

TeachADHD Table 1-1: Manifestation of ADHD Symptoms in the Classroom

Reference

Tannock, R., Hum, M., Masellis, M., et al. (2000). Teacher Telephone Interview Basic Training Manual © 2000. Toronto: Unpublished Manuscript, The Hospital for Sick Children, Department of Psychiatry, Toronto, Canada

Inattentive symptoms specified by DSM-IV	Child stands out from peers in behaviours like the following
Distracted very easily	Constantly looking around, head on a swivel, watching what others are doing Pulled away from task at hand by other events or noises going on in-class, in the hallway, outside the window
Difficulty concentrating on tasks for a reasonable length of time	Starts on an assignment but then loses focus May look day-dreamy or lost in thought and needs prompt to get back to work Stares into space, at others, or at materials, but unfocused and does not get self back on task
Difficulty paying close attention to detail (often makes careless mistakes)	Rarely includes required details, such as name and date Rarely checks, edits, or proofreads own work before handing it in
Problems following instructions and completing activities	May leave things half done, rush through work and not have followed instructions, or need constant supervision to continue and complete work
Difficulty keeping track of their personal belongings and materials	Constantly looking for materials (such as pencils, books, or personal belongings) Doesn't get started on work because he or she can't find needed materials: "Where's my..."
Struggles to remember routines and organize tasks, activities and things required for school (for example, writing assignments in homework book)	Forgets to jot assignments down in agenda book and forgets to hand in homework Has materials but they are disorganized Has difficulty completing independent projects with multiple steps
Difficulty getting started on activities, particularly those that are challenging	Engages in active avoidance (for example, does something else, wanders around) May need active supervision or prompting to get started
Difficulty organizing work and leisure activities	Coat-hooks, cubby-holes, locker, desk, and backpack in constant disarray; materials spilling out everywhere Papers misfiled or simply pushed into bag or other container Toys, sports equipment, and other leisure materials mixed with clothes and school work
Does not seem to be listening when spoken to directly	Has difficulty keeping focused on the conversation May be able to repeat none or only some of the instructions just given in direct face-to-face conversation

How Executive Function Weaknesses May Manifest in the Classroom

From: Tannock, R., Hum, M., Masellis, M., et al. (2000). Teacher Telephone Interview Basic Training Manual © 2000. Toronto: Unpublished Manuscript, The Hospital for Sick Children, Department of Psychiatry, Toronto, Canada – Section Rethinking ADHD from a Cognitive Perspective

Children may have difficulty with:

- identifying the problem or knowing what the finished product of a task should look like
- planning, executing, and monitoring projects or assignments
- holding directions in mind, especially if the directions are complex or multi-step
- multi-tasking (trying to organize and complete several tasks within a specific time frame)
- resisting or delaying impulses (for example, tendency to blurt out answers rather than resisting the impulse and putting up hand)
- getting started on assignments (that is, difficulty with initiation) despite interest in the work
- setting goals and carrying out steps to achieve goals
- monitoring school work (for example, checking for errors)
- monitoring how their actions affect others in a social context

Educational Implications of Executive Function Weaknesses

- In order to acquire and exhibit self-regulatory behaviours (for example, the ability to plan, monitor school assignments, set goals, and evaluate progress), students may require direct instruction, coaching, and instructional supports.
- Tasks should be analyzed (for example, for task complexity, novelty, number of steps, types of skills required, familiar vs. unfamiliar context) to help teachers understand where students may need support and targeted instruction.
- Executive function weaknesses can occur despite the student exhibiting good ability in specific domains of functioning (that is, achievement in the normal range on standardized tests of reading and/or mathematics). Thus, these executive function difficulties should not be considered to reflect laziness or unmotivated behaviour on the part of the student.

Executive function weaknesses may hinder the student's ability to perform novel and/or complex tasks independently. Therefore, instruction that identifies critical components and action sequences can help students learn "how to learn" and facilitate their ability to perform complex academic tasks (for example, reading comprehension, written composition).

References

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