

Trends is published regularly throughout the school year by **Cornerstone Day School** as a service to New Jersey school professionals. Each issue highlights one important topic with practical applications for those working with students with emotional and behavioral problems.

TRENDS



"Integrating state of the art psychiatric treatment and outstanding academics within a dynamic school environment."

"The National Resource Center on ADHD defines the disorder as "A neuro-behavioral disorder characterized by differences in brain structure and function that affect behavior, thoughts and emotions"."

References:

- Blumberg, R. (2012) Lecture notes, Educational Psychology, The College of New Jersey.
- CHADD, The National Resource Center on ADHD, chadd.org

Students with ADHD: What educators need to know and do to help them succeed

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is the most common neurobehavioral disorder of childhood. It is among the most prevalent chronic health conditions affecting school age children, affecting approximately 5% of students. ADHD is an umbrella term describing individuals who experience problems with inattention, impulsivity and/or hyperactivity. ADHD is understood to be a neurologically based condition caused by differences in brain structure (particularly the frontal lobes), neurochemistry or chemical imbalances, brain function, or some combination of these. Some of the observable characteristics of ADHD are described below:

Inattention

- Fails to finish things she starts
- Often seems not to listen
- Doesn't remember directions
- Easily distracted
- Difficulty concentrating on work that requires sustained attention
- Difficulty sticking to a play activity

Impulsivity

- Often acts before thinking
- Shifts excessively from one activity to another
- Difficulty organizing work
- Needs lots of supervision
- Frequently calls out in class
- Difficulty waiting and taking turns
- Difficulty with transitions!

Hyperactivity

- Difficulty sitting still, fidgets excessively
- Facial grimacing
- Talks excessively
- Won't stay in seat
- Moves excessively during sleep
- Always on the go – acts as if driven

The Executive of the Brain

The frontal lobes are the area of a child's developing brain believed to be responsible for "executive functions" including inhibiting behavior, directing and sustaining attention, and coordinating complex behaviors. The frontal lobes are not fully developed until a person is about 25 years old, and one theory suggests that this area of the brain is slower to develop in individuals diagnosed with ADHD.

Children and youth with ADHD have difficulty with many if not all executive functions. These difficulties include response inhibition: the capacity to think before you act; working memory: ability to draw on past learning to apply in the present, or project into the future; and self-regulation of affect: ability to manage emotions to achieve goals, complete tasks or control behavior.

Evidence-Based strategies to improve social, academic and classroom behavior:

Improve Social Behaviors

- Provide direct instruction in social behaviors (turn taking, conversation, sharing)
- Conduct a Functional Behavioral Assessment – to gain understanding of function of problem behaviors
- Promote self management – goal setting, monitoring, and reinforcement
- Provide peer support – cooperative learning activities, use peer tutors/mentors

Promote better academic work

- Define goals and provide examples
- Provide a rationale for the assignment
- Provide clear, concise, sequential instructions, orally and in print
- Have student review the assignment
- List all materials needed
- State specifically how much time is allowed
- Explain how assignments will be evaluated, provide a checklist of items to be included, rubrics for grading
- Check work often and provide feedback

Classroom Management

- Reward more than you punish
- Have a comprehensive behavior support plan
- Positive classroom rules
- Frequent feedback – reinforce appropriate behaviors
- Proximity control
- Avoid drawing attention to the student's behavior- redirect
- Conceal your frustration
- Explain why behavior is inappropriate
- Teach alternative behaviors
- Warn students of transitions