



"Specialist Care for Every Child"

Child and Adolescent Clinic

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Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

Working with Your Child's School

Why is My Child having Trouble in School?

It is very common for children with ADHD to have difficulties in school. These problems can occur for several reasons:

- **Distractibility and hyperactivity** – These symptoms of ADHD make it hard for children to pay attention or stay focused on their work, even though they may be capable learners and bright enough to understand the material.
- **Organizing** themselves can be hard. Breaking an assignment into smaller steps and staying on a schedule can help.
- **Self-control difficulty** can get kids into trouble with their peers and/or teachers.
- **Learning Disability** is common in children with ADHD. Schools usually define a learning disability as the difference between a child's IQ score and his/her performance on achievement tests. A child with a learning disability has difficulty understanding information he/she sees or hears or trouble putting together information from different parts of the brain.
- **Takes longer to learn material** for kids with ADHD and may require more repetition.
- **Inconsistency** - Children with ADHD often show inconsistency in their work because of their ADHD; one day they may know information and the next day they cannot seem to remember it.

Common School Performance Difficulties Associated with ADHD

- Poor organization and study skills.
- Weaknesses in written language/writing skills.
- Very little or inconsistent amount of school work done (both in-class assignments and homework).
- Behavior that interferes with learning and relationships.
- Immature social skills.

How Can I Help?

There are many ways a parent can help their child's school experience, including:

- **Spending time** in the classroom and observing your child's behavior.
- **Talking with your child's teacher** to identify where your child is having the most problems.
- **Make a Plan** with your child's teacher on how you will address these problems and what home and school strategies will help your child be successful at learning and completing work.
- **Acknowledge the extra efforts your child's teacher** may have to make to help your child.
- **Read all you can about ADHD** and share it with your child's teacher and other school officials.
- **Find out about tutoring options** through your child's school or local community groups. Children with ADHD may take longer to learn compared with other children, even though they are just as smart. Tutoring may help your child master new materials.
- **Make sure your child actually has mastered** new material presented so that he or she does not get behind in school.
- **Acknowledge how much harder** it is for your child to get organized, stay on task, complete assignments, and learn material compared with other children. Help your child to expend his or her excess physical energy in ways that are "okay" at home and in the classroom.
- **Praise your child** and reward him or her for a job well done immediately after completing tasks or homework.
- **Join a support group** for parents of children with ADHD or learning disabilities. Other parents may help you with ideas to help your child.

Are there other school programs to help my child?

Check if your school has an education process to help teachers with students who have learning or behavioral problems.

The process differs in various school districts and even among different schools in the same district. Some of the names this process may go by include:

- Student Study Team (SST)
- Instructional Support Team (IST)
- Pupil Assistance Team (PAT)
- Student Intervention Team (SIT)
- Teacher Assistance Team (TAT)

Ask for a meeting - Parents should request a team meeting to discuss concerns about their child and create a plan of action to address their child's needs.

Members of the team may include:

- Child
- Parents
- Child's teacher
- A mentor teacher or other teachers
- Principal
- School nurse
- Resource specialist
- Speech and Language Specialist
- Counselor or Psychologist

Team members meet to discuss:

- Child's strengths and weaknesses
- Child's progress in his or her current placement
- Types of problems the child is having

Plan of Action will be developed by the team members that documents:

- The steps that will help the child make changes
- The timeline for the changes to take place
- The school staff responsible for implementation of the team's recommendations
- A plan to monitor the child's progress

A follow-up meeting should be scheduled within 4 to 6 weeks to see if the team's steps are actually helping the child and change the plan if needed.

Remember...just like you, the school staff want the best for your child and can be a great help when you work as a team!