

Widening the Circle

Celebrating Neurodiversity in Faith-based Schools

FOCUS

STRATEGY:

Understanding ADHD

We all have students who seem to have boundless energy, struggle to focus, or forget assignments. Understanding ADHD can equip us to better support these amazing learners!

What is ADHD?

Imagine your brain is like a symphony orchestra. Different sections work together to create beautiful music – processing information, controlling impulses, and staying focused. In students with ADHD, some sections might be a little louder or quieter than usual, making it harder for the orchestra to play in harmony. This can lead to challenges with focus, hyperactivity, or impulsivity. However, it's important to remember that ADHD is a spectrum, and every child experiences it differently.

The Three Subtypes of ADHD:

There are three main subtypes of ADHD, each with its own unique presentation:

- **Predominantly Inattentive Presentation:** These students might daydream a lot, have trouble following instructions, or lose track of belongings. They may appear calm, but their minds are busy elsewhere.
- **Predominantly Hyperactive-Impulsive Presentation:** These students have a lot of energy, might fidget or talk excessively, and struggle to wait their turn. They might seem restless and have difficulty sitting still for long periods.
- **Combined Presentation:** This is the most common type, where students experience symptoms from both inattentive and hyperactive-impulsive presentations.



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Differential Diagnosis: Ruling Out Other Possibilities

Before concluding a student has ADHD, it's important to consider other factors that might be causing similar symptoms, such as:

- *Anxiety*: Anxiety can manifest as difficulty focusing and fidgeting.
- *Learning Disabilities*: Some learning disabilities can mimic ADHD symptoms.
- *Vision or Hearing Issues*: Unaddressed vision or hearing problems can make it hard to focus in class.

Working Together: Creating a Supportive Classroom

If you suspect a student might have ADHD, the best course of action is to communicate with their parents and encourage them to seek a professional evaluation. In the meantime, there are many things we can do in the classroom to support students with ADHD:

- *Structure and Routines*: Clear routines and consistent expectations can help students with ADHD feel more secure.
- *Movement Breaks*: Schedule short breaks for students to move around and release energy.
- *Chunking Information*: Break down tasks and instructions into smaller, more manageable steps.
- *Visual Aids*: Use charts, diagrams, and graphic organizers to help students stay focused on key ideas.
- *Positive Reinforcement*: Catch students being successful and celebrate their efforts!

Remember:

Every student with ADHD is an individual with unique strengths and challenges. By working together with parents and professionals, we can create a supportive classroom environment where all students, including those with ADHD, can flourish and reach their full potential.

Additional Resources

- CHADD (Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder):<https://chadd.org/>
- Learning and Attention Difficulties:<https://www.understood.org/en/articles/adhd-in-children>

