

Impact of AD/HD on Elementary Students*

Clare B. Jones, Ph.D.

Joan K. Teach, Ph.D.

Adapted from *Practical Suggestions for AD/HD* and *Sourcebook for Children with Attention Deficit Disorder*

Overview

Elementary school, often referred to as the “building block of future learning,” is where the child learns to behave and understand in a manner consistent with the social, cultural, and organizational requirements of a society. This six-year span from kindergarten to fifth grade is when children lay a critical educational foundation. Students begin learning the basic rules and regulations of attending school, the basis of social interaction, and the cognitive tools that enable them to pursue higher level education. This is a challenging learning process for most children. When a child brings the added complexity of AD/HD¹ to this developmental learning process, one can begin to understand the importance of offering interventions and strategies to support these students.

Impact of AD/HD on School Performance

During the developmental stages of elementary school, the problems most likely to be observed by teachers and parents are “continued difficulties with hyperactive-impulsive behavior joined by difficulties with goal-directed persistence (sustained attention),” according to Russell Barkley, Ph.D.² The teacher may observe the following characteristics:

- ✓ Difficulty with work completion and productivity
- ✓ Distraction
- ✓ Forgetfulness related to daily tasks
- ✓ Lack of planning
- ✓ Poor organization of work activities
- ✓ Trouble meeting deadlines associated with school assignments

Students with AD/HD face several significant challenges that interfere with their ability to succeed in school. Difficulties with executive functions, sometimes called executive skills, such as working memory, internalized speech, and verbal fluency, affect the acquisition of math, spelling, reading comprehension, and written language skills. Students may also have deficits in organizing events and objects.³

Poor fine motor coordination also manifests in many of these students. Their handwriting is often messy and difficult to read, and they can have difficulty mastering cursive writing, preferring to print even throughout their high school years.

Academic underachievement is frequently a hallmark of AD/HD. These students are at risk for serious problems during their school years, such as 1) undiagnosed coexisting learning disabilities, 2) deficits in executive skills, 3) failing a grade,

* In most cases, AD/HD is used interchangeably throughout this Manual to describe both AD/HD predominately hyperactive-impulsive and AD/HD predominately inattentive. IDEA regulations refer to these two conditions as ADHD and ADD, respectively.

The Top 11 Challenging Behaviors in Elementary School

Joan K. Teach, Ph.D.
Chris A. Zeigler Dendy, M.S.

Since many children with AD/HD lack self-control, they frequently have difficulty complying with classroom rules and expectations. In addition, the AD/HD diagnostic criteria of inattention, disorganization, incompleteness of work, not listening, losing things, forgetfulness, excessive talking, and blurting out answers makes academic success extremely difficult, especially when the AD/HD is untreated.

Below are the top 11 challenging behaviors that most classroom teachers encounter in elementary school age children with AD/HD, as well as several classroom interventions to help these children succeed in school. The behaviors are divided into two lists: one for kindergarten through second grade and one for third through fifth grades.

Chapter 5 contains numerous suggestions for preventing or reducing behavioral problems by creating a proactive classroom or making changes to the environment. Chapters 4 and 9 offer additional high-interest instructional strategies that can be helpful to maintain a student's attention and assist with organizational and homework issues. Chapter 8 contains more advanced behavioral strategies for more challenging behaviors.

Kindergarten through Second Grade

Teachers of students in kindergarten through second grade are also encouraged to review the "Top Five Challenging Behaviors for Preschool Students" in Chapter 6 for additional ideas.

1. Inattention; out of seat or designated area; not completing work.

- ✓ Use visual cues. Use tape lines or carpet squares to visually show the child his space.
- ✓ Set a kitchen timer. Start out with small increments. Work 10 minutes, then get water. Work 15 minutes, then sharpen a pencil. Work 20 minutes, then spend time drawing.
 - When more than one task is assigned, set the timer for a designated time. When the timer goes off, the child should move on to the next task.
- ✓ Draw a picture of appropriate behavior. When a kindergarten child was unable to stay in her seat in the cafeteria, talking and punishing didn't work so one teacher drew a picture of the child sitting the proper way at a table in the cafeteria. After that, the student remained in her seat during lunch.
- ✓ Assign two workstations. Designate a work area in addition to the student's desk where he or she can move to after sitting for a while. Perhaps have the student change after completion of each subject.
- ✓ Allow the student to sit on his or her knees or stand. One student was always moving and sometimes sat on her knees or stood leaning on her desk. The student was completing her work regularly and participating in class discussions so the teacher seated her at the back of the room to avoid distracting others and allowed her to sit or stand as needed.

2. Difficulty following directions and staying on task.

When students appear noncompliant, the underlying problem may be that they cannot pay attention, have problems with listening comprehension, have limited working memory capacity, or simply do not understand the directions.

- ✓ Designate someone — a "shepherd" or friend — to check that the directions are followed, assignments are written down, and completed work is submitted the next day.
- ✓ Allow the use of fidget toys as described in the "Preschool Top Five Challenges."
- ✓ Use high-interest teaching strategies to maintain attention.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 64

4) dropping out of school, 5) school suspensions, and 6) for a few, expulsion.⁴

The challenges these students face at school can be overwhelming at times. Some do not persist in their efforts, reporting great frustration and giving up more easily. These students often put forth a great deal of effort that does not “pay off” for them.⁵ They learn that no matter how hard they try, they will not be successful.

Students with AD/HD inattentive particularly can have difficulty processing language tasks quickly, including the encoding (oral and written expression) and retrieval of information.⁶ They may also sit quietly, day-dreaming as they stare into space. For more information, teachers of students in grades K-3 may find it helpful to read Chapter 6 and those teaching students in grades 4-5 are referred to Chapters 9 and 10. Chapters 3-5 are also important companion guides to this section. Additional resources are listed in Appendix A.

Impact of Delayed Developmental Skills

Dr. Barkley reports a 30 percent developmental delay in these students in key academic skills, social skills, self-care, and control of emotions.⁷ Consequently, these students can appear less mature than their peers. When viewed from this developmental perspective, a 10-year-old student may act more like a 7- or 8 year-old. Dr. Barkley further notes that social promises or commitments to friends are now combined with the impulsive, heedless, and disinhibited behavior that was initially seen in the child during preschool. The result of this continuing behavior challenge is that the elementary teacher will note difficulty with students not raising their hands in class discussion, their lack of turn taking and their lack of self-regulation.

Impact of Executive Function Deficits

The elementary age child with AD/HD experiences an immaturity in the development of skills that most elementary children have begun to establish. This absence of these skills can have a definite impact on the child's overall personal conduct, self-care skills, and ultimately the child's self-esteem. While the student's

peers are beginning to develop these adaptive and formative skills and feel successful with them, the child with AD/HD begins to fall significantly behind. Their off-task behaviors alert teachers and parents that the student is not producing at a rate commensurate with expected developmental levels.⁸ When AD/HD and deficits in executive skills co-occur and the student's verbal language skills are impaired, he or she is at higher risk for having serious problems with aggression and antisocial behavior.⁹ (Additional information about the impact of AD/HD, the 30 percent developmental delay, and executive skill deficits on school performance is available in Chapters 1, 3, 6, and 8.)

Impact on Social Skills

Some of these children, especially those with AD/HD combined type, may be socially rejected by peers. This social rejection is most often linked to their aggressive behavior.¹⁰ As a result, they are more likely to be described as irritating, annoying, domineering, and rigid in social situations.¹¹ They often have difficulty accepting responsibility for their own behavior and may not adapt well in a win-or-lose situation. They can also have trouble joining clubs and participating in sports and other extracurricular activities.¹² Additionally, they are more likely to receive negative attention from both parents and teachers. When defiance and aggression are present in elementary school, they may portend serious behavior problems in the future. (Specific suggestions for reducing this unwanted behavior are discussed in Chapter 6. Additional information on social skills is provided in Chapter 12.)

Unique Challenges for Girls

Since girls with AD/HD are often more compliant and eager to please than boys, they are unlikely to present discipline problems at school. Thus, they can be overlooked until later on in their school years. Misdiagnosis of anxiety or depression can also delay a proper diagnosis. Although these girls don't present major discipline problems, the problems they face are just as serious as boys' problems. Girls with attention deficits are more likely than boys to struggle with impaired social skills, be emotionally reactive, or at

The Top 11 Challenging Behaviors in Elementary School, Cont.

3. Disrupting class; blurting out; talking excessively.

- ✓ Use simple positive intervention strategies, such as redirection, ignoring comments and praising those who are listening quietly.
 - Use gestures, such as a finger across your lips and hand cupped behind your ear.
- ✓ Consider instituting a classwide behavior management program, such as *Change Your Clip* or *Red Light*. These two programs involve a three or four level color-coded behavior rating system. Green, yellow, orange, and red circles are mounted on magnets and placed on the board. Clothes pins with each student's name are clipped around the circle. Each student starts the day on the green circle.

Put a positive spin on this strategy by saying that everyone is doing a good job listening, for example. If everyone's clip is still on the green circle, periodically spotlight three to five students, "Emily, Hunter, Nathan and Ashley are all working really hard — so their clips stay on the green circle." If everyone is on green at the end of the day, the teacher can give a treat, like a few Skittles, M&Ms, or raisins.

When a student acts inappropriately, the teacher can say, "Change your clip." The student then moves his clothes pin to the next circle. Most students will comply with the teacher's requests more readily after the first clip move to yellow. The color rating scale and label for each circle is:

1. Green = Great job
2. Yellow = Warning
3. Orange = Quiet or silent lunch
4. Red = Referral to the office or a telephone call to parents

Allow students to earn back the right to return to the green circle. "John, when you get three checks for following my directions and working, I will put your clip back on the green circle."

4. Difficulty getting along with peers; annoying others.

Unfortunately, there are no magic answers for enhancing social skills in students with AD/HD. Some students with AD/HD lack basic social skills, making it difficult to make and keep friends and possibly offending other students inadvertently. As a result, they are sometimes bullied or they become the bully themselves.

Some researchers recommend implementing a social skills curriculum. However, this program has a major flaw; these students do not always use their training when it is needed. Because of the deficits related to their AD/HD, these students have great difficulty generalizing the learned behavior into new settings. Having stated the obvious drawbacks, teachers nonetheless are still encouraged to teach social skills, while remaining realistic in their expectations for the results of the training. Chapter 11 provides a discussion on this topic, as well as strategies for enhancing training effectiveness and specific curricula that can be helpful.

- ✓ Consider implementing a social skills curriculum.
 - Creative Coaching: A Support Group for Children with AD/HD (for elementary and middle school age students)
 - Skills Streaming (for children)
 - The Walker Social Skills Curriculum: The ACCEPTS Program
- ✓ Implement an individual behavior management system utilizing a behavior chart. See Appendix C.11 for a sample Getting Along form.
- ✓ Consider implementing a bullying prevention program. This program can reduce bullying, teach students new communication skills, make them aware of what constitutes bullying, and teach students how to respond to bullying. The Olweus Bullying Prevention program is discussed in Chapter 12.
- ✓ Consider medication. Medication enables students to use the social skills they know, thus making it easier for these children to get along with others.*

CONTINUED ON PAGE 66

times be underreactive. Unique issues facing girls are discussed in more detail in Chapters 2 and 9.

Specific Instructional Strategies for Common Learning Problems

Effective classroom management and education of these children is a multistep process. Skillful teachers must be willing to shift focus from global performance to specific tasks, by breaking lessons into smaller segments and then teaching basic skills.¹³ Given the nature of AD/HD, the hallmark of intervention is to make the task interesting and the payoff valuable. According to Sydney Zentall, Ph.D.,¹⁴ Professor of Special Education at Purdue University, the educational environment for children with AD/HD must be structured to allow them to talk, move, and question. Such a program allows students to start, stop, and engage in tasks in a nondisruptive fashion.

Active learning strategies, such as the “start, stop think model,” and other tips discussed in the chapter, *Managing and Educating Children with AD/HD*,¹⁵ offer the teacher strategies for helping the student stay alert and focused. Additional instructional and behavioral strategies are discussed in Chapters 4, 5, 10, and 11.

Here are several important intervention strategies:

1. GENERAL CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT SUGGESTIONS

- ✓ Well-organized routines and methods for returning and retrieving materials are critical. Storage and classroom materials need to be arranged effectively for easy management.
- ✓ Buddy systems, in which classroom partners monitor one another, help students check homework assignments in schedule books and the returning of papers. Later, the teacher can check that assignments are recorded and new instructional information is understood.
- ✓ Students who move frequently and have difficulty organizing their papers can benefit from using a clipboard, which provides a sturdy format for papers and a structure for internal organization.¹⁶

- ✓ The child with AD/HD benefits from being placed away from distractions in the room, such as doors to the hallway, pencil sharpeners, and computer areas.
- ✓ Since children with attention deficits often have difficulty with organization and tend to lose supplies such as pencils and paper, extra supplies should be available.
- ✓ Making time, an abstract concept, visible through the use of a regular timer or a colorful one can be effective. Time Timer® offers timers that can be set for a specific time, which is visualized by a red area that gets smaller as time elapses (<http://www.timetimer.com>).

2. PLANNING AND USE OF CLASS TIME

Children with AD/HD benefit from having daily schedules available in list format within the room and within their work area. Consider color-coding this list for easy recall. Here are a few tips for improving use of class time:

- a. Students with AD/HD have difficulty settling down to start an activity and moving from one activity to the next, so consider structuring and minimizing daily transitions. Offer an activity that aids in transitioning and helps the child move from an unstructured activity to a formal one by slowly adding more structure.¹⁷ Examples of this process include:
 - Clapping hands in a beat or pattern
 - Giving verbal cues: “Eyes up here”
 - “Clap your hands once if you hear me. Clap your hands twice if you hear me. Clap your hands three times if you hear me.”
 - Holding up the material to be used in the next assignment
 - Book, paper, pencil
 - Verbally prompting students what is to be done
 - “Take out your math book, a piece of paper, and a pencil, and turn to page 15.”
 - Write the page number on the board
 - Giving verbal directions for the assignment
 - Asking students to parrot directions as a rehearsal

The Top 11 Challenging Behaviors in Elementary School, Cont.

5. Aggressive or emotional "blow-ups."

Sometimes aggressive or explosive behavior is linked to frustration related to the inability to be successful in school (adapted from *Teaching Teens with ADD and ADHD*).

- ✓ Ensure that hidden learning problems are identified and accommodated when needed.
- ✓ Ensure that assignments are appropriate, not too long and not too difficult.
- ✓ Suggest that parents talk with their doctor to ensure that medication levels are appropriate.
- ✓ Use language and actions that de-escalate anger.
 - Lower your voice and stay calm.
 - Be nonthreatening. Give students physical space. Don't touch them or get in their face.
 - Ask the student to step out of the room to give him or her time to cool off.
 - Listen, reflect feelings, and be understanding.
- ✓ Offer sympathy and understanding. "Something must be very wrong because this is unlike you to be so angry."
- ✓ Teach anger management, including alternative behaviors to aggression.
- ✓ Develop a prearranged crisis plan, such as the "Cool-off" pass system described in Chapter 8.
- ✓ Prevent a reoccurrence by conducting a Functional Behavior Assessment to identify the antecedent or "trigger" for the emotional blow-up. See Chapters 5 and 11 for more details on assessing behavior problems.

6. Poor handwriting; poor fine motor coordination; graphomotor problems.

Some students with AD/HD have severe writing problems. One parent described the writing process as being physically painful for her child.

- ✓ Refer to an occupational therapist for an evaluation.
- ✓ Vary traditional writing activities such as practicing spelling words with Scrabble letters instead of writing them five times each.
- ✓ Provide activities that strengthen fine motor coordination skills.
- ✓ Allow use of a computer as early as possible.

Third through Fifth Grades

Teachers of students in grades 3–5 are also encouraged to read the "Top Six Challenging Behaviors" for secondary students in Chapter 9 for additional ideas. Several effective strategies are listed here:

I. Difficulty paying attention and staying on task.

The hallmark characteristic of AD/HD is inattention. Medication can be helpful in increasing attention.^b Teachers can also utilize several instructional strategies that are listed in Chapter 4. Briefly, they include:

- ✓ Use visual cues, prompts, and redirection to a task.
- ✓ Increase time on task by using timers and rewards.
- ✓ Use novel and engaging high-interest activities and strategies.
- ✓ Consider active-response strategies, such as writing on dry erase boards, replying in unison, and paired learning. For more information, see Chapter 10.
- ✓ Give task or job cards. Include pictures.
- ✓ Vary your voice. Be British, Southern, loud, soft, high, or low. Become an actor.

- Saying "The first problem is on page 6." Or "Take out your math book, turn to page 29, and do problems 6 through 10"

- b. Encourage the student to use a daily agenda, assignment book, or weekly calendar. Model how to use these tools and frequently check to see if the student is using the tool.

3. PREFERENTIAL SEATING

Preferential seating in the room, with direct view of the teaching area and away from a distracting neighbor, can increase compliance and decrease disruptive behavior. Researchers report that among children with behavioral and/or learning problems, on-task behavior doubles when a child's seat changes from desk clusters to rows. Row seating gives the child an island of isolated space and avoids the feeling of sensory overload and invasion of space. The rate of disruptions has been reported as three times higher in the desk cluster seating arrangement.¹⁸

4. DAILY PROGRESS NOTES

Research indicates that notes sent home from school are beneficial for children with AD/HD. These colorful notes are placed in a notebook, book bag, or planner on a daily basis. Creative communication tools of this decade now include e-mail and fax notes. Researchers consistently report that the daily note report process improves behavior and target academic performance.^{19,20,21}

The teacher or parents should talk with the student before any notes are sent home. Since some students are fearful of any notes sent home from the teacher, their purpose should be explained in positive terms. The child should be given some honest praise in the first note home, then, if possible, provide at least one positive comment in subsequent notes sent home. Faxing notes to parents also helps them be aware of the child's good days. Parents can greet him or her at the door with praise to reinforce the good behavior. See Appendix C.1 and C.2 for sample Daily Report forms.

5. ADAPTING THE CURRICULUM

Making thoughtful adjustments to instructional activities, often referred to as *diagnostic teaching*, benefits the unique qualities of each student. The curriculum should have age-appropriate expectations and be developmentally appropriate. The following accommodations are helpful for elementary school age students with AD/HD:

- ✓ **Break tasks into segments.** When long-term projects are assigned, separate the projects into short manageable parts with separate due dates. The teacher should check back with the student prior to each due date to ensure compliance and increase the possibility of success.
- ✓ **List activities.** Use a list of activities or items to be completed during a section of the day. This list is generated at first by the teacher and eventually by the student. As items are completed, they are crossed off the list. A complete list is rewarded with a predetermined reward.
- ✓ **Use mnemonics.** The use of mnemonic strategies, which are tricks and devices of learning, helps improve memory for rote facts and figures and recall of information. Acronyms, acrostics, rhythm, or chants can be helpful. Encourage students to create their own mnemonics.
- ✓ **Use other tools.** Grid charts containing multiplication facts or other information are effective. Graphic organizers also aid memory by organizing information in a manner that is easier to remember.
- ✓ **Use visual cues.** Visual models and diagrams of key material are helpful. For example, give the student a "job card" that lists the steps for completing a task. Posting key information on wall posters and using PowerPoint or overhead presentations are effective strategies.
- ✓ **Use manipulatives.** Manipulatives can be effective for memory work. For example, use a device that twists and shows correct multiplication table answers or craft sticks or other concrete objects for demonstrating simple math problems.

The Top 11 Challenging Behaviors in Elementary School, Cont.

- ✓ Move around. Variation is the key.
- ✓ Allow the use of fidget toys as described in the "Preschool Top Five Challenges" in Chapter 6.

2. Not completing and submitting homework.

Many students with attention deficits don't submit completed work in a timely manner. They forget to do their work or they complete it but lose it before reaching class to submit it. Their grades can fluctuate from one extreme to another, from zeros to 100s. They can also have difficulty understanding the directions for an assignment. Because of their forgetfulness, disorganization, and executive function deficits, these students often require extra supervision to ensure homework is submitted.

a. Work not submitted due to disorganization and forgetfulness

- ✓ Post homework assignments on the board.
- ✓ Appoint "row captains" or a "homework buddy" to pick up homework and check that assignments are recorded.
- ✓ Intervene at the "point of performance." At the end of the day, review homework assignments before students leave class and remind them which books to take home.
- ✓ Provide an extra book or set of textbooks for home.
- ✓ Determine whether homework assignments are too long. Provide accommodations, such as extended time or shortened assignments.
- ✓ Use weekly or daily reports as needed. See Appendices C.1, C.2, and C.3 for sample weekly reports and C.4 for a Classroom Behavior Rubric.
- ✓ Communicate regularly with parents of struggling students via:
 - Homework "hotlines"
 - Teacher websites
 - E-mail or ask parents to e-mail the teacher
 - Weekly reports
 - Teacher phone calls or conferences
- ✓ Encourage parents to establish a homework routine. When homework is completed, put it back into the notebook and backpack. Place the backpack in a routine place each night.
- ✓ Give "free homework" coupons. Students earn a "free or reduced homework" coupon when submitting all their homework for one week. Students who earned these coupons actually showed improvements in overall organization and grades received on notebooks. Students also work to improve their behavior if the amount of homework is reduced.
- ✓ Medication has been shown to be extremely effective in improving academic performance: for example, increasing the amount of work completed and the student's compliance with teacher requests.

b. Work not submitted due to not fully understanding directions

- ✓ Ensure that assignments are understood.
 - Review the directions and then model how to complete the problem correctly.
 - Leave a sample problem on the board.
 - Incorporate color to highlight directions and delineate sections of the assignment.
 - Ask students to highlight the directions or the + and - signs for math assignments.
 - Teach students to write notations on their work.
 - Circle words that cue addition, subtraction, greater than, less than, and how many.
 - Ask the student to follow action directions: underline, circle, and cross out. Highlight the first action to be taken, then complete that step.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 70

- ✓ Use organizational strategies. Teach organizational techniques such as webbing, mapping, or use of graphic organizers to support writing assignments and note taking.
 - ✓ Give extended time. Give the opportunity for untimed writing assignments.
 - ✓ Ignore poor handwriting. Motor skills may not be fully developed in these students, so look at the content and accept what has been written. Have the child describe what he wrote if it is intelligible.
 - ✓ Adjust grading techniques. Adapt standards on some writing assignments and grade written assignments with one grade for content and one for mechanics. Average both for a final grade on the paper.
 - ✓ Mark correct work. Mark the student's papers for correct performance, not the mistakes.
 - ✓ Sequence tasks. Give two tasks, with a preferred task to be completed after the less preferred task.
 - ✓ Give choices. Give two parallel assignments and allow the child to choose the way the assignment will be done. For example, allow the student to do a project such as making a mobile or designing a book cover.
 - ✓ Incorporate color. Use color to highlight directions and sections of the worksheet. For example, highlight the + and - signs in different colors on a math paper. The effective use of color to draw attention to relevant, discriminative stimuli has been well-documented.^{22,23,24} Color accents can add key features to repetitive tasks, perhaps increasing interest and motivation. Color can make the important stimuli in an activity look more intriguing.
- Additional suggestions for adapting the curriculum are provided in Chapters 4 and 10.

6. COMPENSATORY EQUIPMENT

Students with AD/HD can use various tools to support their efforts in compensating for their challenges. Some tools include:

- ✓ Tape recorder, digital if possible, to record teacher lectures or assignments

- ✓ Computer software, such as *Kidspiration* or *Inspiration* (<http://www.inspiration.com>), to develop their writing skills
- ✓ Written and spelling prompters, such as Wynn, Kurzweil,[®] or Write Out Loud[®] and Co-Writer[®]
- ✓ Handheld spell checker and dictionary
- ✓ Triplicate carbonized (NCR) notebook paper for taking notes in class
- ✓ Voice-activated software, such as Write and Speak and Dragon Naturally Speaking[®]
- ✓ Handheld daily organizers and minute minders that hold three minutes of tape for tape-recording assignments instead of writing them

Positive Reinforcement

Positive reinforcement is critical to recognizing the child's strengths and efforts. Teachers can support this by:

- ✓ Calling attention to the child's strengths by allowing for a consistent time each day or week when the child can display his or her talents
- ✓ Recognizing that excessive activity can mean increased energy and productivity when it is channeled positively
- ✓ Recognizing that bossiness can translate into leadership potential, so providing positive leadership opportunities is critical
- ✓ Recognizing that attraction to novel stimulation can lead to creativity
- ✓ Recognizing that this student must be actively involved in every aspect of learning; he is not a passive learner
- ✓ Understanding that these students have a natural playfulness that can be redirected in a positive manner and used to develop skills

Ultimately, teachers who work with students with AD/HD should attempt to make each student feel comfortable and successful with his or her disorder.

Behavioral Strategies

The classroom teacher can target specific behaviors within the regular classroom and in accordance with an individualized educational plan (IEP) or 504



The Top 11 Challenging Behaviors in Elementary School, Cont.

c. Work not submitted due to assignments that are too long or difficult.

If students are struggling with weak written expression, slow processing speed, reading comprehension, limited working memory capacity, or fine motor coordination problems, they may need extra time on assignments and tests. Chapter 9 gives a few suggestions for determining whether assignments are too long, as well as additional intervention strategies.

- ✓ Ensure that the length of assignments is appropriate by giving extended time or shortening writing assignments, if needed.

3. Disorganization.

As teacher expectations for completing work independently increase, several problems begin to surface: disorganization, difficulty getting started, difficulty completing assignments promptly, and difficulty planning ahead. Because of the developmental delays and disorganization related to their executive function deficits, these students need more supervision and support than their peers. Chapters 4 and 9 contain several helpful recommendations including the following:

- ✓ Provide additional support and supervision to improve organizational skills.
 - Teach organizational and study strategies by using binders, planners, or assignment calendars and color-coding strategies.
 - Organize the classroom area by setting up files or trays for returning work and designating areas for select tasks or materials.
 - Provide assistance and teach skills by practicing organizing notebooks, lockers, and important papers.
 - Tape a card to the child's desk with each class assignment listed in order. Mark off completed tasks.
 - Designate a colored folder for all assignments.
 - Monitor the planner or assignment book. Ask "row captains" to check planners and pick up homework.

4. Difficulty with written work.

Many students with AD/HD have great ideas but can't get them written down on paper. These children can seldom sit down with their thoughts well-organized and produce a written story or report. Some fail miserably in spelling and organizing the content material. Other students can explain their material verbally but fall apart when they try to put their ideas on paper. Deficits in executive function, especially limited working memory capacity and the ability to problem solve and reorganize and sequence information, result in serious problems with written expression and rapid completion of multistep math problems.

- ✓ Provide organizational support. Use organizational techniques such as webbing, mapping, or sticky notes to support writing assignments and notetaking.
 - Dictate ideas to a scribe, student, or parent.
 - Tape-record the initial draft of an essay or report.
 - Brainstorm creatively with Mindmapping[®] or sticky notes.
 - Create an outline of essay components for essays. Fill in labeled organizers or charts to show: who, what, when, where, and why.
- ✓ Modify teaching strategies. Several instructional strategies discussed in Chapters 4 and 9 are effective with these children. For example, give visual cues, reduce demands on memory, and use direct instruction.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 72

Plan. The following *behavior techniques* should be considered when designing classroom-based management systems.

1. **Encourage strengths.** Find what the child does well and build on those strengths. Reinforce what these children can do, not what they cannot do. In math, count the number of correct answers, not mistakes. Have students record their number on a chart. Reward students for having more correct answers as the week progresses. For improving writing proficiency, record the number of sentences written by the student, regardless of the number of errors.
2. **Use positive rewards.** Provide positive rewards, including praise and primary reinforcers (like stickers and tokens), for on-task and appropriate behaviors. When the child with AD/HD is performing, let them know immediately that they are doing well. Respond to the child's need for variety and change rewards often.
3. **Use redirection.** This strategy allows the child to quickly refocus on a new activity. The child is distracted from the current behavior and then quickly moved to another acceptable behavior.
4. **Ignore misbehavior.** At times, it may be appropriate to ignore minor misbehavior. The child with AD/HD often needs to touch, fidget, manipulate objects, or doodle to focus better. Respect this need for stimulus and avoid making it a reason for arguments.
5. **Allow the use of fidget toys.** Allow students to hold a fidget toy in their free hand when working. Fidget toys such as Wikki Stix, stress balls, and Koosh balls® are helpful. Standing during class or writing on a lapdesk also changes focus and interest. Sitting on a flexible cushion allows the student to wiggle or squirm when needed.
6. **Implement a point system.** Offer a point system in which children earn points for appropriate behavior, turning in papers, or compliance. Show the child how to keep a tally or score sheet and provide an easy system for recording information. Allow the child the opportunity to earn lost points for specific behaviors on a daily basis.

7. **Review the schedule daily.** Provide a well-organized daily plan. Involve the child in reviewing the plan and noting when responsibilities occur on the plan. Teach list making and crossing off completed tasks as a personal organizational strategy.

Positive reinforcement and additional behavioral strategies are discussed in Chapters 5 and 11.

Accommodation Plans: IEPs and Section 504 Plans

Some students with AD/HD can be successful in school with basic supports or accommodations that teachers often provide just because the child needs a little extra help. These strategies are often labeled "good teaching strategies." Other students who are struggling require services under Section 504 or IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act). Many students can be served successfully under Section 504, but others with more challenging struggles require support pursuant to IDEA. If the multidisciplinary team decides that the student would benefit from services afforded by the IEP process, the child will probably qualify under the Other Health Impairment (OHI) category. (IDEA and Section 504 are discussed in more detail in Chapter 14.)

EDUCATIONAL PLANS

Teachers can develop an informal educational plan for students who are struggling. On a more formal basis, IEPs and Section 504 plans are developed for eligible students. IEPs and some 504 plans:

- ✓ describe the disability
- ✓ detail how the services will be provided
- ✓ list who will be responsible for each task
- ✓ list the recommended accommodations

All team members as well as parents often have input on the educational plan. Parent input is mandated for IEPs and is often solicited for 504 plans as a matter of best practice principles. Everyone at the team meeting signs and receives a copy of the final educational plan. A copy is kept in the student's cumulative record

The Top 11 Challenging Behaviors in Elementary School, Cont.

- ✓ Introduce technology to provide assistance.
 - Use computer programs like *Kidspiration* or *Inspiration* to organize ideas and material.
 - Use a computer writing assistant program such as *Write Out Loud*, *Co-Writer*, and *Dragon Naturally Speaking*®.
- ✓ Modify grading. Give two grades, one for content and one for mechanics; then average the score.
- ✓ Use color to highlight directions or key details. For example, in social studies, highlight people in blue, happenings in yellow, dates in red or pink, and places in green.

5. Not completing long-term projects.

- ✓ Modify assignments.
 - Break down long-term assignments into two or three segments.
 - Give multiple due dates and grades.
- ✓ Provide organizational support and increased supervision:
 - Prompt the child about getting started on the project and monitor progress.
 - Notify parents of the due dates.
 - Involve parents in monitoring. Ask parents to initial the assignment book.
 - Have the student record reminders in the assignment book and request the parent to initial the assignment book when it arrives home and is understood.
 - Check progress regularly. Check back with the student prior to each due date.
- ✓ Provide a job card that outlines the project.
- ✓ Show completed model projects or reports to improve the overall quality of reports.
- ✓ Provide a graphic organizer for the project as described in Chapter 10.

6. Difficulty memorizing rote information.

- ✓ Use mnemonic strategies (tricks and devices of learning).
- ✓ Use manipulatives (objects that can be physically manipulated to aid in learning).
- ✓ Use color-cuing or hands-on activities. Moving objects and arranging items requires greater involvement of the learner and is sometimes necessary to encourage understanding and memorization.
- ✓ Create a rap or rhyme for hard-to-remember multiplication facts. For example, "7 times 8 is 56, I ate a grape and it made me sick."

for future reference, and the plan is modified and changed as skills are mastered and obtained.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Typical accommodations that are provided to students with AD/HD include:

- ✓ Preferential seating
- ✓ Reduction of copying or written tasks, including homework assignments
- ✓ Support in recording homework assignments in a plan book
- ✓ Use of compensatory tools in the classroom, for example, a computer or calculator
- ✓ Advance notice sent to parents of due dates, especially on long-term projects
- ✓ Daily note sent home

- ✓ Additional copies of textbooks for home use
- ✓ Supplementing verbal instruction with visual information
- ✓ Alternative testing measures, including oral testing, or support on bubble sheet scan tests such as using a ruler to keep the row in line or writing answers directly on the test copy to later be transferred to the bubble sheet by an aide
- ✓ Breaking tasks into shorter chunks or segments
- ✓ Additional time for timed tasks or eliminating the time factor entirely

Teachers may also receive consultation or assistance from a school psychologist or other professionals who are familiar with AD/HD to implement the educational plan.