Common Accommodations Available for Students with ADHD

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ADHD Accommodations and Modifications for Students

One thing we quickly become aware of as someone with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or as the parent of a child with ADHD, is that we (or them) can't learn the way other children do. Since classrooms are set up to push as many students successfully through as possible, those with special needs can often get left behind.

This doesn't have to be the case.

It is important to advocate for your child to make sure they are receiving the accommodations they are entitled to. Be ready for meetings with teachers and principals. Know what your student's IEP or 504 plan entitles them to. Don't be afraid to ask for it and teach your child to ask as they get older.

There is no better resource in a classroom than a teacher who is dynamic, understanding, and willing to work with you for your child.

What Are Common Accommodations for an ADHD Child?

All children are different, and ADHD accommodations will be tailored to them after extensive testing, but some common things can be done in the classroom that will set the ADHD student up for success. In my opinion, following these things could help all children succeed and find their voice.

- Seat student in a quiet area. Spacing desks a bit farther apart, keeping the student away from active stations in class such as near aquariums or pets, or away from high-traffic areas. Seat ADHD students close to the teacher or to students who will model good behavior.
- Be clear on expected behavior. It isn't enough to tell an ADHD child what they are not supposed to do. Let them know what they are supposed to do. Explain in detail what behaviors are expected.
- A token economy with rewards and consequences. ADHD children respond well to a token economy. If they know they can earn or lose points throughout the day and then use points for rewards, they are likely to try to earn their rewards. This can be tricky, as a reward system must be in place before attempting to correct with consequences. Due to short attention spans and impulsiveness, rewards and consequences should be administered as quickly as possible.
- Extra time. Extra time to complete assignments, as well as tests, can be a big help.
- Removal to quiet space. Allowing an ADHD child to remove themselves to a quieter location to take tests can help ensure they do their best.
- Break up assignments. Breaking assignments into smaller parts can help the student see clear steps and feel a sense of accomplishment as each step is completed.
- Assist the student in setting goals. Help the student in short-term goal setting so they can find ways to get assignments finished on time.
- Supervise writing down of homework assignments. In my student's entire time in school, I have never known her homework assignments. She never writes it down, relies on memory, and so many teachers

have been unwilling to help with this simple step.
- Provide an opportunity for seat breaks. Let the class get in a quick stretch when switching lessons. Allow the student to stand at times while they work, or give them the opportunity to run an errand.
- Encourage neatness but don't penalize a student for a messy desk.
- Acknowledge positive behavior of student as well as surrounding students. This will help reinforce acceptable behaviors.
- Keep rules and instructions clear and brief. Provide oral as well as written instructions.
- Present lessons in novel, interesting ways, and involve students on a physical level in the lesson, such as helping with visual aids or writing points on board.
- Enforce rules with visual cues.

This, of course, is not an exhaustive list, but these things are small parts of what can happen in an elementary, middle, or even high school classroom to benefit all students.

ADHD accommodations can be pretty straightforward, and although testing will provide a list of suggested accommodations for students, be prepared to add to that list when you go in to meet with administration. As long as what you are asking for is reasonable, most administrators will add and take away from the list according to a child's needs.

What About ADHD Accommodations for College Students?

What about the child that is heading off to college? And what can be done at that level to accommodate their ADHD diagnosis and help them succeed?

First, students should know what they can do for themselves.

- Choose wisely. Choose a college with reasonable accommodations, a large number of ADHD/LD specialists, and many ADHD students.
- Disclose diagnosis as early as possible to student services staff in order to request accommodations.
- Contact the school's office of disability and be familiar with the resources offered.
- Find study groups or buddies, a good location for study, an academic coach, and make appointments with professors to clarify assignments.

What can the college do for the student?

- Extended time on tests and assignments
- Testing in a separate and quiet place
- Permission to record lectures
- Assistance with writing notes
- Written instructions from professors
- A possibility of class substitution
- Reduced course load
- Priority registration with professional in disability services office

Law and rules will vary from school to school and state to state, as well as by country. Being prepared is your biggest asset. Know the laws in your area, and know what your child is entitled to receive. Some administrators are easy to work with, while others are not.

I have a friend who had to sue a local public school before they would recognize her son's IEP. Hopefully, it isn't always as drastic as that to get our children the help they need and deserve.