

Including the Multicultural Student with AD/HD in the Regular Classroom

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Multicultural students with Attention-Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorders (AD/HD) present a wide range of challenges, problems, and opportunities for educators due to their diverse backgrounds, learning styles, and unique assessment needs. Of major importance are the problems of developing instructional strategies specifically designed to match the special needs of this population. The misrepresentation, inappropriate education, and lack of adequate attention to this issue may result in major educational problems for administrators and teachers during the 21st century when minority populations become majority populations. The question remains as to how this issue might be more effectively addressed when a void exists in the literature regarding the provision of appropriate instructional strategies to students from African-American, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American backgrounds. The need to address this issue in education is paramount (CHADD, 1994).

Failure to address the special needs of multicultural students with AD/HD can have an adverse effect on the educational achievements of these students. The implication for educators is to develop and implement innovative and diverse instructional strategies that address the cultural factors, language characteristics, communication and cognitive styles, and their relationship to problems inherent to AD/HD. Many of the current approaches have not been effective, and a general consensus for new, special education strategies for the multicultural student with AD/HD is apparent. As national debate continues to focus on these multicultural problems and their solutions, students are often caught in a complex web of conflicting ideas and methodologies.

The primary problem lies in both the acts of intentional and unintentional discrimination on the part of administrators and teachers toward the multicultural student with AD/HD. Administrators and teachers must prepare themselves and become sensitive to the diverse cultures in their schools and classes before they can address the issue of working with the multicultural student with AD/HD (Wright, 1995). In short, educators must make development of instructional strategies a top priority based on cultural values, interests, views, customs, and behaviors. Thus, in order to adequately address the issue of AD/HD in our multicultural society, it is necessary to attend, plan, and implement instructional strategies and programs to meet the needs of this growing population of school age children.

Since the reauthorization of IDEA in 1990, educational changes for inclusive instruction have exploded, and a number of projects were funded to investigate the issue of AD/HD. However, none of the projects to date have focused on the multicultural student with AD/HD. In order to adequately address the issue of educational changes for the multicultural student with AD/HD, attention must be given to the two "E's:" "environment and expectations" (Wright 1995).

The educational environment of the multicultural student with AD/HD occurs primarily within the general classroom setting. Members of the Professional Group for ADD and Related Disorders (PGARD, 1991), using an AD/HD prevalence figure of 5 percent of the total school population, estimated that 65 percent of children with AD/HD did not receive special education services and are served within the general classroom setting. PGARD (1991) emphasized that regular education must assume the responsibility for the education of children with AD/HD. Thus, general education teachers must be trained to recognize the special needs of all children with AD/HD, including the multicultural student with AD/HD, and make modifications within the classroom environment. Modifications will include behavior management techniques, changes in existing curriculum, and sensitivity to cultural diversity.

Instructional Strategies for the Multicultural Student with AD/HD

In special education, attempts are made to meet the individual needs of students based on their current educational performance. When dealing with the multicultural student with AD/HD, instructional techniques must also be designed with an understanding of the cultural make-up of the student. In order to effectively design the instruction and teach the multicultural student with AD/HD, teachers must first appreciate the cultural diversity of their students (Stainback & Stainback, 1996), and secondly, apply teaching techniques that are applicable to the cultural diversity so that each student can benefit from the instructional process.

Once a teacher has established a positive learning environment through recognition and respect of cultural differences, instructional strategies are more appropriately matched to meet the diverse needs of the students. According to statistics provided by Reif (1993, p. 53), "... students retain 10 percent of what they read; 26 percent of what they hear; 30 percent of what they see; 50 percent of what they see and hear; 70 percent of what they say; and 90 percent of what they say and do." Thus, the most appropriate techniques for the student with AD/HD, regardless of cultural background, is to use a multimodal approach to instruction. By combining visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile (VAKT) approaches to learning, the student with AD/HD becomes physically involved in the lesson. Through active participation, the student is more likely to internalize the concept being taught. Teachers in elementary grades frequently use movement, music, and singing, which are multimodal approaches to teaching (Franklin, 1992).

Reif (1993) gives several practical techniques, strategies, and interventions for working with children with attention and hyperactivity deficits in a book entitled, *How to Reach and Teach ADD/AD/HD Children*. Some suggestions Reif gives for gaining one's attention include using signals such as flashing lights, ringing a bell, or playing soft music to indicate the end or change in an activity. Still, other techniques for gaining student attention include using visual aids like highlighting key words or phrases and using equipment such as an overhead projector. Reif (1993) also mentions the use of establishing eye contact to gain a student's attention. However, the fact that "some" African-Americans and "some" Native Americans may not establish eye contact while

listening may be frustrating or confusing to the teacher who expects a student to have eye contact to verify attention is engaged. Eye contact is interpreted differently in various cultures, thus teachers must be aware and sensitive to this issue.

Strategies for teaching organization skills may include providing a notebook or organizer/calendar for students to record important information and assisting with frequent "house cleaning" of students' desks and notebooks to eliminate unnecessary papers (Fowler, 1992; Ford, 1992; Franklin, 1992). Reif (1993) also refers to the use of a peer study buddy to aid in recording assignments and organization exercises. These techniques may be appropriate, especially for the Hispanic student who prefers to work in groups and for the Asian student who may be too bashful to ask the teacher questions.

Additional strategies that are beneficial for the student with AD/HD include preparing them for changes in the routine, building in stretch breaks, or providing opportunity for movement between activities (Parker, 1992). Frequent feedback and positive reinforcement, as well as other behavior management techniques, are particularly helpful with the multicultural student with AD/HD. Teachers must also exercise control over the distractions in the classroom and provide quiet work areas, study carrels, or earphones/earplugs to block out extraneous noise.

Finally, the teacher should call on students with equity (Reif, 1993). Students quickly identify the teacher's favorites and may avoid participating for fear of being incorrect or teased by their peers. Teachers must be aware of their classroom dynamics and prepare accordingly.

The techniques and strategies for working with the multicultural student with AD/HD provided in this paper are far from exhaustive. No magic bag of tricks exists for working with this special population. Each student must be dealt with on an individual basis. Various techniques that work for some students will not work for others. The key to designing an effective mode of instruction for the multicultural student with AD/HD is to first understand, respect, and appreciate the cultural diversity of the student. Then the proper teaching technique will follow. As an old familiar saying among teachers goes, "Students may not remember what you taught them, but they will never forget how you treated them."

Summary

Literature concerning AD/HD is plentiful, while the issues pertaining to multicultural students with AD/HD are limited. The concerns expressed by the multicultural population accentuate the need for further research in this area in order to assure accuracy of identification, placement, and service.

Inconsistencies of diagnosis and placement have the potential for continued overrepresentation of minorities in special education classes. The challenge for educators is to develop and implement strategies that are designed to address the special needs of multicultural students who are diagnosed with AD/HD (Wright, 1995). Culture and language can no longer be ignored as they relate to AD/HD. Resolution of

these issues will assist in reducing the numbers of multicultural students who are mislabeled and subsequently misplaced and miseducated.

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