

ATTENDING: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHERS

First of all, **check for physical** (e.g., hearing deficit), **developmental, and cultural** (e.g., bilingualism) reasons. If the student is prescribed medication, check to see if it was taken. Once these potential reasons for listening and attending failure have been considered, proceed with the following:

First and foremost: Be consistent. Any change, even a positive one, can be detrimental. These students need structure to be provided externally (for example by a teacher or parent). And make sure that you are consistent in your expectations. You cannot expect one thing today and another tomorrow. Consistency in expectations is an important part of their structure.

Provide the student with a daily environment that is well planned, organized, structured, and predictable. Classroom rules, daily schedule and assignments should be displayed, and specific tasks should be assigned to specific times. Regularly scheduled, frequent breaks should be available.

Modify the curriculum if the student would benefit more from a quality vs. quantity approach. For example, if the student can demonstrate proficiency by completing ten problems in an assignment, twenty do not need to be assigned. Also, larger tasks can be broken down into smaller parts and given at alternate times if necessary.

Allow for movement and activity that does not disrupt the learning of the student or others. For example, allow the student to stand by his/her desk.

Allow for some amount of fidgeting. Allowing students to play with objects while doing a task may actually help them concentrate on the task at hand. Being allowed to manipulate an object may put them more at ease and allow for greater focus to the material you are trying to teach.

Simplify and increase visual presentations. For example, use visual references for auditory instruction.

Establish eye contact for oral instruction. When feasible, stand near the student.

Increase the student's use of lists and organizational notebooks and folders to improve organization skills. Write assignments on the board, and make sure the student copies them.

Verify the accuracy of assignments recorded on daily or weekly assignment sheets or notebooks. Give the student a weekly, or daily, progress report that is to be signed by parents.

If a long-term assignment is given, divide it into segments and use a calendar to specify when each segment should be completed. Where appropriate, allow extra time to complete assignments and tests.

Color code the student's materials to help him/her stay organized.

Clearly delineate your expectations and the task requirements.

Alter activities when no success is being made on a task. Expect to have to **repeat instructions** often. After presenting directions, often ask the student to repeat them.

Seat the student away from any auditory distractions in the room, such as heaters, air conditioners, etc. Make sure that any visual or auditory distractions in the room are behind the student. **Minimize competing messages** (e.g., at home, turn off TV or radio; at school, make sure peers take turns expressing their opinion, etc.)

Seat the student with positive peer models and/or near the teacher. Seat at individual desks instead of tables, when feasible.

Experiment to see if the student benefits from cooperative learning groups or peer tutoring. Assign a study mate.

Give immediate and frequent feedback when the student succeeds on a task or exerts his/her best effort.

Catch them being good! Reinforcement of positive behavior is more effective in eliciting good behavior than is punishing bad behavior. So, as often as possible provide reinforcement for and acknowledge good behavior. Reinforcement can come in many forms. Figure out what types of reinforcement work best for your student(s). Possibilities include (but are not limited to) point systems, praise, tangibles, physical activity and special privileges.

Use activity rewards for improvement such as running an errand, erasing the board or arranging chairs. **Reinforce often**, building self-confidence before requiring completion of difficult tasks.

When the student is off-task, use a predetermined signal (e.g., verbal cue or hand signal) to remind the student to attend. **When the student fails to listen to what you or others said, immediately let him/her know what he/she did, and how he/she could do better.** For example, you might say, "Henry, you're not listening to me. Please put those baseball cards aside for a moment and look at me in the eye."

Offer interesting and stimulating assignments, instead of repetitive or tedious tasks. Likewise, **use a variety of instructional methods** throughout the day.

Schedule more complex assignments in the morning hours.

Use teaching techniques that involve active student participation instead of passive listening.

Imbed all lessons and interactions with social teachings. Modeling proper social interactions is the best way to teach these lessons. Teaching social interactions should not be a separate topic, but rather something that happens all day long in as many settings and situations as possible. “Do as I say, not as I do” will be a very ineffective strategy with AD/HD students (or any other students).

Ask student to repeat instructions before beginning an assignment or taking homework home. **Be sure that the student comprehends the instructions.**

Use fun games to teach listening skills (e.g., Red Light-Green Light, Mother May I?, Simon Says).

When delivering complex directions, explanations, or instructions, stop at key points to make sure the child understands.

Introduce important messages which you do not want the student to miss by saying, “Maria, listen carefully...” Call the student by name, and have his/her peers do the same, before speaking to him/her.

Instruct the student to “echo” in his/her mind information just heard, so that he/she can remember the important facts. When lecturing allow time for students to do so.

Try to display a caring and supportive attitude consistently to the child. **Use praise liberally, and try to minimize criticism.** Recognize success—praise him/her sincerely. Praising the student for reflective or attending behavior is more effecting than punishing him for impulsive behavior. **Be sure to frequently inform parents of his/her successes** (e.g. notes home, phone calls, etc.)

While it is not helpful to raise your voice every time the student is inattentive, **it often helps if you alter the volume of your voice.** However, every attempt should be made to speak at a comfortable level—alter inflections, not volume.

Check to make sure the student has the prerequisite skills to succeed on the tasks assigned. Is the student working at a frustration level? If so, change the assignment and/or teach prerequisites.

Where feasible, **give the student a choice** of activities and assignments.

If necessary, **develop a written contract** with the student in which tasks, behaviors, and consequences are specified. Be sure to include the student in the development of the contract, especially the rewards that might be earned.

Teach the student to slow down and reflect. Just having the student delay a response probable will not work. The student must learn to control his/her impulses, scan and select relevant cues, ignore distractions, and repeat overlearned responses rapidly. Self-verbalization and modeling are two methods that may be effective in teaching these strategies. A school psychologist or counselor may help with these and other strategies.

- a. Self-verbalization. Have him/her verbally command himself to “STOP” and “THINK.” Signs on his desk may be helpful. Encourage him to talk to himself while solving a problem whenever practical. Teach self-monitoring.
- b. Modeling. Sit him/her next to peers who are more reflective so that he/she may imitate their behavior. Arrange a “buddy system” in which a peer assists the student.
- c. Self-recording. Combined with the above strategies, teach the student to record his/her own behavior.

Give opportunities for the student to make decisions concerning assignments.

Recognize that the long-term goal is for students to be able to self-monitor. A technique to utilize with older students to this end is to have them take notes on what teacher says in class as well as their thoughts on what is being said. This will help them keep track of their own thought and to formulate questions they want answered.

Make the child responsible for as much as possible. This is a gradual process that over time will allow the child to work on his or her own skills and become more autonomous and need less outside structure. But this will not happen over night! The feeling of autonomy will become increasingly important as the child enters adolescence, so the more responsibility the child can have at a younger age, the easier more autonomy will be later.

Give out only one classroom task assignment at a time to avoid work overload and provide a built-in check for assurance of reception of material.

Communicate with Parents. Communicate with parents as often as possible regarding their child’s performance (both positive and negative). Make sure that teachers and parents are on the same page in their interventions. One effective method for parent-teacher communication is a notebook that travels between teacher and parents daily with feedback from both parties.

Notify parents immediately if assignments seem to be missing or incomplete. Schedule a teacher-parent-student conference when the student first fails to complete an assignment.

Encourage parents to set up appropriate study space at home with routines established as far as set times for study, parental review of completed homework, and periodic notebook and/or bookbag organized.

Use a daily homework log to communicate with parents. The student should fill out the log and be responsible for having the teachers and parent sign it.

Make sure you have a support system. Know whom in your school (other teachers, administrators, mental health services, etc.) you have to use as resources. Utilize the knowledge and experience of others and be willing to support other teachers working with AD/HD students. Sharing ideas is the best way to get new ideas.

If the student's attending problems are severe and unresponsive to the above interventions **consider referring the student for a comprehensive assessment by a school psychologist and other members of a multidisciplinary team.** Likewise, if the parents have not taken the student to the physician, it should be suggested that they do so (to consider medication or a change in medication). It is important to note that most students with serious attending problems respond favorably to medication, especially when used in combination with the above recommendations.

Additional Resources:

- Barkley, R.A. (1995). *Taking charge of ADHD: The complete, authoritative guide for parents*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Bradley, K. & DuPaul, G. (1997). Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder. In G.G. Bear & K.M. Minke, Children's needs II: Development, problems, and alternatives. Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.
- Chronis, A. M., Jones, H. A. & Raggi, V. L. (2006). Evidence-based psychosocial treatments for children and adolescents with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder. *Clinical Psychology Review*, (26), 486-502.
- DuPaul, G., Stoner, G., & O'Reilly, M. (2002). Best practices in classroom interventions for attention problems. In A. Thomas & J. Grimes, Best practices in school psychology IV. Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.
- McCarney, S.B. (1994). *The attention deficit disorders intervention manual*. Columbia, MO: Hawthorne Educational Services.
- Reif, S.F. (1993). *How to reach and teach ADD/ADHD students*. West, Nyack, NY: The Center for Applied Research in Education.
- Vile Jund, R. E., DuPaul, G. J., Jitendra, A.K., Volpe, R.J., & Cleary, K. S. (2006) Classroom observations of students with and without ADHD: Differences across types of engagement. *Journal of School Psychology*, (44), 87-104.
- Weyandt, L.L. (2001). *An ADHD primer*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

www.chadd.org: Students and Adults with ADHD Organization Website.

www.gday-mate.com/adhd/adhd_in_the_classroom.htm: ADHD in the Classroom.

www.healthyplace.com/communities/ADD/judy/teaching_tools_1.htm: Teaching Students with ADHD.

<http://add-adhd.lifetips.com/cat/57702/adhd-add-in-schools-the-classroom/index.html>

<http://www.drpaul.com/factsheets/adhdass.html>

<http://www.educational-psychologist.co.uk/adhdclassrm.htm>

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/adhd.cfm>

http://www.naspcenter.org/principals/nassp_adhd.html

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