

## 13 CLASSROOM STRATEGIES FOR TEACHERS OF STUDENTS WITH ADHD

- 1 .... **Students' attention:** Capture students' attention before giving directions. Are they looking at you or in your general direction? How are you keeping them engaged? Are you noticing their non-verbals? Are you surveying the class to make sure they are tracking what you are saying?
- 2 .... **Class participation:** Are you keeping the students guessing and not automatically providing the answers when they don't answer right away? Are you comfortable with silence? How do you break up the monotony of classroom participation? If the same students are always answering, how can you use those students in a more helpful way (i.e., being classroom leaders or ambassadors; breaking up in smaller groups to promote classroom participation)?
- 3 .... **Stay close:** Utilize proximity control: Do you seat the distracted child at the front of the classroom? Is he close to your desk, away from windows and doors, and sitting separately from other distracted children? What are some other potential distractors that are nearby this student (i.e., items on your desk, papers to be graded, your phone)?
- 4 .... **Give clear directions:** Are your lesson plan and tasks for the day clearly written, organized, and explained in a logical order and sequence? If not or if it's interrupted, do you repeat yourself in a clear and organized fashion? Are you giving more than three-step directions?
- 5 .... **Give opportunities for choice:** Are you providing the child with the option to work solo or in a group? Are you offering indoor vs. outdoor activities for an in-class assignment? Do they have the option of sitting down or standing up while completing an assignment? Can they work with an older student who can be their peer mentor or tutor?
- 6 .... **Stimulating activities:** Students with ADHD often get bored easily or distracted if the activity or lesson is not an interest of theirs.<sup>18</sup> If you speak too slowly, are unfamiliar with the subject matter, or speak about the subject matter in a way that is not engaging, you will most likely lose that student (and many other students, as well). Instead, instruct at a brisk pace and make the activity stimulating. Tap into all the various learning styles. For example, for the visual learners, use PowerPoint presentations, handouts, drawings or art, movies, or videos. To engage the auditory learners, use music, your voice instruction, singing, talking, rhyming, and reading books or poetry. For the kinesthetic learners, use role-playing, dancing, clapping, acting, stand-up comedy, games, hands-on projects, or movement. There is no need to always do things the same way. Mix it up and keep your students engaged.

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- 7 .... Social skills:** Teach social skills and promote extracurricular activities. Involve children in groups to learn social skills, as well as other groups that are socially based (i.e. co-op programs for homeschooled children, team sports, community service groups, ministry/church youth groups, camps, volunteer service opportunities). Help the child in social situations by helping to promote cooperation and peer interaction.
- 8 .... On-task student:** Pay attention to the on-task student by noticing his or her effort. Note that some students appreciate the public notice in front of peers, while others prefer the more private, one-on-one praise. Get to know your students and figure out early on how they like to receive praise and correction based on their temperament, strengths, weaknesses, and prior teacher interactions.
- 9 .... Quiet work area:** Provide a quiet work area for the child who is easily distracted to help him or her focus on the task at hand. Minimize external distractions by providing a space to regulate the child's attention.
- 10 ... Attention breaks:** Provide attention breaks for 15 to 30 seconds during long class instruction, very difficult content, and when children are getting easily distracted or irritated. Don't do the attention breaks for too long, or you'll lose that student (and the entire class). It will take a lot more effort and energy on your part to get them reengaged, and it will be challenging for the dysregulated student to shift focus back to the previous task if they are away from it for too long.
- 11 ... Physical strategies:** Utilize resistance bands, medicine balls, rubber bands, Velcro, and other devices the child can fidget with to help reduce mental distractions.
- 12 ... Mental and visual schedules:** Provide students with a mental and visual schedule for the day. This would include activities for the day, lesson plans, special projects, and important school information. You can include this information on the board or at the student's desk.
- 13 ... Parent interactions:** When giving written and verbal feedback to parents, start with the positive and be specific. What great things did that child master that day? What did they struggle with and then overcome? Refrain from bombarding the parent with all the negative things, behavioral challenges, and frustrations you had with their child. Most parents already know the challenges their child is having. They are likely having those same struggles at home. It doesn't feel very good or collaborative when your child's teacher reminds you about what a challenge you think their child is. Show empathy and do your best to see life through that parent's eyes. Make a genuine connection, offer support, and provide a collaborative environment in which to problem solve the child's biggest challenges while celebrating their triumphs.