

Attention-Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

A resource for educators

Mate Takawhiti Takarepa Aro (ADHD)

He rauemi mā te kaiwhakaako



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Introduction

This booklet examines how ADHD can influence learning and provides strategies teachers can use in the classroom. It examines key areas where students with ADHD may need support and features some whole class strategies that may benefit all students, particularly those with ADHD.

This booklet focuses on supporting you where specialist assistance may not be available, but you are searching for ways to adapt your classroom programme to meet the diverse needs of your students.

The strategies outlined in this booklet will be most effective when used in the context of good planning, knowing your students and what makes each of them unique, setting goals, and regular inquiry into what works and what doesn't.

If you need more intensive, specialist support, look into a referral to a Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour (RTLb) or to your local Ministry of Education district office.

Helpful link

Visit the Inclusive Education Online Knowledge Centre where you will find a more indepth guide on ADHD, as well as videos and links to student and teacher experiences.

<http://inclusive.tki.org.nz>

ADHD – what is it?

ADHD is a neurological condition that affects the way the brain receives, processes and responds to information. It can cause inattention, hyperactivity and a sense of being overwhelmed by sensory information.

There are three subtypes of ADHD:

- ▶ the inattentive type (formerly called ADD), characterised by inattention to detail, not listening when spoken to and being slow to process information
- ▶ the hyperactive-impulsive type, characterised by moving and fidgeting, talking nonstop and acting without thinking through the consequences
- ▶ the combined type, featuring some or all of the inattentive and hyperactive-impulsive characteristics.

Lisa is quiet and never misses a day at school. She's also often late and rarely has the books or right equipment she needs to learn. At lunchtime, she wanders between social groups, without engaging in a particular group activity. Teachers note she seems not to listen when spoken to, often loses things and struggles to stay focused and attentive.

How ADHD can influence learning

Every situation and every student is different. Their experiences will vary, depending on the nature of their disability, any associated disability, their family setting and circumstances and individual factors such as age and personality.

Students with ADHD can find challenging to:

- ▶ settle into class and stay on track
- ▶ grasp and retain important information
- ▶ regulate emotions, make friends and socialise.

The strengths of students with ADHD can include:

- ▶ persistence and energy
- ▶ creativity, enterprise and willingness to take risks
- ▶ leadership
- ▶ empathy and sensitivity
- ▶ good sense of humour.

“Up to 70 percent of students with ADHD also have ASD, which can go undiagnosed, yet result in students having additional sensory and emotional needs.”

– spokesperson, The ADD Assessment and Family Support Centre

Teaching students with ADHD – a framework

There is extensive well-documented evidence about the teaching approaches that consistently have a positive impact on learning.

The evidence says all students need teachers who:

- ▶ create supportive learning environments
- ▶ encourage reflective thought and action
- ▶ enhance the relevance of new learning
- ▶ facilitate shared learning
- ▶ make connections to prior learning and experience
- ▶ provide sufficient opportunities to learn
- ▶ inquire into the teaching-learning relationship.

See *The New Zealand Curriculum*, pg 34.

Using the key competencies to guide teaching

The New Zealand Curriculum identifies the key competencies students need to live, learn, work and contribute as active members of their communities.

These key competencies are relevant to all students and all learning areas.

They include:

- ▶ thinking
- ▶ using language, symbols and texts
- ▶ managing self
- ▶ relating to others
- ▶ participating and contributing.

Cade is 10 and has ADHD. He enjoys school and responds well to praise and positive reinforcement. He likes to be liked and loves to socialise, but struggles to take turns or wait to join a conversation. He also needs to hear instructions several times and is easily distracted by others.

The New Zealand Curriculum key competencies

Teaching support

Thinking

Encourage students with ADHD to use tools such as mind mapping that will help them better understand, organise and play with ideas. Allow them to recount and summarise their experiences and to predict, question and analyse in different ways – through role playing and by using visual and oral symbols and texts, for example. Support students with ADHD by breaking down new information into chunks and making the connection between ideas and concepts clear. Make sequencing explicit too. Students may benefit from having information presented in non-written formats such as pictures, video clips and graphics.

Relating to others

Take advantage of possible strengths in leadership, empathy and humour and creativity. Students with ADHD may find it easier to relate to and interact with their peers by taking part in group activities that are hands on and practical or that involve high levels of spontaneity and physical activity.

The New Zealand Curriculum key competencies

Teaching support

Using language, symbols, and texts

Present new information in a range of ways, for example, by video, through role playing, print materials and interactive media to develop their understanding of the new information and to expand their knowledge of the language, symbols and texts that make up the new information.

Managing self

Students with ADHD have the persistence and energy to succeed. Give students tools that support concentration and attention, for example, something to fiddle with in class and your permission to move about.

Participating and contributing

Introduce opportunities into the classroom that build on the strengths and interests of students with ADHD. Students with ADHD may do well in performance, creative tasks, leadership, music and art. Students with ADHD may rely on physical movement and activity to help them focus and retain attention and understand and take part and respond to what is going on in the classroom.

Strategies for teaching students with ADHD

The following strategies will be most effective when used in the context of good planning, knowing your students and what makes each of them unique, setting goals and regular inquiry into what works and what doesn't.

| CHALLENGE | |
|---|--|
| Settling into class and staying on track | Feeling calm, organised and ready to focus is an essential part of learning. Students with ADHD may find it challenging to get started on their school work, stay alert and finish what they have started. |

STRATEGIES

Classroom adaptations

The following changes in the classroom will give students the support needed to maintain their focus, effort and persistence.

- ▶ Give extra attention to students with ADHD at the beginning of class to get them interested and motivated (some students will like public acknowledgement, others will prefer a quiet pat on the back or a gesture that doesn't draw attention to or embarrass them).

- ▶ Make the class stimulating but not too distracting, for example, seat students with ADHD away from high-traffic, distracting areas of the class.
- ▶ Provide students with a clear structure for each day, lesson and tasks. Break the school day into broad units of time that will appear more manageable.
- ▶ Use visual tools that identify what is happening when and what will be achieved throughout the day or class, for example, a daily organiser or planner for the board.
- ▶ Ask students to develop 'things to do' checklist each day.
- ▶ Verbally prompt students to settle in – start 10 minutes before class and repeat your message every few minutes as a reminder.
- ▶ Reduce class noise as you get started. A quiet classroom is a less distracting environment.
- ▶ Keep your verbal instructions simple and clear – and slow down your speech.
- ▶ If a student hasn't started a task, gain their attention and use visual cues and gestures such as pointing to where the student should be. Use eye contact and get down to their level to engage with them – tell the student simply what is required and model what is expected if necessary.
- ▶ Set achievable goals. Set a small number of examples to be completed initially and then gradually increase them to increase motivation for learning.
- ▶ Call attention to due dates and task expectations. Write them down or put them in a place where they can be seen easily.
- ▶ Note key times for maintaining attention, for example, around a quarter of the way through a task may be a good time to check understanding, provide teaching or direction. About three quarters of the way through reinforcement may need to be increased to maintain focus.
- ▶ Allow fewer written tasks and more opportunity to present ideas visually or orally.
- ▶ Improve students' awareness of time by having a clock in class, verbalising the passing of time (for example, by saying: 'it's been 10 minutes since you started, you have five minutes to go') and practising time estimation (for example, by asking a student to guess and write down how long their homework will take, then comparing that to the actual time it took).

- ▶ Follow up general classroom or group instructions with a check of understanding or one-on-one instruction.
- ▶ Consistently and clearly reinforce the class rules and boundaries, for example, write them down, verbalise them and regularly restate what is acceptable and not acceptable.
- ▶ Develop some private cues with students that will signal such things as when they need to refocus or take some time out from the task or situation.
- ▶ Allocate space for students to move about in or sort through resources and get organised.
- ▶ Avoid giving homework at the end of the school day when students are tired and ready to go home.
- ▶ Praise students who settle into class and maintain focus – your praise will help them stay on task and persevere.

Breaks, physical exercise and movement

Some students with ADHD may seem restless and jiggle a lot. This can make it difficult to settle down and learn. Regular breaks can have a positive effect.

Studies show giving students permission to take off their shoes and wiggle their toes during times of high anxiety such as test time can reduce anxiety by 37 percent.

Other strategies include:

- ▶ change the pace of your lessons, use physical activity and opportunities to move around, for example, allow for regular short breaks during class, such as to fill water bottles or move desks
- ▶ allow access to something tactile to fiddle with for focus and concentration, for example, pipe cleaners
- ▶ adapt chairs for seated movement, for example, introduce a swiss ball or tie recycled pantyhose to the front two legs for students to bounce their feet on
- ▶ use seated cushions or air-filled cushions for side-to-side movement on chairs and standing desks for standing movement.

| CHALLENGE | |
|---|---|
| Grasping and retaining important information | Students with ADHD may have difficulty with working memory and recall (briefly holding facts in their heads and manipulating, sequencing, organising and writing down factual information). Complex problem-solving and taking a concept apart, analysing it and putting it back together may be difficult too. |

STRATEGIES

Classroom adaptations

Adapting the classroom programme using the following strategies will give students the support needed to grasp and retain information more effectively.

- ▶ Set priorities for action – provide a sequence of actions or steps to help task engagement and completion. Monitor and provide feedback along the way.
- ▶ Break down larger or longer tasks into smaller manageable chunks.
- ▶ Use buddies, peer tutoring and cooperative learning to reinforce information, problem solve and collaborate and present information.
- ▶ Give extra time for students to process information. Check understanding by asking: ‘What do you have to do now?’ (instead of: ‘Do you understand?’)
- ▶ Help consolidate learning through repetition and linking to life experience.

- ▶ Follow up general classroom or group instructions by checking understanding. Encourage a student to talk through a task to help them understand what is required and the sequence of actions they need to take.
- ▶ Provide lists of the main ideas in a lesson (or flow charts, diagrams or a map of the concepts) to guide and reinforce ideas.
- ▶ Cue key points in information by underlining, highlighting and pointing. Use post-it notes to mark relevant sections in text or handouts.
- ▶ Suggest students make reference aids that feature common maths, writing or reading facts that they can refer back to throughout the day (consider developing into classroom posters).
- ▶ Encourage creative thinking with graphic organising software and tools such as mind mapping to make abstract ideas concrete, visually organise ideas and remember key ideas.
- ▶ Use colour coding to differentiate subjects from one another, for example, red for maths, green for reading. Use these same colours when communicating about a subject on the board, on paper and to organise the classroom filing systems.
- ▶ Incorporate hands on, practical ways to learn about topics such as science and technology. Take the opportunity to use these lessons to build on the particular strengths of students with ADHD and to praise their achievements.

Research suggests working memory stays active for 10 to 20 minutes for demanding tasks. Teaching in 10 minute blocks may work well for students with ADHD and their peers.

| CHALLENGE | |
|--|---|
| Regulate emotions, make friends and socialise | Students with ADHD may find it challenging to regulate their emotions or stop and think before they act or speak. At times, they may talk excessively, impulsively blurt out in class, talk back and get into fights at school. |

STRATEGIES

Positive identity

These strategies will give students the opportunity to develop a positive sense of self and regulate their emotions more effectively.

- ▶ Greet each student by their name every day as a way to build a rapport.
- ▶ Encourage students with ADHD to feel more positive and less stressed in social situations by using warmth, patience and good humour (together with consistency and firmness) when you talk and communicate with them.
- ▶ Give a couple of students extra attention each day – keep in mind some students like public praise, while others are embarrassed by it and prefer a pat on the back or a quiet comment.
- ▶ In social sciences, look into famous people with ADHD (for example, musician Justin Timberlake, businessman Sir Richard Branson or chef Jamie Oliver) and focus on their strengths, abilities and achievements.

- ▶ Identify what a student is good at, for example, creativity and use it as the basis of a group activity the student can lead or contribute to.
- ▶ Provide opportunities to reframe ADHD, for example, someone bossy could see themselves as having leadership potential, while someone who is hyperactive could see themselves as energetic.
- ▶ Respond to and communicate positively by phrasing your instructions and comments in a positive way, for example, 'You're working really hard, you have the skill it takes to do this' or 'Read it to me. Does it sound right to you?'
- ▶ Avoid embarrassment by dealing with any issue in private and using 'I' messages such as 'I am surprised you didn't hand in your assignment. That's not like you. Is there a problem? What is going on?'
- ▶ Praise students for meeting set goals for behaviour – pointing out what has been done correctly can improve behaviour by 80 percent.

Classroom adaptations

Other classroom strategies to encourage students to make friends, regulate their behaviour and socialise include:

- ▶ set up a buddy system where classmates take turns letting each other know what is happening, what page they're on and when there is a change
- ▶ support students to manage unstructured times in the day such as break times or lunchtimes (these times can be challenging – students have to organise their time, regulate their emotions and interact socially)
- ▶ cue the transition between lessons to help manage anxiety and keep behaviour on a more even keel.

Skill development

Some students will need to learn the skills required to make friends, socialise and regulate their emotions. The following strategies may help.

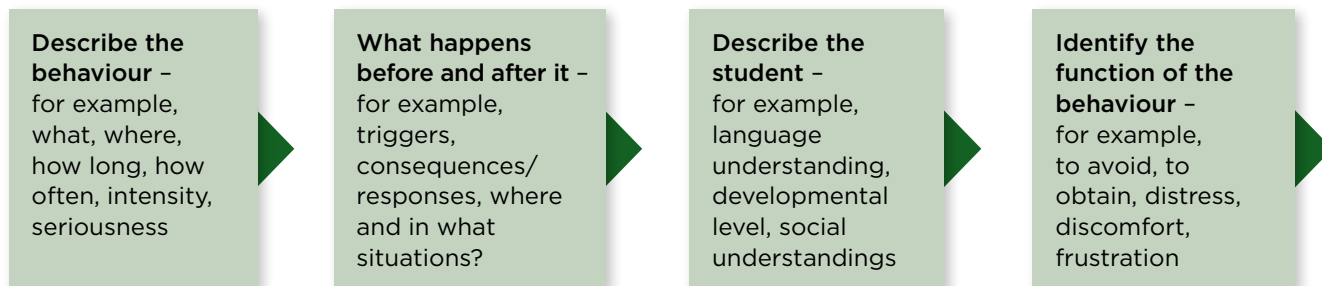
- ▶ Use role playing and other resources to support development of positive behaviour, healthy relationships and conflict management.
- ▶ Provide ways to practise what to say and do in different social situations, for example, how to join in rather than cut across someone during a game or in conversation.
- ▶ Use strategies such as prompting, cueing or giving forced alternatives to develop students' knowledge of social language. For example, by asking: 'Was your friend happy or sad to see you?'
- ▶ Ask your school's learning support coordinator or school counsellor to run a small group social skills class on topics such as coping with emotions or asking for help.
- ▶ Discuss rules of conversation, for example, maintaining personal space between people, using eye contact and facial expressions, opening and closing conversations and taking turns.
- ▶ Set up a buddy system where classmates take turns letting each other know what is happening in class and how to respond to the situation.

Behaviour

All behaviours communicate something. Students are trying to communicate messages important to them, in the way they know how. The key is to understand and respond to the function (the why) of the behaviour, rather than responding solely to the behaviour itself. This is what we call, Functional Behavioural Assessment. Students might be trying to avoid or obtain something. They might be trying to communicate distress, discomfort, pain or frustration.

Understanding behaviour – a framework

This diagram is a summary of the framework of Functional Behavioural Assessment. You can find more indepth information about this on the US website, Positive Behavioural Interventions and Support, www.pbis.org/resource/887



STRATEGIES

The following behaviour strategies draw on the framework for understanding behaviour. They provide ways to build positive support and interaction, teach appropriate skills and manage difficult times.

Building positive support and interaction

- ▶ Understand and remove or minimise things that can cause distress.
- ▶ Catch the student doing the right thing early on in the school day or class period. Acknowledge specific achievements in terms of tasks as well as efforts, attention to tasks and in-class interactions. Do it immediately, discretely and often, using verbal acknowledgement as well as gestures and/or visual feedback.
- ▶ Aim for a ratio of 3:1 positive acknowledgements or reinforcements for appropriate actions.
- ▶ Acknowledge the student at the beginning of each day and after every long break as this will help them settle into class activities.
- ▶ Stand in close proximity to the student as a way of moderating off-task activities.
- ▶ Consider short term contracts to achieve learning goals and task expectations. Negotiate these with the student rather than impose them. Work initially on achieving success within a short time frame and then lead to something the student really wants to do. Make rewards and reinforcement immediate and regular at first and relevant to the student.
- ▶ Give choice within set alternatives, starting with one out of two possible choices.
- ▶ Develop some cues individually with the student that will signal such things as when they need to refocus or take a break from a task or situation.

Teaching appropriate skills

Essential skills to be developed include:

- ▶ general constructive skills, such as organisation, daily living, essential learning areas and communication
- ▶ alternative and appropriate ways to achieve goals such as joining in skills rather than cutting across others, skills to let others know that a situation is difficult
- ▶ skills that help the student relate to others and to manage themselves such as interpersonal, friendship and conflict resolution skills
- ▶ coping skills such as managing anger, problem-solving, how to ask for help and how to find a safe place or person
- ▶ fun skills such as games and ways to have fun which will also enhance their opportunities to relate to others positively.

Medicine management

Some students with ADHD will take medicine and have an individualised medication plan that sets out when and how much medicine they may take at school. Make sure you read your student's plan and keep it handy. Know your role in helping the student take their medicine.

For example, will you need to prompt them to take their medicine? If so, how and when will you do that? Where will it be stored safely? Is there a private place where students can go to take their medicine?

Managing difficult times

Appropriate techniques are non-aversive and rely on knowing your student well so that you can avoid or avert escalation of the behaviour.

They acknowledge the student's need, provide some boundaries, ensure the student gets support when they need it, help the student manage their actions to a point when they can be more receptive.

Make changes around the things that set off such reactions

- ▶ Remove objects that may distract the student.
- ▶ Change the time, location or duration of activities, if these factors are viewed as influencing difficult behaviour.
- ▶ Redirect the student to another activity they enjoy.
- ▶ Remove unnecessary demands or requests.
- ▶ Change where the student sits.

- ▶ Avoid statements and actions you know the student will react to.
- ▶ If the student is taking medication, check that it has been given/taken when it is required.

Interrupt the build-up

- ▶ Move closer or move away as appropriate, stand side-on rather than face-on.
- ▶ Introduce humour.
- ▶ Give instructions that the student is more likely to follow.
- ▶ Remind them of any self-management strategies they know.
- ▶ Cue them to take a break or to monitor and recognise the beginning of a build-up.
- ▶ Facilitate relaxation.
- ▶ If the student is taking medication, check (in private) if medication was taken.

Student examples

Primary school

Lasi is a friendly, quiet seven-year-old with ADHD. Her mum and dad say it took them a long time to pick up her disability because she is not hyperactive. Instead she just seems to be in a dream world most of the time.

To get Lasi to follow an instruction, Lasi's parents have to repeat it a dozen times before their message gets through. Getting ready for school can be a struggle for Lasi too – from waking up on time through to completing all the things she needs to do before she jumps in the car. Brushing teeth. Getting dressed. Gathering up her books for the day. Remembering her swimming togs. She needs a lot of prompting, reminding and focus to do them all.

So far, Lasi is enjoying school. She has made some good friends and has recently developed a love of music (pop music and Samoan cultural songs). Her teacher has found Lasi picks up the lyrics of her favourite songs quite easily, especially when the songs are played aloud and she can get up and dance as well.

Overall, however, Lasi doesn't find learning easy. She is slow to process information and struggles to learn new things. She rarely completes her homework, or if she does, she often forgets to bring it to school. Lasi likes to learn things by doing – her recent experience learning language through singing and movement is a good example.

Lasi the student

- ▶ She needs good instructions from you to follow and retain what you say. Explain how you will give her instructions in the classroom, for example, say: 'I will use your name at the start of the sentence and then tell you what I want you to do. I will then get you to tell me what you have to do.'
- ▶ Lasi responds well to teachers who are patient with her when they give instructions and who can identify and remove environmental factors that stop her from engaging.
- ▶ Teach routine and organisation to everyone in your class. Create a diagram or picture showing students your classroom routines. Develop posters of regular classroom instructions for the wall.
- ▶ Praise Lasi (and all your students) when she follows your routines.
- ▶ Lasi's family are very motivated to help and support her learning – talk to Lasi's parents about what they can do at home to help her get organised, for example, developing a pictorial checklist of what she needs to do before school and another showing what she needs in her school bag.

Lasi's learning environment

- ▶ Use pictorial checklists of familiar routines the whole class need to follow to help Lasi and her peers focus, stay organised and learn how to self manage.
- ▶ Talk to your students about the things they find distracting, for example, noise, flickering lights. Discuss what you can all do to minimise these distractions.
- ▶ Think about creating different zones in your classroom, for example, a quiet zone for reading and a more active place that you could stand up to do some of your work.
- ▶ Set up a system with other teachers to send Lasi on an errand when she needs to refocus.
- ▶ Can you use more technology in your lessons to help Lasi engage? For example, e-books that can be read out loud and that highlight the word being spoken at the same time.

Teaching Lasi

- ▶ **English (reading)** – Engage the class and Lasi with materials that they relate to where possible. Find the best time of day for her to engage with reading. Consider using the Reading Together programme in your school (check out Te Kete Ipurangi for more information).
- ▶ **English (writing)** – Distinguish between the technical aspects of writing and recording ideas. Develop brainstorming strategies to help all your students (as well as Lasi) capture their ideas and plan for writing.
- ▶ **Mathematics** – Use concrete examples in your lessons wherever possible. Identify the steps in a problem-solving sequence and help your students to break the problems down into each step.
- ▶ **Social sciences** – Engage Lasi and all your students in the world around them. Consider using different ways to ‘show you know’.
- ▶ **The arts (music and movement)** – Develop positive self esteem by allowing Lasi to lead where possible. Support her to teach other students Samoan dancing and singing. Make connections with her ability to learn words quickly when singing and bring that ability into other areas of the curriculum, for example, could she make songs up about a social science to help her learn about and remember that topic.
- ▶ **Play** – Build on Lasi’s love of play to help her learn about social rules and understand what is going on. Give the class problem-solving strategies for when they are playing. Praise them for using them well and in the right context.

Secondary school

Justin is a year 11 student who has ADHD. He just made it through year nine and 10 and finds it difficult to be in the classroom. Justin is often considered to be misbehaving when he is just struggling to sit still.

His interests outside of school are rugby league (he plays for the local club) and he likes the idea of making things out of wood but hasn't finished anything yet. Justin reluctantly takes his ADHD medication before school every day.

Right now, he is working towards NCEA level one and is expected to get his numeracy credits but there is some

concern about his literacy credits. He reads fluently but finds it hard to engage with the traditional texts required for English.

Justin has a long history of poor organisation – his school work and folders are messy and he frequently complains that he has a lot of ideas but can't get them out. He also has a patchy record when it comes to teacher relationships – he has made good connections with some teachers, but not all. His science teacher from year 10 knows Justin is good at science but says Justin struggles to express his knowledge.

Justin the student

- ▶ Justin is keen to succeed, but needs support from all his teachers. Work with Justin to develop a learner profile telling his teachers about him and his learning and concentration difficulties.
- ▶ Justin has many strengths he can build on. Help him to succeed by choosing subjects that will help him when he leaves school and that harness his practical skills.
- ▶ Justin is aware of his own frustration and wants a way to manage his high frustration levels. Seek agreement with Justin's teachers that he can be late to class without fuss. Talk to him about ways to get to class on time by using the breaks between classes to re-engage for the next class. For example, having a drink or walking the long way to class may help.
- ▶ Develop a good relationship with Justin, notice the things he does well and tries hard at and acknowledge these specific achievements.
- ▶ Tell Justin's family about what he is achieving and his positive experiences at school.

Justin's learning environment

- ▶ Organisation is a particular area of difficulty for Justin – teach organisation skills specifically and relentlessly.
- ▶ Set up a system where all Justin's teachers give instructions both visually and verbally.
- ▶ Encourage Justin's teachers to ask for clarification when they communicate with him, for example, by saying: 'Tell me what your first step is? I'll come back in five minutes and discuss the next step ...'
- ▶ Think about how the school's learning management system could be used to help Justin stay on track with homework and assignments.
- ▶ Develop a whole school system to give all of Justin's teachers a common approach to teaching organisation skills (in both a practical and thinking sense).
- ▶ Trial a mentoring system for Justin to help Justin stay focussed on NCEA and gently guide him (the mentor could arrange visits to work experience and post-school providers to help Justin focus on life after school).

Teaching Justin

- ▶ **English** – Teach the class how to use graphic organisers to plan writing. Encourage brainstorming, using post it notes (step one) and sorting them into an order (step two) before writing. See if Justin would prefer to use a computer to carry out his internal assessments. Provide the class a choice of reading materials, including materials about sports (biographies) and technologies that will engage Justin.
- ▶ **Science** – Plan lessons that include movement to engage all students. Allow opportunities for students to demonstrate their understanding in ways other than writing. Use technology to video experiments or students explanations. Teach students how to plan and write science reports. Provide exemplars and templates for students to use for writing experiments.
- ▶ **Health and physical education** – Help Justin understand, identify and demonstrate what he is good at (for example, rugby league) and use his strengths to boost his self esteem. Make connections between the organisation he shows on the sports field and how he could use the same skills in other subjects, for example, in his writing.

Useful contacts and resources

addtrust@xtra.co.nz – ADD Assessment and Family Support Centre.

addnz.org.nz – ADD New Zealand Trust.

addnz.org.nz/resources/index.html – information, books and DVDs from the ADD Assessment and Family Support Centre.

aboutkidshealth.ca/En/ResourceCentres/ADHD/AtSchool/TeachingChildrenWithADHD – online resource on ADHD for teachers.

pb4l.tki.org.nz – Ministry of Education's website for Positive Behaviour for Learning.



http://inclusive.tki.org.nz – Ministry of Education's Inclusive Education Online Knowledge Centre

tki.org.nz – Ministry of Education's website for teachers.

sociallyspeaking.co.nz/resources.html – a New Zealand website with resources aimed at helping children develop social, sensory and communication skills.

suelarkey.co.nz – website of New Zealand special educationalist, Sue Larkey.



For more information

For information about services and support available to children with special education needs, visit **www.education.govt.nz** [search word special education].

For more specialist classroom, teaching and curriculum resources, visit the Te Kete Ipurangi website **www.tki.org.nz**

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How ADHD can influence learning

CHALLENGES

Will vary from student to student

- ▶ Settling down to work.
- ▶ Learning routines.
- ▶ Grasping and retaining important information.
- ▶ Being attentive and organised.
- ▶ Impulsively calling out, acting without thinking or talking excessively.

STRENGTHS

Will vary from student to student

- ▶ Persistence and energy.
- ▶ Creativity, enterprise and willingness to take risks.
- ▶ Problem-solving.
- ▶ Leadership.
- ▶ Sense of humour.
- ▶ Empathy and sensitivity.

Download
and keep as
a handy
reference

TEACHING OPPORTUNITIES

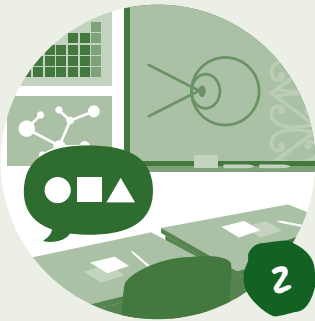


Adjust the classroom

- ▶ Redesign your classroom to make it stimulating but not too distracting.
 - ▶ Seat students away from high-traffic, distracting areas of the classroom.
 - ▶ Allow access to something tactile to fiddle with or for focus and concentration.
 - ▶ Provide opportunities to take breaks and get refreshed.
 - ▶ Establish routines, schedules, organisational habits with the class, and teach changes.
 - ▶ Write down homework instructions and give a verbal outline.
- ▶ Provide students with a clear structure for each day, lesson and tasks. Break the school day into broad units of time that will appear more manageable.
 - ▶ Use visual organisers or planners that identify what is happening when and what will be achieved throughout the day or class.
 - ▶ Ask students to develop a 'things to do' checklist each day.
 - ▶ Verbally prompt students to settle in – start 10 minutes before class and repeat your message every few minutes as a reminder.
 - ▶ Have a clock in class, verbalise the passing of time, practise time estimation.

AVOID:

- ▶ penalising students for behaviour they cannot control
- ▶ talking about medication while in class
- ▶ having students complete work during class breaks.



Present curriculum content in different ways

- ▶ Use visual and graphic resources.
- ▶ Use reference aids, classroom posters and colour-coding to teach and to emphasise key points.
- ▶ Reduce the amount of writing required and include non-writing activities (particularly for students with ADHD and dyslexia).
- ▶ Use repetition and link learning to students' experiences.
- ▶ Teach social and organisational skills.



Use technology and equipment

- ▶ Have the students use netbooks or laptops to construct and present their ideas.
- ▶ Encourage the students to use digital tools rather than handwriting.
- ▶ Encourage the use of graphic organising software and tools.
- ▶ Use cushions for side-to-side movement on chairs.
- ▶ Use standing desks for standing movement.
- ▶ Adapt chairs for seated movement.



Stimulate interest and motivation

- ▶ Support concentration, attention and organisation.
- ▶ Encourage organisation and focus with checklists and verbal prompts.
- ▶ Regularly remind students when to start or complete tasks.
- ▶ Break down complex tasks and instructions into smaller chunks, one instruction at a time.
- ▶ Slow down your rate of speech and give students time to respond.
- ▶ Allocate additional time to complete tasks.
- ▶ Help consolidate learning through repetition and linking to life experience.
- ▶ Scaffold tasks for students who do not do this for themselves for example, beginning, middle and end framework.
- ▶ Provide checklists, colour coding, sequential processes to guide/teach students to manage time, materials, processes.
- ▶ Plan for a range of 'interruption tasks', such as delivering messages.