

**Talking About Special Education
Volume III ...**

**Attention Deficit
Disorder / Attention
Deficit Hyperactive
Disorder**

**An Information
Handbook
Prepared by**

**First Nations
Education Steering Committee
and the
First Nations
Schools Association**

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**We must find all
students' special gifts.**

Workshop Participant cited in
*Reaching for Success.
Considering the Achievements
and Effectiveness of
First Nations Schools.*
FNESC and FNSA. 1998

This handbook is the third in a series of informational handbooks prepared by the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) and the First Nations Schools Association (FNSA). This handbook follows from the general discussion of special needs included in *Talking About Special Education Volume I*, which includes issues such as parental involvement, special needs identification, individual education plans, and advocacy.

This series of handbooks has been prepared in an effort to share some basic information. They are intended to provide a starting point, and people may choose to investigate specific issues in more detail.

We would like to again thank all of the people who took the time to review earlier drafts of these handbooks and provide us with thoughtful comments and recommendations. We look forward to more suggestions for further work for FNESC and the FNSA in this area.

Information About Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD)

Hyperactive symptoms are present when a child, without any apparent reason, is more active than other children his or her age during sleep time, meals, homework, games, and all other activities. A child who moves constantly, becomes frustrated easily, is very impulsive, and constantly blames others for problems is also demonstrating signs of hyperactivity. According to many experts, the child is having difficulty controlling his or her behaviour because the part of the brain responsible for self-control is working at a slower pace.

Attention deficit is shown by difficulties working on tasks, procrastination, difficulty making an adequate effort, and constant forgetting of what has been said. ADD/ADHD are also often accompanied by:

- low self-esteem;
 - problems with peers;
 - mood swings;
 - being easily frustrated;
 - limited organizational skills;
 - developmental, learning and coordination problems;
 - increased sensitivity to allergens (eg. pollen);
 - temper outbursts; and
 - increased risk of alcohol and drug abuse.
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Some signs of ADD/ADHD include when a child is:

- often daydreaming
- sometimes impulsive or disruptive
- sometimes aggressive or defiant
- very disorganized
- often anxious
- prone to depression
- often socially withdrawn
- inconsistent in remembering
- “fidgety” all the time
- consistently restless
- prone to “explode” or “erupt”
- has difficulty waiting for his or her turn
- has strong emotions that come on quickly

What is significant about the behaviours is that they occur over a wide variety of situations, are clearly inappropriate for a child that age or developmental level, and start early in life. Hyperactivity and attention deficit do not always occur together. To be diagnosed, the symptoms for either disorder must be apparent before the age of 7 to indicate that the trouble is neurological, and not an isolated episode.

Teachers have noted many positive attributes of students with ADHD/ADD, including that they are often humorous, creative, talkative, very caring, athletic, sensitive, musical, fair, good with little kids, and always ready to help.

Good Things About Having ADD

(Adapted from K. Nowoselski)

- √ I'm courageous, willing to try things -- take risks.
- √ I have lots of energy.
- √ I'm ready to talk, and I can talk a great deal.
- √ I get along well with adults.
- √ I can do several things at one time.
- √ I'm smart
- √ I need less sleep.
- √ I have a good sense of humour.
- √ I'm very good at taking care of younger kids.
- √ I'm spontaneous.
- √ I often see details that other people miss.
- √ I understand what it's like to be teased or in trouble, so I understand other kids.
- √ I can sometimes think of new ways to do things.
- √ I often volunteer to help others.
- √ I am happy and enthusiastic.
- √ I'm often imaginative and creative.
- √ I can articulate and say things well.
- √ I'm usually sensitive and compassionate.
- √ I'm eager to make new friends.
- √ I have a great memory.
- √ I am charming.
- √ I'm warm and loving.
- √ I care a great deal about my family.

Nine Suggestions for Living with a Hyperactive Child

(Adapted from FNEC, 1997)

1. Accept Your Child's Limitations

Accept the fact that your child is active and energetic and possibly always will be. It may not be possible to eliminate the hyperactivity, but it may be possible to keep it under reasonable control. The child's actions are not intentional. Be tolerant, patient and low-key to have the most success.

2. Provide Outlets for Excess Energy

Use daily outside activities such as running, sports and long walks to help your child burn off energy.

3. Keep Your Home Organized

Consistent routines help hyperactive children accept order. Make mealtimes, bedtimes and playtimes consistent. Predictable responses from you will help.

4. Avoid Fatigue

When hyperactive children are exhausted, they have less self-control and their hyperactivity increases.

5. Avoid Formal Gatherings

Avoid settings where the child's hyperactivity would be extremely inappropriate and embarrassing.

6. Maintain Firm Discipline

Hyperactive children are unquestionably difficult to manage. They need careful, planned discipline, and rules must exist to avoid harm to them or anyone else. Aggressive behaviour should not be tolerated, but consistently negative comments are not helpful. Clear, consistent and important rules will help most. Also, make a point of telling the child the worthwhile and good things about him or her.

7. Use Non-Physical Punishment

Use a “time-out” place to back up the child’s attempts to break rules if a show of disapproval doesn’t work. The place can be the child’s bedroom. The child should be sent there to calm down and should be allowed out as soon as his or her behaviour has changed.

8. Stretch the Attention Span

Reward non-hyperactive behaviour, and give praise for colouring, listening to stories, and quietly playing with games and toys. Use toys and games that are safe, relatively unbreakable, and do not use excessive numbers, as this can be distracting. Introduce new toys and activities gradually, trying to increase the child’s attention span over time.

9. Periodically, Get Away From It All

Take some time away to maintain your own health and sanity. Exposure to some hyperactive children can be exhausting.

Suggestions for the Classroom

(Adapted from ADDSA)

Teaching children who have ADD/ADHD can be very challenging, but also very rewarding. Teachers can play a significant role in helping the child with ADD/ADHD. The following suggestions may help in the classroom.

Providing Structure

- √ Make class rules few in number, clear, concise, and stated in positive terms.
- √ Use easily enforced and immediate consequences for breaking rules.
- √ Provide a written schedule so the student knows what is expected.
- √ Structure class time to avoid waiting periods.

Giving Instructions

- √ Give clear, specific, simple instructions.
- √ Avoid giving instructions in the form of a question, such as “would you ...?” or “could you ...?”
- √ Get the child’s attention before giving instructions. It is good to have eye contact with the student, but do not force eye contact, as the student may concentrate more on maintaining eye contact than on what is being said.
- √ Check to make sure the student understands instructions. If unsure, ask him or her to repeat them.

Cues and Reminders

- √ Instructions are more effective if accompanied with a cue or reminder. For example, point to your eye while saying “look,” or point to your ear when saying “listen.”
- √ Post the rules and consequences for following and breaking the rules.
- √ Develop a “secret” signal to remind the child.

Dealing With Short Attention Spans

- √ Provide a variety of work in short work periods.
- √ Intersperse very high and low interest tasks.
- √ Reduce the length of assignments, or put fewer problems on a page.
- √ Break up monotony with a variety of materials and presentations.

Dealing With Hyperactivity

- √ Give the student a reason to move around, such as passing out papers, or bringing a message to the office.
- √ Try to structure activities so they move from quiet to active.
- √ Allow for a transition period after recess and lunch time, as many students have difficulty settling down.
- √ Note: if too much emphasis is placed on getting the child to sit, he or she may concentrate on sitting instead of the classroom activities.

Dealing With Disorganization

- √ Break assignments into small units.
- √ Help the child use task analysis to break the assignment into sequential steps.
- √ Keep desk materials at a minimum. Materials can be distributed as needed.
- √ Keep materials at your desk. Have the child come for them, gradually allowing more responsibility.

Dealing With Distraction

- √ Seat the student near the teacher’s desk or at the end of a row.
- √ Seat the student away from distracting places such as the pencil sharpener.
- √ Seat the child away from open windows or doors.
- √ Decrease moving visual distractions.

Dealing With Homework

- √ Be realistic about the amount of homework for the student. If necessary, communicate with other teachers to ensure the amount of homework is manageable.
- √ Help to check that the student brings home books necessary to do homework.



Using Technological Support

- √ Allow the use of a calculator, especially to check answers on some math assignments.
- √ Allow and encourage the student to tape important classes.
- √ Allow the student to use a typewriter or word processor.

Please note: the amount of structure used in the classroom can be decreased as the student gains more inner self-control.

Sources of Information on Attention Deficit Disorder

Attention Deficit Disorder Support Association

c/o Ms. Elin Horton
242 Osborne Avenue, New Westminster, B.C., V3L 1Y8
phone: (604) 524 - 9183
fax: (604) 524 - 9123

BC Council for Children with Behavioural Disorders

Colin Tisshaw, President
110 - 4664 Loughheed Highway, Burnaby, B.C. V5C 5T5
phone: (604) 298 - 3434
fax: (604) 298 - 3435

Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorders

Ms. Yolande Andrews, Provincial Representative
P.O. Box 1707, Oliver, B.C. V0H 1T0
phone: (250) 498 - 4854
fax: (250) 498 - 6266

Learning Disabilities Association of BC

c/o Learning Disabilities Association, Vancouver Chapter
#909 - 750 West Broadway, Vancouver, B.C. V5Z 1H1
phone: (604) 873 - 8139
fax: (604) 873 - 8140

RESOURCES USED

Several resources were used in the preparation of this handbook. FNEC and the FNSA would like to acknowledge:

Schmidt, B. 1997. *Nine Guidelines for Living with the Hyperactive Child*. in The Quebec First Nations Education Council (FNEC). *FNEC Newsletter. Special Edition on Special Needs Children*. January.

An informational pamphlet prepared by Ken Nowoselski titled *What is ADHD/ADD?*

Wade, S.F. and C.M. Daniels. *Living With ADHD*. The Attention Deficit Disorder Support Association.

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