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11 Ways Teachers Can Support Our Kids

How teachers can help ADHD students shine in the classroom by fostering structure, routine, good communication, and fun.

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The Importance of Teachers

Parents of ADHDers, is your child's teacher doing everything to support learning? Teachers often dictate the success or failure of a child's education -- particularly if that child has ADHD. Next to parents, teachers are the most influential people in a student's life.

Teachers, here's how you can establish a supportive, structured classroom that will encourage learning and enforce discipline.

Post Class Rules

With input from students, establish short, simple classroom rules. State them in positive terms that convey what you want students to do. For example, instead of saying: "No loud talking when you come into class," say, "When you come into class, check the assignment on the board and start working quietly." Or, "Sit down first and then you may talk quietly with your neighbor until I start teaching."

Make Classroom Routines

This will help students with ADHD stay on task. Routines for all students can include: homework always being written on the board, "row captains" checking to see that assignments are written and that completed work is picked up, etc.

ADHD students can check in with the classroom aide at the end of the day to make sure they understand the homework assignment and what's required of them.

Give Appropriate Supervision

Children with ADHD require more supervision than their peers because of their delayed maturity, forgetfulness, distractibility, and disorganization. Help these students by pairing them with classmates who can remind him of homework and classwork, using student partners to team up on a project, and involving classroom aides as much as you can during and after class.

Reduce Potential Distractions

Always seat students who have problems with focus near the source of instruction and/or stand near student when giving instructions in order to help the student by reducing barriers and distractions between him and the lesson. Always seat this student in a low-distraction work area in the classroom. Encourage the student to sit near positive role models to ease the distractions from other students with challenging or diverting behaviors.

Prepare for Transitions

Remind the student about what is coming next (next class, recess, time for a different book, etc.). For special events like field trips or other activities, be sure to give plenty of advance notice and reminders. Help the student in preparing for the end of the day and going home, supervise the student's book bag for necessary items needed for homework.

Allow for Movement

Allow the student to move around or fidget, preferably by creating reasons for the movement. Provide opportunities for physical action – wash the blackboard, go to the bathroom, etc. If this is not practical, then permit the student to play with small objects kept in their desks, such as a soft squeeze ball. In addition, recess can promote focus in ADHD children, so don't use it as a time to make-up missed schoolwork or as punishment as you might for other students.

Provide Frequent, Positive Feedback

Students with ADHD respond best to feedback that is immediate. Use positive praise, such as "You're doing a great job" or "Now you've got it." If a student's answer is incorrect, say, "Let's talk this through" or "Does that sound right to you?" It's better to ask questions than to reprimand.

Provide Visual Reminders

Students with ADHD respond well to visual cues and examples. For instance, demonstrate a skill like essay writing on an overhead projector or on the board. When children get to their independent work, leave key points about a topic visible on the board. Post important concepts the children will use again and again on brightly colored poster board around the room.

Increase Active Class Participation

Group strategies include asking students to write their answers on dry-erase white boards and showing them to the teacher, asking students to answer questions in unison (choral response), having students give a thumbs up or down if the answer to the question is yes or no — a level palm, if they don't know the answer.

Encourage Hands-On Learning

Create learning opportunities where children experience things first-hand. Have students write and act out a play, record an assignment on videotape or take apart and put together a model of a miniature eyeball when studying the human body.

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