere else” because of sounds and movements in the room, outside the window, or in the hall. Their own thoughts divert their attention away from the task at hand.

Impulsivity is displaying rash behavior such as blurting out answers and failing to sit still for an extended amount of time. Individuals often need to get up out of their chairs and move around. Making transitions from unstructured activities to structured ones (say, from gym to

reading) can be particularly difficult for students with ADHD. They act hastily without considering the consequences of their own actions.

Hyperactivity: students with ADHD can't seem to stay in one place for an extended period of time. They are often characterized as revved-up motors racing from one activity to another. They're high-strung and excitable, and they move around and talk fast.

To accommodate students with ADHD, the classroom teacher must first know who the student is and be aware of any treatment he/she is receiving. (Of course, the teacher would be well informed as a contributor to the students' IEP). Is the student receiving medication and/or professional counseling? Have any recommendations been made regarding this particular individual? Establishing a good rapport with parents would be very helpful. Teaching strategies and a positive student/teacher relationship can be developed using information parents provide on their child's likes/dislikes, hobbies, etc. (Weinstein, 131).

The first consideration will probably be seating arrangement. The teacher may want to seat the student near the front of the room, next to well-behaved kids, in a quiet area away from distracting locations, such as windows and hallways. This will help enable students to focus on the teacher and the lesson (Lerner and Johns, 232).

Secondly, establishing clear procedures and rules on the first days of class will benefit students with ADHD, well as the whole class. In his book *The First Days of Class*, Harry Wong (1998) suggests devoting a considerable amount of time reviewing and rehearsing daily routines on the first day or two so they are firmly engrained in the students' minds. For example, at the beginning of a typical day, students must walk into the room quietly, sit down, get out their materials for work and follow the instructions for the short assignment on the chalkboard. When the ten-minute work time is over, the teacher will collect the work and begin to teach his lesson

for the day (173). Other procedures can be rehearsed in like manner, such as the signal to get the student's attention (i.e. simply extending his arm in the air), how to get called on (by raising hands, not calling out), even guidelines for bathroom requests and sharpening pencils. Clearly defined daily practices can help the student with ADHD to slow down and focus on the tasks at hand.

Rules of the classroom should be written and posted in plain sight. They should be simple and direct, such as "keep your hands, feet, and objects to yourself," or "no insults." Students should be well informed about the rules and how they benefit everyone by ensuring a safe and orderly learning environment. Consequences for breaking the rules will be enforced. Like their classmates, students with ADHD will respond well to firm yet responsive teachers (Steinberg, 139). Reprimands should be consistently carried out and fit the seriousness of the misbehavior. However, sometimes it is better to ignore minor, inappropriate behavior (Lerner and Johns, 233).

Thirdly, since the teacher must keep students with ADHD alert, steady, and motivated to learn; they should utilize strategies that continually capture students' interest. The instructor should use every means possible to present material in a fresh, novel way; using visual aids such charts, pictures; and videos. He/she should speak with sparkle and flair, avoiding a repetitive monotone speaking voice and over-lengthy lectures. Using stories and humor can help students with ADHD to pay attention. Involving them in group discussions and projects can also keep them engaged (233).

Fourth, teachers must use various techniques to help students with ADHD keep on task in order to comprehend material and stay focused until the lesson is complete. Intermittently asking questions and having students repeat previously said material can help in this regard. Hopefully, a special education teacher or a paraprofessional can be on hand to assist the general education

teacher in the classroom by quietly prompting students with ADHD stay on task and tell them “this is important.” They can also help in developing approaches that are tailored to certain individuals, such as breaking assignments in smaller units. Students with ADHD can also be reminded to slow down and wait before acting (233).

Finally, hyperactivity can be addressed in several ways. Ideally, quiet activities performed by students in their seats like doodling in a notebook might be the best solution. However, the student may need to be allowed to get out their seat and move around while working in the back the room. The teacher can also provide opportunities to run errands or help in a task requiring physical exertion. Because their need to move takes time away from their school work, students with ADHD can be given extra time to complete tasks.

Throughout their lives, individuals with ADHD often have poor self-image, problems with authority, and low tolerance for frustration (Hartman, p.21). They need support and encouragement. That’s why students should be reminded that many successful people share their condition, including Paul Orfalea, founder of Kinko's; Charles Schwab, a pioneer in the discount brokerage business; and Ty Pennington host of TVs “Extreme Home Makeover.” Whether they have ADHD or not, successful people know their strengths and weaknesses and they pursue careers that capitalize on what they are good at. Perhaps those with ADHD should choose careers that use their creativity and people skills rather than those that require sustained concentration like banking. Good career counseling and self-assessment can launch people with ADHD toward a satisfying career.

Perhaps now more than ever, individuals with ADHD have access to a multitude of research and support groups, perhaps in their own area but certainly through the internet, for example, CHADD (Children and Adults With Attention Deficit Disorder), the National Resource

Center on ADHD, and ADDA (Attention Deficit Disorder Association) (Lerner and Johns, p.219). The best website I have found is administered by ADDitude magazine (additudemag.com) which provides many helpful “how to be successful” tips that address workplace issues and personal relationships. One article provides ten tips for better productivity on the job. These suggestions share a common emphasis on organizational skills such as planners and in-baskets; time management like calendars; and strategies for paying attention such as taking better notes during meetings and using highlighters.

Individuals with ADHD are fortunate to live in a time when their condition is better understood and medications are have become more effective. Similarly, teacher and school administrators are better equipped to help. As a future special education and general education teacher, I look forward to doing everything I can to assist young persons with this condition.

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