



Chapter 1

Why Another Book on ADHD?

As a secondary teacher, you are a powerful catalyst in the lives of the students who enter your doors. Your extraordinary impact on their success has far-reaching consequences. This book was written to equip you for this weighty responsibility by providing you with a clear understanding of your students with ADHD and how to teach them.

“Succeeding in school is one of the most therapeutic things that can happen to a teenager. In fact, school successes may often be more helpful for students struggling with ADHD than an hour of counseling a week. . . . Teachers are often the critical factor determining the success or failure for students with this condition!”¹ This statement by ADHD expert Chris Zeigler Dendy makes it very clear that it is up to the teacher to make academic success a reality for adolescents with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Secondary students who do not achieve academic success have limited postsecondary options. Teachers face a significant challenge in helping their students with ADHD find academic success at the secondary level. This book was written to give teachers the tools to meet this challenge.

Education in the Twenty-First Century: The No Child Left Behind Act and Federal Accountability

Our nation is in an unprecedented period of focus on education and educational accountability. The sweeping reform created by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) has brought to light the inequalities of education that have persisted for years in this country.

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It has been an ongoing unspoken practice to provide a below-average educational experience for students who live in poverty, for students who speak a second language, and for students with disabilities. Students with ADHD were often included in this group of students, those whom Rod Paige, former Secretary of Education, identified as the “most difficult to teach” and were regularly left behind.² These students typically did not pass classes, came up credit-deficient due to

remedial class attendance, or were unable to pass high-stakes tests—and therefore did not graduate with a diploma. Those who were identified for special education as learning disabled or having other disabilities were often provided a subpar education that did not teach grade-level standards or grade-level skills. Low expectations reigned, and the outcomes were abysmal; 70 percent of adults with learning disabilities were unemployed or underemployed,³ and the average income for working adults with learning disabilities in 1997 was \$20,000 a year.⁴

NCLB has placed a laser-like focus on these inequities and has opened a Pandora’s box of previously hidden inequities in the current systems through accountability. Under NCLB, for the first time, all states are being held accountable for the quality of the education they provide to *all* students. Each state has had to develop or adopt a standardized assessment to measure the proficiency of all students on the state’s grade-level content standards. NCLB holds the lofty goal that *all* students in each state, in each district, and in each school reach proficiency. This goal includes all students in every classroom, even those “difficult-to-teach” students in your classroom who may have ADHD or other disabilities. Discussion of NCLB often results in the rolling of eyes and the gnashing of teeth, but as former Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings stated in 2006, “What gets measured gets done.”⁵ This truth cannot be denied. Without the accountability of NCLB, there would continue to be different expectations for different student groups. Realistically, attaining the goal of 100 percent proficiency by 2014 is impossible, but the climb to meet the goal in all states has brought about profound changes in the way that teachers teach and in instructional opportunities for all students.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004

It is possible that the most pronounced change caused by NCLB has been for students with disabilities. The spotlight on the performance of these students has revealed that the educational outcomes for students with disabilities have not been held to the same standard as those for their peers. “Special education classification has too frequently been used to diminish the expectations for the students designated as eligible for such services and to minimize the responsibility of general education teachers and administrators for their progress.”⁶ The pervasiveness of lowered expectations and below-average educational opportunities has been brought to light.

The fact that, in the past, special education has existed in its own separate silos has contributed to the marginalization of special education students. In the typical approach to special education, children are not seen as students first but rather as part of a separate system in which labels have determined both the access to grade-level content and the instruction itself.

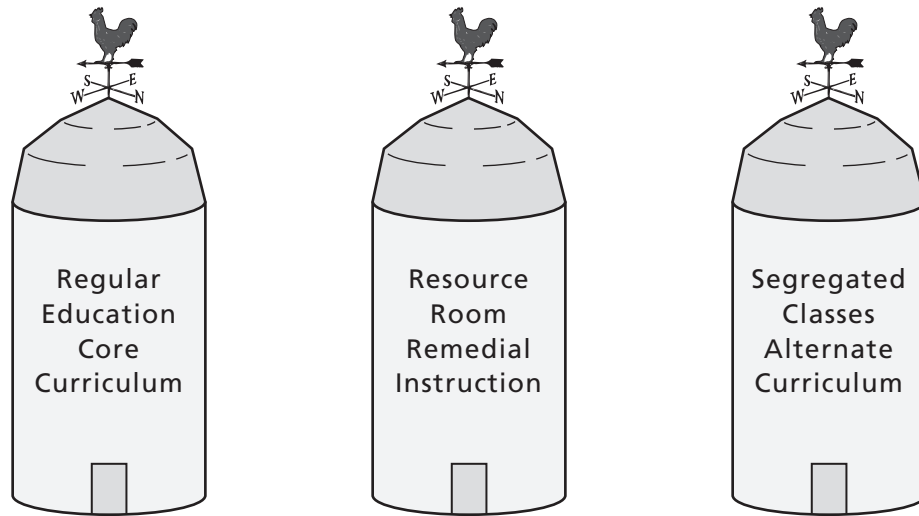
In conjunction with NCLB, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 supports the notion that students with disabilities can be proficient at grade-level standards when provided instruction in the general education curriculum. This is a far cry from the traditional special education practices of self-contained classrooms with a separate curriculum or resource rooms with remedial instruction. The combined effect of these two acts has broken down the silo mentality of separate systems and has created educational scenarios in which all teachers are responsible for all students, providing an integrated schoolwide instructional program in which all students have access to standards-aligned instruction in the general education core classroom (see Figure 1.1).

Educational equity for students with disabilities has not been an option in the past.

Students with ADHD and Special Education: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

Prior to the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1997, the only statutory option for obtaining educational support for students with ADHD was Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. IDEA 1997 allowed students with ADHD who were *significantly impaired* to qualify for special education services under the “Other Health Impaired” (OHI) federal handicapping condition category [34 CFR §300.8(c)(9)]. Most students with

Not Integrated



Integrated



Figure 1.1: Nonintegrated and Integrated Approaches to Instruction

Source: Illustration created by Fred DeRuvo.

ADHD do not qualify as having an OHI handicapping condition because the impairment is often not deemed significant enough to warrant special education services; however, instructional accommodations and adaptations provided through a Section 504 plan are considered to be *required* for the student to be academically successful.

While most students with ADHD in a typical classroom function without the intensive, specially designed academic instruction or supplementary services provided by special education under IDEA, many students are affected to the extent that they require a Section 504 plan of some sort. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination or harassment on the basis of a disability in any program receiving federal financial assistance. Therefore, public schools must comply with the nondiscrimination requirements of Section 504 to provide students with disabilities with a “free and appropriate public education” in a program designed to meet the students’ educational needs as adequately as they meet the educational needs of students without disabilities. This statute (Section 504, 34 CFR § 104) identifies an “individual with a disability,” as a person who “has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities.”

- “Major life activities” is defined as functions such as caring for one’s self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, *learning*, and working.
- “Substantially limits” describes a disability that significantly affects the *student at school*.
- “Meeting the students’ educational needs as adequately as they meet the educational needs of students without disabilities” refers to educating students in a general education classroom with the use of supplementary or related aids and services. These accommodations are identified in the student’s Section 504 plan and might include a change in the educational setting or materials or strategies that do not significantly alter the content of the curriculum or the level of expectation of a student’s performance but that *allow the student to access the general education curriculum*.

Because learning is one of the major life activities identified in this law, students diagnosed with ADHD whose ability to be in school and do their schoolwork is substantially limited by their disability are found to be eligible for academic accommodations under Section 504.

Not every student with ADHD will have a 504 plan, but those who find that their disability substantially limits their ability to be successful in school will. There continues to be some confusion in the field about whether providing the accommodations to the student are a district’s, school’s, or individual instructor’s choice. Under the law, it is clear that the provisions are not optional. If the student has been assessed by a qualified professional and is found to qualify as a person with a disability under Section 504, then that student’s district, school, and individual instructors must provide the accommodations identified by the school’s 504 team and included in the 504 plan.

The 504 team, including the site administrator or that person's designee, general education teachers, school psychologist or other specialists, parents, and the student determine which accommodations would allow the student to be free from discrimination and have the same instructional opportunities as his peers without the disability. An example of a reasonable accommodation for a student with ADHD who struggles with the organizational skill of lining math problems up correctly on a blank piece of paper would be to provide the student with a sheet that has the problems already written on it or with graph paper that would help the student with the organization needed to write the problems correctly. For note taking, the student might be provided with a graphic organizer or a note-taking guide. These simple examples show that the accommodations in a 504 plan are often easily implemented and do not require an inordinate amount of work or planning on the part of the school or the instructor, but nonetheless can have a significant impact for a student who might get the math answers wrong due to poor alignment on the page or have poor study notes due to difficulties in keeping up with note taking.

All teachers and staff working with the student should be informed of the 504 accommodations, and the student should be able to advocate for these herself. Once a district, school, or instructor is informed of the accommodations in the plan, it is a breach of the student's civil rights to disallow the use of them. Compliance with the law requires that teachers, students,

It is a breach of a student's civil rights to disallow the use of accommodations.

and staff recognize that accommodations are not optional because the disability puts the student at a disadvantage; the accommodations in the 504 plan simply level the playing field, creating a more equitable educational opportunity for young people with ADHD.

Students identified as having ADHD whose disability significantly affects their academic progress to the extent of requiring specially designed academic instruction or supplementary services under IDEA will also have accommodations written into their Individualized Education Plan (IEP). In the same vein as 504 plans, these accommodations are deemed by the IEP team as necessary in order for the student to make progress in the general education curriculum. It would be a breach of IDEA to deny these accommodations that are provided to the student by law.

Teaching in the Twenty-First Century: Current Research and Instructional Practice

To a secondary school teacher, meeting the mandates of NCLB, IDEA 2004, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act may seem overwhelming. Making sure that no student in your class is left behind and that all students, including your

students with ADHD, meet grade-level standards is quite a challenge. This book has been written to support you, the secondary school teacher, in reaching these lofty, yet attainable goals.

First, as a teacher of young adults with ADHD, it is important that you be able to recognize how the disability may look in your classroom. Although you may have friends or relatives who have a child with ADHD, the symptoms of this disability may look very different in your secondary school classroom. It is also essential that you realize that the single label *ADHD* actually includes behaviors that differ from student to student and from gender to gender. Having a clear understanding of the neurobiological and neurological components of the disability may give you more clarity on the puzzling behaviors of some of your students. The next chapter will focus on what ADHD means for adolescents with this disability and what it may look like in your classroom.

Abundant research supports the proposition that engaged students learn more, and there is a direct correlation between the amount of time that students are actively engaged in learning and their achievement levels.⁷ Instruction that is engaging will produce better outcomes for students with ADHD as well as reduce many of their common behavior problems. Chapter Three will focus on instructional engagement strategies that allow students to be continually involved in their learning, thus improving their academic level and their psychological investment in meeting grade-level standards.

Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated instruction is focused to meet the specific learning needs and learning styles of all students. Our highly technological society has changed the way that students learn and take in information. Students are technologically connected in ways that most parents and teachers cannot comprehend. Is it any wonder that the traditional form of classroom instruction has become obsolete? The time has come to break the paradigms of our old instructional models and methods and embrace student-centered, active learning and engaging instructional methods. Chapter Three will also examine specific research-based instructional strategies that will support the instructional needs of your YouTube-generation students and the students with ADHD in your classroom.

The Student-Centered Classroom

Teaching in the twenty-first century requires a culture in which the focus has changed from what is taught to what is learned. Chapter Four defines the student-centered classroom, which is a major shift from the teaching of content to the

teaching of students. In a student-centered classroom, the teacher facilitates the learning, but the students do the critical thinking work, solving problems through discussion and joint efforts. Students with ADHD flourish in a student-centered environment because the activities of the class have meaning and allow them to take greater ownership of their learning.

Within the context of a learning-centered classroom, research-based instructional strategies for English language arts will be examined in Chapter Four. This chapter investigates specific vocabulary instruction strategies, reading comprehension strategies, and classroom practices that motivate students with ADHD to become actively involved in literacy. Reading intervention structures and processes are also discussed, as well as specific scaffolds for developing independent writing skills in students who struggle with working memory.

High-level math skills are a gateway skill to higher education. Because a large number of students with ADHD have difficulty in learning math due to issues with working memory that affect their ability to memorize and recall information, it is essential for the twenty-first-century teacher to use instructional strategies that address these weaknesses. In Chapter Five, we will look at the different levels of math knowledge required to be successful in math and how ADHD affects these processes. The chapter also takes an in-depth look at seven instructional strategies for students who are at risk for math failure that were identified by the Center on Instruction. Strategies for accessing algebraic concepts will also be covered, including the use of the concrete-representational-abstract (CRA) instructional strategy to help students learn how to translate word problems into mathematical symbols and link the concrete to a representation and then to an abstract or symbolic level. Effective strategies to help with memory and recall, such as graphic organizers, mnemonics, and process steps, will also be discussed.

Standards-Aligned Instruction

The application of standards-aligned instruction in science and social studies is the focus of Chapter Six. When focusing on standards instead of textbooks and defining the curriculum as a structured set of learning outcomes, teaching these two content areas can be a very creative endeavor. This chapter will look at the latest research on effective science and social studies instruction within the context of a learner-centered classroom in which active learning and intentional student engagement are employed. This chapter will look at the motivational factors that affect students with ADHD when learning the content in these two areas as well as ideal processes for eliciting intellectual engagement. Examples from teachers who have made science instruction intellectually engaging and who have brought history alive are provided in this chapter as well as a few teacher tricks for helping students memorize basic science and history facts.

Response to Intervention: Behavioral and Academic Approaches

Students with ADHD often suffer from anxiety disorders⁸ and find the unpredictability of teachers' behavioral expectations across a school campus too confusing to figure out, often leaving students lost, confused, or unresponsive. Students with ADHD need consistency and predictability as well as rituals and routines that support positive behavioral interactions with their teacher and other students. Developing schoolwide supports for positive behavior that include clear common expectations is covered in Chapter Seven. This chapter will cover the behavior management strategies that do not work as well as those that have proven to be successful. Chapter Seven also looks at proactive strategies for managing students' behavior and at the principles of fairness and respect. Finally, this chapter covers the three tiers of behavior intervention that are often referred to as a *multi-tiered intervention* or a *Response to Intervention model*. Strategies that support students at all levels of behavioral needs will be investigated, as well as what can be done for students with ADHD who need the highest level of behavioral intervention.

Secondary school teachers have a tremendous responsibility for meeting the academic, social, and behavioral needs of their students with ADHD. Chapter Eight covers the schools' responsibility for providing equitable educational opportunities for all students through a multi-tiered intervention or Response to Intervention (RtI) model. This chapter will explore the different purposes of RtI and how students with ADHD can benefit from each tier of intervention, depending on their particular academic needs. Finally, this chapter looks at the responsibility of the family and, ultimately, of the student. Students with ADHD at the secondary level need to be able to advocate for their own needs, but beyond that, they need to develop long-term strategies that will build self-determination and effective transition skills. This chapter investigates classroom activities that help students with ADHD develop these skills, which will serve them throughout life.

It is the school's responsibility to provide equitable educational opportunities for all students through a multi-tiered intervention or Response to Intervention (RtI) model.

To Sum Up

Facing the changes created by NCLB and its subsequent accountability for all students is not easy. The shift in responsibility and instructional practice is uncomfortable for many teachers. Recognizing this discomfort is the first step in

moving forward and taking the steps necessary to bring about necessary change. The information and strategies provided in this book provide an opportunity to empower teachers to take on the challenge of change. Recognizing the specific needs of students and having the tools, knowledge, and strategies to adjust instruction to meet those needs will create classrooms where productive learning will occur. This book aims to provide you, the secondary school teacher, with the tools, knowledge, and strategies you need to make productive learning a reality for your students.