

“School-Based Support for Students with ADHD” by Dr Mariam Aljunied and Ms Ho Soo Wee, Educational Psychologists from Educational Psychology, Ministry of Education – Talk to SPARK on 4 April 2015

ADHD and Academic Achievement

ADHD is now classified as a Neurodevelopmental Disorder with :

- Key symptoms : Distractability and Impulsivity, and in some cases, Hyperactivity
- Poor regulation or cognitive control of information or impact of stimulus
- “Executive Dys-Function” – Execution Function impairment in areas of sustaining attention, switching attention, impulse control, delayed gratification, planning and execution, self-directed learning, problem solving, working memory and time management.

A Meta Analysis of 72 studies since 1990 showed students with ADHD having :

- Lower overall achievement relative to controls
- Poor academic attainment is evident beyond standardised tests, so lower scores not primarily attributable to situational factors, e.g. negative test taking behaviour

Significant overlap between ADHD and other Learning Disorders

- Reading disorder : 15% - 40%
- Math disorder : 10% - 25%

Implications for Intervention

- Focusing on the behaviour and attention is important but not enough
- Medication and behavioral modification are important - These make the child with ADHD available for teaching and learning
- Teaching and learning strategies that compensate and accommodate for the specific learning deficits must be used

Strategies for Behavioural Management of ADHD

Manipulating Consequences (Reactive), e.g.

- Token reinforcement
- Verbal reprimands
- Self-monitoring
- Time-out
- Facing natural consequences

Manipulating Antecedents (Proactive), e.g.

- Provide Supportive environment
- Post clear & explicit rules
- Adjust workload
- Modify instructions
- Providing choices

Antecedent Focused Behaviour Support Strategies :

- Create classroom environment that is positive, encouraging and supportive
- Teach rules and remind students of the rules and expectations frequently
 - Make sure students understand the rules (teach, model and practice the desired behaviour)
 - Use visual and verbal cues to aide memory
- Specific and immediate feedback
- Create structured routines
 - For work activities, tasks, transitions, materials
 - Children with ADHD often need the external scaffolds long after others have internalised them

Consequence Oriented Behaviour Support Strategies

- These work too! But...
 - By themselves, they do not teach the more appropriate behaviour or skills
 - They **reinforce** existing behaviours (negatively or positively)
 - Efficacy depends on frequency and timing of reinforcers given.
 - Children with ADHD need more frequent and immediate feedback than others
- Token Economy
 - Tokens/secondary reinforcers when student show desired target behaviour (SMART targets needed)
 - Hierarchy of rewards (best individualised)
 - Efficacy highest when it is planned and implemented as a class-wide system
- Using self-management and self-monitoring to observe and record own behaviour, e.g.
 - Checklist of tasks
 - Countdown-timer
 - iPad based applications

Support in Schools : School Personnel and Services

- School personnel:
 - Allied Educators (Counselling, Learning and Behavioural Support (LBS), Teaching and Learning) – every Primary and Secondary School have them
 - Teachers trained in Special Needs (TSN)
 - More in numbers and more training
- MOE Educational Psychologists
- Response, Early intervention and Assessment in Community mental Health (**REACH**) Teams covering the 4 school zones
- Customised Support
 - In-class support by teachers
 - Access arrangements
 - Mother Tongue Language Exemption

Key Guiding Principles for School-based Support

- Positive and collaborative relationship is key
- Interventions in school is based on specific educational need of the child, not on disability diagnosis per se
- Involve School's Key Personnel in communication and collaboration efforts

School-based Support Programmes

1. Programme for Active Learning (PAL) –
2. Stellar (Strategies for English Language Learning and Reading) -
3. Learning Support Programme (LSP) – English and Mathematics
4. School-based Dyslexia Remediation Programme (SDR)
5. Facing-Your-Fear (FYF) programme

Access Arrangements (from ADHD Clinical Practise Guidelines)

- Access arrangements are pre-agreed reasonable adjustments that are made to examinations, tests and assessments in certain subjects..
- The diagnosis of ADHD alone is insufficient for the approval of access arrangements during national examinations
- Not every student with ADHD needs access arrangements, nor do all students with ADHD need the same types of access arrangement.
- Extended time for examinations does not necessarily benefit all children with ADHD

What Access Arrangements to Recommend

- Recommendations for special examination arrangements are based not solely on a particular disability but rather on the **student's specific needs**.
- Consider the student's familiarity with the specific arrangements.
 - Professionals can encourage schools to try out these arrangements before national exams to ensure ***pupil is adequately prepared and knows how to fully utilise the access arrangements*** eg. Extra time
- Deadline for Access Arrangements for National Exams
 - Contact SEAB for more information <http://www.seab.gov.sg/> (SEAB will alert schools of the deadline for the respective years)

MTL (Mother Tongue Language) Policies in Schools

- Primary Schools
 - Modular MTL Curriculum (Implemented in Phases since 2007)
 - Across all levels
- Secondary Schools
 - MTL 'B' syllabus (For students who are exceptionally weak in MTL or have learning disabilities)

Application for Access Arrangements and MTL exemption is made by **School to SEAB and CPDD respectively**, supported by information/reports from relevant professionals, teacher reports, observations and curriculum-based assessments.

What Parents Can Do

- Maintain good relationships with schools
- Communication with school personnel supporting Special Needs and teachers
- Working with medical doctors regarding medications if needed
- Organise play dates for younger children, or gatherings for older ones, get to know child's peers and other parents
- Helping the child understand self and ADHD
- Develop child's strengths and interests
- Affirm your child positively frequently (Relationship is Key!)
- Parent Self-Care