

entire class. On the other hand, the special educator may work with a small group of children while the general education teacher delivers whole-group instruction. Cooperative learning groups of specifically chosen peers is another way of engaging students with ADHD. The keys to a successful collaborative relationship are listening, acknowledging the teacher's concerns, meeting the teacher's needs as well as those of the students, and doing all of this in a timely manner.

Working With Parents and Families

A close relationship with the parents and families of students with ADHD is vital to the child's success at school. Recently I e-mailed a parent about extreme changes in her son's behavior. The classroom teacher first brought it to my attention, and the paraprofessional who works with him noticed the changes as well. I also observed the changes, but working with this student for only fifteen minutes each day I failed to put it all together. I simply informed his mother that we had seen some changes and wanted to address them with her before it began to affect his progress and ultimately his grade. Later that same day she stopped by my classroom and said she had brought him his medicine. It seems that she had simply stopped giving her son his medication and wanted to see if we would notice any changes. While medication should not be the first line of defense in dealing with ADHD, for many students medication is a necessity. Some parents, however, do not believe in the benefits of medication for their child. It is important for teachers to realize that this is a very personal decision, and they must respect the wishes of the parent. Parents who feel that their voice is not being heard are more likely to become defensive and uncooperative when problems do arise.

Follow-through and consistency of routines across environments are crucial for the child with ADHD. At home there should be a schedule similar to the one used at school. There should be consequences and rewards that mirror what is done in the classroom. A clear understanding of expectations that are consistent across environments will often enhance success.

Homework is often a huge source of frustration for both parents and the child. Teachers can usually suggest ways to

minimize frustration. For example, it may not always be necessary to complete each and every homework problem if the student is able to demonstrate an understanding of the concept. Breaking homework into manageable chunks or giving due dates for assignments early will allow parents additional time to help their child and possibly keep the student from feeling overwhelmed. Sometimes students are good at certain parts of an assignment, and these can possibly be omitted. A student, for instance, who is great at computation facts but weak at deciphering word problems may be required only to determine the equation but not expected to work it out. The bottom line is two-way communication. It is important that parents and teachers view each other as a team.

Advice for Making Inclusion Work

Special educators often assist the general education teacher as much as they do the student. Being available when assistance is required and serving as a source of effective instructional and behavioral interventions are very important for making inclusion work. I often send my colleagues useful articles and short weekly e-mails with instructional suggestions. I also remind them that ADHD is real and that the child is not trying to drive them crazy.

Students with ADHD lack the ability to focus and are distracted by anything overly stimulating, so finding ways to make learning fun is a key component of success. In an inclusive setting, the special educator has to help the general education teacher find ways to make the learning environment less stimulating and his or her teaching more stimulating. Again, this works for *all* students, not just the child with ADHD. Be sure that you facilitate open lines of communication between home and school. View inclusion as a partnership among the general education teacher, the special educator, and the family for the benefit of all, but especially the student with ADHD.

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