

Chapter 3

Working With Attention–Deficit Disorder, Attention–Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, and Twice–Exceptional Students

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ABSTRACT

As part of inclusive education, teachers are likely to see two other categories of students with special needs that do not specifically fit into one of the 13 disability categories under IDEA: (a) students diagnosed with attention-deficit disorder (ADD)/attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and (b) twice-exceptional students. Both of these categories of students warrant individual attention in the discussion of inclusive education. Thus, this chapter provides an overview of ADD/ADHD and twice-exceptional students, discusses how these categories connect with IDEA, and presents important information for teachers working with ADD/ADHD and twice-exceptional students in inclusive classrooms. Specific research-based strategies that general education teachers can use to educate these students as well as resources for gaining further information are included.

INTRODUCTION

As part of the modern inclusive culture of public education, teachers are likely to see two other categories of students with special needs that do not specifically fit into one of the 13 disability categories discussed in Chapter 1: (a) students diagnosed with attention deficit disorder (ADD) or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder

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(ADHD), and (b) twice-exceptional students. Both of these categories of students warrant individual attention in the discussion of inclusive education. Thus, this chapter provides an overview of ADD/ADHD and twice-exceptional students, discusses how these categories connect with IDEA, and presents valuable information for teachers working with ADD/ADHD and twice-exceptional students in inclusive classrooms.

ADD/ADHD

The previous chapter provided detailed information on specific learning disabilities (SLDs) recognized under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004. Many people mistakenly believe that ADD and ADHD are specific learning disabilities. However, they are actually considered mental disorders. Neither affects the ability to process information like a specific learning disability does. Nonetheless, ADD/ADHD may affect a child's ability to learn (Orenstein, 2010).

ADHD is also a behavioral disorder. It is a medical condition that affects not only the ability to pay attention but also to sit still and follow directions. ADHD children have brain function impairments that can make them inattentive, hyperactive, and impulsive, and "ADHD children may appear to have learning disabilities because they often are unable to acquire information and working skills as a result of their inattentiveness or hyperactive behaviors" (Orenstein, 2010, para. 5).

According to Orenstein (2010), one reason that people mistakenly believe that ADHD is a learning disability may stem from the fact that ADHD often occurs simultaneously with an SLD; in fact, about 20 to 30 percent of ADHD children also have a specific learning disability, and having one condition makes the other more likely. The most common SLD in children with ADHD is dyslexia. According to Ornstein, approximately 15 to 30 percent of students with ADHD have a reading disability, and "impairments in several areas of functioning—social, academic, and emotional—are worse when someone has both a learning disability and ADHD" (para. 7).

ADD/ADHD is not specifically recognized as a category under IDEA, but if the condition is severe enough to affect learning to the point that the student needs special education or related services, it could qualify under the "other health impaired" (OHI) category. According to a 1991 Joint Policy Memorandum on ADD/ADHD by the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services:

The term "other health impaired" includes chronic or acute impairments that result in limited alertness, which adversely affects educational performance. Thus, children with ADD should be classified as eligible for services under the "other health impaired" category in instances where the ADD is a chronic or acute health

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