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**SCHOOL ISSUES ARTICLE**

## How Can Teachers Help Students With ADHD?



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Education World highlights strategies for teachers to help their students with ADHD be successful in school, from routines that provide structure to showing students how to keep daily assignment journals. Included: 20 tips for teachers from the American Academy of Pediatrics and CHADD.

All kids in school fidget in their seats and look out the windows from time to time. Sometimes elementary students get out of their seats and walk around for a few minutes, or sometimes they have trouble getting their work finished. Those are normal behaviors. Most of us did those things in school when we were children. Generally, children need only a gentle nudge to get back to work. But with children who have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), teachers need to understand how that disability interferes with their ability to learn and stay on task.

### TEACHERS MAKE ADIFFERENCE

The [American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry](#) (AACAP) estimates that *all* teachers have in their classrooms at least one child with ADHD.

Teachers can help children with ADHD become successful in school, said Beth Kaplanek, volunteer president of the board of directors for [Children and Adults With Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder](#) (CHADD). "Teachers can make all the difference with how a child feels about [himself or herself]," she said.

Kaplanek recalls how her son Chris, now 18 years old, struggled in school because of ADHD and learning disabilities. She credits a special teacher for helping her son believe he could achieve in school. "She was the most caring teacher, and she would point out his successes whenever she could. The best thing a teacher can do is to look for the small milestones with kids with ADHD."

### 20 TIPS TO TEACH KIDS WHO HAVE ADHD

When teachers understand the struggle of a student with ADHD, they can better help that student in the classroom. Because children with ADHD do better when their lives are ordered and predictable, the most important things teachers can do for those children is establish a calm, structured classroom environment with clear and consistent

### What Educators Should Know About ADHD and the Law

Under the federal [Individuals With Disabilities Education Act](#) (IDEA), schools must provide an appropriate education for all children, including those diagnosed with ADHD. Federal law also has specific regulations about discipline of students with ADHD. Schools and teachers must assess an ADHD child's troubling behavior and develop positive interventions to address the behavior. Educators must determine whether the behavior is a manifestation of the child's disorder.

In [Running on Ritalin: A Physician Reflects on Children, Society and Performance in a Pill](#), Lawrence Diller wrote that "schools must develop a plan to address a child's behavior problems." If schools don't comply, they may face legal costs and even civil damages, he warns.

Under federal law, schools can remove a child for up to ten school days at a time for violations of school rules as long as there is not a pattern of removals. Schools cannot give a child with a disability a longer suspension or expel the student for behavior that

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environment with clear and consistent rules and regular classroom routines.

CHADD and the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) offer suggestions on what teachers can do in the classroom to help students who have ADHD:

- Display classroom rules. **Classroom rules must be very clear and concise.**
- Provide clear and concise instructions for academic assignments.
- Break complex instructions into small parts.
- Show students how to use an assignment book to keep track of their homework and daily assignments.
- Post a daily schedule and homework assignments in the same place each day. Tape a copy on the child's desk.
- Plan academic subjects for the morning hours.
- Provide regular and frequent breaks.
- Seat the child away from distractions and next to students who will be positive role models.
- Form small group settings when possible. Children with ADHD can become easily distracted in large groups.
- Find a quiet spot in the classroom (such as a place in the back of the room) where students can go to do their work away from distractions.
- Train the student with ADHD to recognize "begin work" cues.
- Establish a secret signal with the child to use as a reminder when he or she is off task.
- Help the child with transitions between other classes and activities by providing clear directions and cues, such as a five-minute warning before the transition.
- Assign tutors to help children with ADHD stay on task. Tutors can help them get more work done in less time and provide constant reinforcement.
- Focus on a specific behavior you wish to improve and reinforce it. Teachers can reinforce target behaviors by paying attention to the behavior, praising the child, and awarding jobs and extra free time.
- Offer more positive reinforcements than negative consequences.
- Explain to the student what to do to avoid negative consequences.
- Reward target behaviors immediately and continuously.
- Use negative consequences only after a positive reinforcement program has enough time to become effective.
- Deliver negative consequences in a firm, business-like way without emotion, lectures, or long-winded explanations.

is a manifestation of his or her disability. If that child is suspended or expelled, the school must continue services for the children.

Schools and teachers do not have to be subject to dangerous behavior, however. In the event a child brings a gun to school, schools do have the authority to remove the child. Schools may also request a hearing officer to remove a child for up to 45 days if keeping the child in his or her current placement is substantially likely to result in injury to the child or to others.

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### Education World Explores ADHD In a Five-Part Series

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder has been the subject of countless investigations, seminars, and individual education plans (IEPs). Education World published a five-part series that explores ADHD, research and treatments, and the controversy that surrounds it.

- \* [ADHD: What Is It?](#)
- \* [Statistics Confirm Rise in Childhood ADHD and Medication Use](#)
- \* [Is Medication the Best ADHD Treatment?](#)
- \* [How Can Teachers Help Students With ADHD?](#)
- \* [Dramatic Rise in ADHD Sparks Controversy](#)

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