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# Guiding ADHD Students:

## Ten Ways To Help Them Succeed

ADHD students have special needs. The strategies educators use to help them learn will also benefit the rest of the class.

**A**ttention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD) affects about 3 percent of the American population. Although its symptoms can become evident as early as age four, ADHD is often not diagnosed until the child enters school, because it is then—in group situations—that the characteristics become more obvious:

- Inability to stay on task
- Messy and/or incomplete work
- Difficulty following directions
- Interrupting
- Failure to follow game rules
- Poor relationships with peers
- Low self-esteem.

Many of these characteristics are often associated with young adolescents in general, but they are intensified in the ADHD middle level student. This student fidgets and squirms more often, is more easily distracted by external stimuli, sometimes talks excessively, and is disorganized and prone to losing belongings. ADHD students may exhibit these behaviors in varying degrees, and may be extremely inattentive yet not hyperactive.

### Helping Students Succeed: Ten Tips

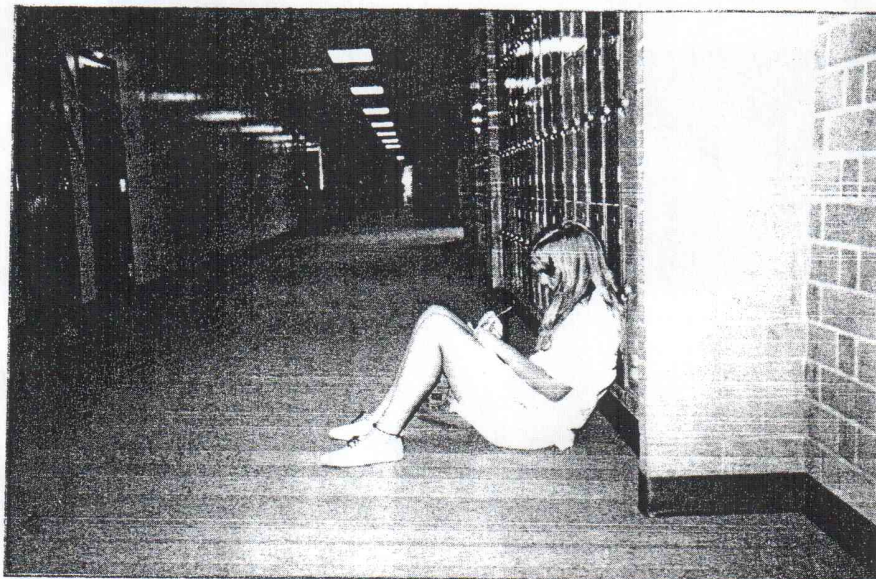
These maladaptive behaviors are not often corrected until the individual gains enough maturity to use the coping skills necessary to control the behavior. But, educators can help these students succeed at the middle level by implementing the following strategies—which will also benefit the rest of the class:

**1** Use as many visuals as possible. These students need the opportunity to visualize directions as well as hear them. Try to appeal to as many senses as possible. Always give directions visually and orally. State them as simply as possible using a chalkboard or overhead projector. Have students copy the directions and guide them through each one.

**2** Provide “wait time” between changes in activities. A variety of activities will help hold the attention of ADHD students, but these students may have difficulty changing from one activity to another.

By Mary Lou Clawson





## The Classroom: A Warm, Caring Place

Make the classroom a warm, friendly, nonthreatening atmosphere for ADHD students, but ensure it is one in which there is an underlying structure and organization at all times. Allow students ample time to complete a task in order to keep frustration levels low. Avoid negative comments at all costs, and constantly reward positive group behavior.

Middle level educators can help ADHD students achieve success and foster self-esteem. They can prepare these students with the coping skills they will most certainly need to function throughout school and into the future.

**3** Give short, well-structured homework assignments. Allow students ample time to copy homework assignments into a designated notebook and at a specific time each day.

**4** Give positive feedback for both classwork and homework. Points, positive comments, and stickers work effectively.

**5** Reinforce positive behavior as often as possible. A positive comment to the student after class about good conduct will reinforce this behavior.

**6** Heighten self-esteem by searching out student talent whenever possible and applying it to the classroom situation. Use student creativity on classroom displays, bulletin boards, performances, etc.

**7** Maintain student attention by walking around the room as much as possible, giving nonverbal cues to those who

might be having trouble paying attention. A change in tone of voice or non-verbal cue is often effective without bringing attention to the problem.

**8** Utilize and teach color coding and highlighting as a learning strategy.

**9** Allow students to write on the chalkboard/overhead projector as often as possible. "Hands-on" experience is extremely important.

**10** Be aware of peer relationships. Encourage students to interact constructively. Use cooperative learning and peer tutoring strategies whenever possible, as this interaction will help ADHD students develop the social skills they sometimes lack, in addition to helping them academically.

Start with one-on-one student interaction and move to small-group and then large-group situations. Be prepared to change groups frequently if problems arise.

## Bibliography

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