

**ADHD SESSION**  
**Attention Deficit/Hyperactive Disorder**  
**(Monday, March 26th)**

**Learning Objective:**

Examine the issues related to the delivery of special education services to children with ADHD.

**Overview:**

Public school students with ADHD can fall into one of the following three service options: (a) students who receive no services with placement in the general education classroom; (b) students who receive services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, which can include accommodations and modifications within the general education classroom; or (c) students who receive special education services, which can mean support within the general education classroom or placement within a more restrictive setting. This activity will help clarify the issues surrounding special education services and students with ADHD.

Fads aside, the struggle for the student with ADHD, and his or her teacher, is at times overwhelming. Theories suggest that this student's brain is craving stimulation, and perhaps less able to organize the stimulation that appears constantly within our environment. Remember the term "visual figure ground" that refers to the ability to find the relevant image in a very busy picture? Some of us are more able to do so than others. Perhaps the student with ADHD lacks the "stimulation figure ground" or the ability to select the most important aspect of the environment--be it the teacher at the whiteboard diagramming a sentence or a cell--and lives in a state of confusion about what to focus on and what to block out at any given moment.

During this online session, you will have an opportunity to become more acquainted with the student who has ADHD--some of the theories behind the disability, some of the resources available online to support parents, and some of the pressing questions for educators who serve students with ADHD daily.

We'll begin with a brief description of ADHD from Dr. Richard Lavoie, a noted local educator with a knack for using analogies and stories to convey the subtleties of this disability (and others). Next, I'll send you to view a streaming video—about the role of medication for people with ADHD. Then, onto the Internet to search for answers to some key questions about ADHD.

Now let's begin by reading what Dr. Lavoie shares with us about ADHD:

Richard Lavoie on ADHD

Taken from

[Beyond F.A.T. City: A look Back, A Look Ahead](#)

Presented by Richard Lavoie

PBS Video BFC

“The most exciting research that has been done since the video (FAT CITY) was produced is in the area of Attention Deficit Disorder. We know so much about this disability; it’s been estimated that about 90% of what we know about this disability, we’ve learned since the year 2000. There’s been an explosion of research in this field. I talk about the fact that many people don’t understand the difference between **attention span** and **distractibility**. There is a tremendous difference.

We often use the two terms interchangeably,

- **‘The child is very distractible, he has no attention span’;**
- **‘he has no attention span; he’s very distractible.’**

What we realized then and realize more now is that they are **two very different** kids.

- The child with no attention span ***pays attention to nothing.***
- The child who is distractible ***pays attention to everything.***

The big difference between those two kids...

**The distractible kid:** It’s sort of like looking at the world through a wide angle lens.

If I put a wide-angle lens on my camera and try to take a picture of the person in the front row, no matter how much I try to focus on that person- I get everybody else in the picture, as well.

That’s the way it is for our kids. They’re in constant need of stimulation.

A good analogy for attention deficit disorder is those little single-celled animals you used to look at in the eighth grade. What we learned about those little paramecium and amoeba was they- 24/7- were constantly searching for food. They never slept; they were just constantly searching for nutrition.

That’s what it is like for people with attention deficit disorder, except, they’re not looking for food. They’re looking for stimulation. They need to be stimulated all the time. They need stimulation to the same degree that I need oxygen. If you try to cut off my oxygen supply, I would act against it. I would fight against it. That’s what happens when you take a child who needs stimulation and you put him in a non- stimulating environment.

So, the teacher’s in front of the class talking about the War of 1812 and suddenly this 11 year-old with Attention Deficit Disorder pushes the kid next to him off onto the floor.

Why?? It's possible the lecture wasn't stimulating enough. He needed more stimulation so he actually created stimulation. What we're finding is if you take these kids and put them in a non-stimulating environment they will actually create stimulation.

But, the most exciting thing that we're finding out about ADD now, thanks to the goodwork of a number of people, is that the biggest problem is actually a lack of organization and inability to plan that really catches up with them by the time they get to high school.

These video linked below will help you to think about the final key question.

### **ADHD Streaming Videos**

This link is to a website containing a video about the use of medication for students with ADHD.

[www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/medicating/watch](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/medicating/watch)

Remember, after you view the video clips, the readings in the textbook and Internet research; complete the key questions on the following page.

Enjoy the online experience, and email me if you are experiencing any difficulties

## **Key Questions - ADHD:**

Use the Internet, textbook, library or other resources to answer the following questions:

1. How many students with ADHD are currently being served in the United States?
2. Has the number of students identified increased in recent years? If so, what are some of the reported reasons for that increase?
3. What are the specific behaviors and characteristics of students with ADHD?
4. In what ways do those characteristics make it difficult for students to learn and participate in school?
5. Will all students with ADHD demonstrate the same characteristics or degree of behavior? Explain your answers.
6. What professional organizations have supported the legitimacy of ADHD as a disability? Given the definition of special education as a “specially designed instruction that meets the unusual needs of an exceptional student,” list the ways in which a student with ADHD meets the criteria of “exceptional” and what services might be provided to support that student.
7. If parents are totally opposed to having their child take medication for ADHD, what would you as a classroom teacher do?

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