

NYC Task Force For Quality Inclusive Schooling
“Creating an Inclusive Environment for All Students”
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Attention! Creating an Environment for Success for Kids with ADHD

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Presenter’s Background:

Dr. Jozwiak has a BA in special education, with a specialty in children with emotional disturbances, an MS in learning disabilities and a PhD in child development and family relationships. She began her career by working as a special education teacher for children with emotional disturbances in Tennessee, where she served as special class teacher for students with challenging behavior and resource teacher in intermediate and middle schools before becoming a behavior consultant for the district. When she moved to New York State, she became a member of the Special Education Training and Resource Center network, providing professional development and technical assistance to districts on the needs of students with disabilities. Currently, she serves as Coordinator of

Statewide Activities for the IDEA State Improvement Grant. Dr. Jozwiak is involved in various activities that relate to inclusion, such as working with the New York City Task Force For Quality Inclusive Schooling and working for the State Improvement Grant, which centers on inclusion practice.

Dr. Jozwiak became interested in the topic of her lecture because it directly relates to her. She has a diagnosis of attention deficit disorder (ADD) and has a family history of this disorder. In her work with children exhibiting challenging behavior, she noticed that many had a diagnosis of ADHD; as a result, she wanted to learn as much as possible about ADHD to improve her work with them and give them the opportunity to function at their optimal level.

Workshop Objectives:

- To indicate ways of identifying behaviors that are common of children with ADHD.
- To mention the difficulties that these children consistently face.
- To specify the most efficient ways to address these behaviors.
- To discuss effective strategies that can be implemented in order to help children with ADHD be successful in school and in life.

Topical Outline:

The topics that were discussed during the workshop included the types of ADHD, common characteristics of children with ADHD, issues with diagnosis and common misdiagnoses, co-occurring problems, ADHD in relation to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), factors that contribute to ADHD, significant risks and concerns, strengths of children with ADHD, common misconceptions, functional results,

and educational interventions and other strategies. This progression of topics allowed for an understanding of the manifestations of children with ADHD, how to identify these behaviors, ways of recognizing co-occurring problems, as well as strategies for dealing with the exhibited behaviors.

Content of Session:

Dr. Jozwiak began her workshop by explaining the three types of ADHD, which included ADHD with inattention and hyperactivity, ADHD with inattention but no hyperactivity, and a combination type, which consists of hyperactivity and distractibility. The common characteristics that are seen include inattention, disorganization, and poor motivation, which can hinder learning, schoolwork, interactions with peers, and emotional development. For children with ADHD, seemingly irrelevant or undetectable external stimuli may interfere with their ability to concentrate and perform adequately in class.

ADHD may be difficult to diagnose, as it has many overlapping symptoms with other disorders. Sometimes the problem is a physical one, such as a vision or hearing deficit, a metabolic issue or a genetic problem. Conversely, the child may have a co-occurring issue, such as oppositional defiant disorder, conduct disorder, mood disorder, anxiety disorder, or a learning disability. James Messina came up with the “onion - garlic rule out”. First rule out or treat the “garlic” issue, or any problem that may be masking the true identity of the problem, such as a vision problem, and then address the “onion” issue, the remaining issue, such as ADHD. The method of diagnosis should include a multi-system, multi-factor and multi-disciplinary assessment. All aspects of the child

should be evaluated, including his/her physical, neurological, behavioral, cultural, social and academic functioning.

Children with ADHD may present with a variety of difficulties in the classroom. They may be impulsive and act without thinking. They may have poorly developed social skills and therefore have difficulties working with peers. They may be irritable and have a quick temper, or be emotionally labile. Stress, even a small amount, might be intolerable, which could be a problem when they feel that they are getting an overload of schoolwork. Additionally, their threshold for stimuli may be drastically different from their peers, either needing constant stimulation or being overloaded by external stimuli very easily.

Often, teachers and education professionals may not focus on the strengths of children with ADHD. These children tend to have various assets, including being creative, active, lively and having the ability to visualize situations in which they are successful in an effort to modify behaviors to achieve success in other aspects of their lives. Rather, teachers may perceive these children to be lazy, lack motivation, be unintelligent, have a lack of willpower, or have poor parenting.

ADHD can result in a child who has problems with executive functions. These include planning, organizing, problem solving, managing behavior, initiating and terminating an activity, persisting on an activity, and working memory. Often, a child will have difficulty retaining and evaluating events in his/her working memory, although it may be easier to pay attention to something when the child is intrigued by it. Separation and regulation of mood may also prove challenging, such as making a split between fact and feelings. Internalizing language and reflecting on it may seem demanding.

Additionally, a child may have difficulties dividing situations into parts instead of only seeing the big picture.

Educational interventions can be part of the solution. There should be teacher-directed instruction. Teachers must engage the student by asking frequent questions, breaking an activity into parts or using a fast-pace activity. Teachers should also use guided practice activities by cueing and prompting the student during a structured activity. Independent practice activities can also prove positive. This can be done by pointing out to the student what he/she is doing correctly and helping him/her with areas that need improvement. Additionally, assess the child's performance when the activity is finished to give the student feedback on how he/she performed.

Relevance to Inclusion:

This workshop provided a variety of strategies that can be implemented by teachers in an inclusion classroom. With the information provided, teachers will be able to recognize signs of when these children are having trouble focusing, and know how to modify the classroom to fit their needs, present material to them, increase compliance in the classroom and ensure that other children in the classroom will not be distracted by the child with ADHD. This is extremely important for teachers in inclusion classes. By learning how to properly handle these children and apply a variety of strategies, they can help the child with ADHD be successful academically, not disrupt the rest of the class and assure that enough time is spent focusing on the other students.

Goals, Concerns, and Issues for Future Work:

Dr. Jozwiak's goal for the future is to be involved in school improvement in public schools in New York and aid them in meeting their goals. She aspires to work on

this project because she is concerned about general education testing, the decrease in number of students who are graduating, transition planning, and children who are in specific disability categories, as people tend to be placed in certain categories more often than others. School officials and administrators may not see it as their jobs to deduce what type of strategies and methods work with individual children. Dr. Jozwiak would like to compile a tool box of validated methods have been working in order to improve the way schools are operated. She feels that many schools are not getting to the core of the problems and addressing learning styles of individual children. If changed, this can aid teachers in their instruction of children in the classroom.