

Five back-to-school tips to enhance classroom success for your child who has attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Norma Fay Nicholson, MA(Ed), BA, RN (Retired)
Youth Empowerment Services
Author, Educator, Public Speaker
n.nicholson.a805@rogers.com
<https://youthempowerments.com>

ADHD is diagnosed in about 3 – 7% of school-age children. (*American Psychiatric Association, 2000*). The school environment creates multiple challenges for these children. Most have difficulty in sitting still, listening quietly and focusing their attention. These children sometimes find it so very hard to wait their turn. They often know what they should or should not do, but they can't control themselves. They may daydream, make careless mistakes, forget things, and lose track of them.

Many parents judge themselves by their children's behaviour and feel that others are judging them too. In their own minds, they may think that the behaviour shows that they are not good parents. As a result of this view, not all parents find it easy to collaborate with the teacher or even to share in-depth information about their child who has ADHD. Remember that the focus must be on this unique child, ensuring that school is both enjoyable and successful for all, as we live in a diverse culture. Meeting the needs of one child who has ADHD does not meet the needs of all children who have ADHD... different approaches work best.

Teachers and parents can work together for successful outcomes.

1. Parents should schedule a meeting with the classroom teacher before the start of school to share the strengths and challenges of their child.
2. Create written goals together for clear expectations for your child. One of the goals could be as simple as sharing strategies that are successful at home when the child is unable to sit still.
3. Parents and teachers schedule regular meetings to discuss what is working inside and outside the classroom.
4. Maintain honest communication so that the focus remains on supporting the child for successful outcomes.
5. The child will succeed in an environment that is safe, friendly and provides flexibility.
 - Provide a comfortable chair and desk.
 - Allow flexibility when the child is unable to sit still, have an additional desk at the side of the classroom where the child could stand to write.
 - Seat the child away from entry doors and windows to decrease distraction.

- Where the child is acting out, seat him/ or her near a good classmate or role model.
- When the child becomes restless in the classroom, the teacher can encourage all children to stand and stretch for a few seconds, then return to their seats.
- Classroom assignments can be broken down into manageable parts, as the child may find some assignments quite challenging to complete.

The understanding and compassion shared about a child with ADHD significantly impact that child's future success. Addressing challenges requires thoughtful preparation, and the results are often much joy when teachers and parents collaborate for positive outcomes.

Updated August 28, 2025