

Comprehensive Guide to Supporting Diverse Learners in the Classroom

An actionable reference manual on Dyslexia, ADHD, and Proactive Behavior Management strategies for educators and support staff.

QUICK NAVIGATION & CORE MODULES

1. Dyslexia Support

- Identification & Indicators
- Multisensory Techniques
- Classroom Accommodations

2. ADHD & Executive Function

- Understanding ADHD Symptoms
- Environmental Adjustments
- Formal Support & Teams

3. Behavior & Emotional Regulation

- Proactive Management
- Restorative Practices & Positive Action
- 4-Step Emotional Support

1. Dyslexia: Identification & Instructional Strategies

Neurodevelopmental Overview: Dyslexia is a neurodevelopmental learning disorder affecting up to **20% of the population**. It primarily hinders an individual's capacity to recognize speech sounds and map them onto written text. Beyond core reading skills, it affects learning pace, social-emotional connections, and self-esteem due to fundamental brain processing differences.

Common Indicators Across Grade Levels

Elementary & General Symptoms

- Struggles with reading, writing, and spelling
- Difficulty blending letter sounds and decoding unfamiliar words
- Trouble recognizing rhymes
- Inadvertently skipping small words while reading

Middle & High School (Grades 6–12)

- Difficulty understanding complex reading assignments
- Trouble recalling common abbreviations
- Challenges with oral communication and expression
- Reduced reading fluency and slower processing pace

Effective Multisensory Teaching Techniques

- **Multisensory Tools:** Incorporate tactile activities such as sand writing and blending boards to enhance information retention.
- **Kinesthetic Reading:** Teach techniques like arm tapping to assist students in phonetically segmenting and decoding words.
- **Assistive Technology:** Utilize tools such as pocket spellcheckers, line readers, and digital scanning pens that read text aloud as it is scanned.

Classroom Accommodations & Practical Supports

Note: Accommodations do not grant an unfair advantage; rather, they ensure equitable access to learning.

- **Assessment Flexibility:** Grant extended test time, allow oral response options, and provide quiet study areas.
- **Instructional Adaptations:** Offer pre-taught vocabulary, lecture outlines, graphic organizers, and step-by-step written directions.
- **Classroom & Task Modifications:** Seat students close to the instructor, reduce mandatory copying, turn lined paper vertically for math task alignment, use visual or auditory cues to emphasize key points, and offer flexible submission times or assignment adjustments.
- **Collaborative Strategies:** Use peer-mediated learning, note-sharing systems, and display model work samples.



Teacher Tip: Direct input from the student is invaluable—asking them what accommodations work best fosters self-advocacy and academic confidence.

2. Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Prevalence & Nature: Affecting roughly **11% of school-aged children**, ADHD is a lifelong neurodevelopmental condition impacting executive functioning and brain processing. Historically termed "*minimal brain dysfunction*" prior to 1987, ADHD presents in predominantly inattentive, hyperactive-impulsive, or combined forms.

Key Perspective for Educators: ADHD-related behaviors—such as fidgeting, daydreaming, or attention-seeking—are **neurological symptoms** rather than intentional choices or behavioral defiance.

Structural & Environmental Accommodations

- **Strategic Seating:** Seat students near the teacher and away from environmental distractions, pairing them with supportive peer role models.
- **Sensory & Movement Outlets:** Integrate sensory breaks, break cards, and flexible seating tools like wobble stools to accommodate the physical need for movement.
- **Instructional Clarity:** Break tasks into achievable steps, provide frequent feedback, repeat directions, and use auditory signals to maintain focus.
- **Formalized Support:** Implement Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or Section 504 Plans under IDEA to secure formal accommodations like extra test time, specialized instruction, and organizational support.

Collaborative Support & Multidisciplinary Teams

- **Active Collaboration:** Maintain continuous communication between educators, parents, school counselors, support staff, and medical providers.
- **Evidence-Based Frameworks:** Utilize established guidance from CHADD's National Resource Center on ADHD, the Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS), and guidelines from the American Academy of Pediatrics.

3. Classroom Behavior Management & Positive Interventions

Proactive Behavioral Strategies

Proactive management focuses on establishing an engaging environment that stops disruption before it starts:

- **Collaborative Expectations:** Establish consistent daily routines and create classroom rules jointly with students to build clear expectations.
- **Impartial Enforcement:** Apply guidelines for rule violations consistently and neutrally so students do not feel targeted.
- **Interactive Learning:** Keep lessons stimulating through practical activities, educational games, movement breaks, and varied instructional aids.
- **Positive Framing:** Use encouraging language to build student self-discipline and strengthen teacher-student relationships.
- **Alternative Assessment:** Consider non-traditional grading methods, such as gamified point systems, to reduce academic stress.

Restorative Practices & Whole-Child Systems

- **Restorative Practices:** Implement proactive community circles and responsive dialogue to resolve conflict, rebuild trust, decrease suspensions, and improve academic performance.
- **Positive Action Framework:** A comprehensive program that addresses physical, intellectual, social, and emotional growth. By targeting the root causes of misbehavior rather than merely reacting to symptoms, it boosts learning readiness and intrinsic motivation.

Impact & Digital Tools (e.g., Pasela Platform): Digital tools unify over 2,000 lessons into a single system, producing measurable improvements in reading, math, respect, and self-control. Research indicates a return of **\$182.07 in benefits per \$1 invested**, along with substantial drops in discipline referrals, bullying, and violent incidents.

Mental Health America: 4 Steps for Emotional & Behavioral Challenges

1. **Provide a Fresh Start:** Approach each day with a clean slate and avoid carrying past conflicts forward.
2. **Exercise Compassion and Patience:** Reframe negative interactions, avoid public embarrassment, and expect occasional disorganization or forgetfulness.
3. **Praise Effort:** Celebrate progress and effort rather than insisting on perfection.
4. **Prioritize Educator Self-Care:** Manage personal stress to remain calm, grounded, and supportive in demanding classroom situations.

Works Cited

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