



NASSET ADHD SERIES

Part # 9 - Classroom Accommodations for Students with ADHD

The third component of a strategy for effectively educating children with ADHD involves physical classroom accommodations. Children with ADHD often have difficulty adjusting to the structured environment of a classroom, determining what is important, and focusing on their assigned work. They are easily distracted by other children or by nearby activities in the classroom. As a result, many children with ADHD benefit from accommodations that reduce distractions in the classroom environment and help them to stay on task and learn. Certain accommodations within the physical and learning environments of the classroom can benefit children with ADHD.

Special Classroom Seating Arrangements for ADHD Students

One of the most common accommodations that can be made to the physical environment of the classroom involves determining where a child with ADHD will sit. Three special seating assignments may be especially useful:

- **Seat the child near the teacher.** Assign the child a seat near your desk or the front of the room. This seating assignment provides opportunities for you to monitor and reinforce the child's on-task behavior.
- **Seat the child near a student role model.** Assign the child a seat near a student role model. This seat arrangement provides opportunity for children to work cooperatively and to learn from their peers in the class.
- **Provide low-distraction work areas.** As space permits, teachers should make available a quiet, distraction-free room or area for quiet study time and test taking. Students should be directed to this room or area privately and discreetly in order to avoid the appearance of punishment.

Instructional Tools and the Physical Learning Environment

Skilled teachers use special instructional tools to modify the classroom learning environment and accommodate the special needs of their students with ADHD. They also monitor the physical environment, keeping in mind the needs of these children. The following tools and techniques may be helpful:

- **Pointers.** Teach the child to use a pointer to help visually track written words on a page. For example, provide the child with a bookmark to help him or her follow along when students are taking turns reading aloud.
- **Egg timers.** Note for the children the time at which the lesson is starting and the time at which it will conclude. Set a timer to indicate to children how much time remains in the lesson and place the timer at the front of the classroom; the children can check the timer to see how much time remains. Interim prompts can be used as well. For instance, children can monitor their own progress during a 30-minute lesson if the timer is set for 10 minutes three times.
- **Classroom lights.** Turning the classroom lights on and off prompts children that the noise level in the room is too high and they should be quiet. This practice can also be used to signal that it is time to begin preparing for the next lesson.
- **Music.** Play music on a tape recorder or chords on a piano to prompt children that they are too noisy. In addition, playing different types of music on a tape recorder communicates to children what level of activity is appropriate for a particular lesson. For example, play quiet classical music for quiet activities done independently and jazz for active group activities.
- **Proper use of furniture.** The desk and chair used by children with ADHD need to be the right size; if they are not, the child will be more inclined to squirm and fidget. A general rule of thumb is that a child should be able to put his or her elbows on the surface of the desk and have his or her chin fit comfortably in the palm of the hand.