

# Preface

With all that is available for classroom teachers on ADHD, one might legitimately question why we chose to write another book on this topic.

Through our research, we found that though there are many volumes written to help teachers of school-age children, not much has been written with the early childhood educator in mind. This unique book is specifically written for teachers of preschool and early school-age children. We wrote this book with the intention of *specifically* helping teachers who work with children from three to eight years of age. Even though you will read about academic and behavioral interventions that are specifically targeted for preschool and early school-age children, you will find that many of the interventions and recommendations can be applied to older, elementary school-age children as well.

This book will help teachers who face the intense time demands of working with children with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) as well as the challenges of addressing these children's educational needs with limited support. The reader will also find this book appealing because of the in-depth attention it gives to explaining learning difficulties that children with ADHD experience, as well as the presentation of practical classroom interventions.

One particular challenge for teachers is trying to meet the educational needs of children with ADHD without depriving the other children of classroom time and attention. The ideas shared in this book should make this challenge more manageable as the strategies discussed benefit the learning needs of all students.

As authors, our professional backgrounds offer the reader a wide range of experiences: therapeutic, educational, and medical. We draw on our many years of professional experiences to bring to the reader reasonable and effective interventions that can be used in a classroom. It is our belief that children with ADHD benefit most when families, teachers, and (when necessary) doctors work together. You will find in this book ideas and suggestions that support and guide readers through collaboration.

## HOW THIS BOOK IS ORGANIZED

The book's chapters cover a range of topics. Chapters 1 and 2 present an overview of ADHD, outlining symptoms and etiology (that is, origins) of ADHD. When teachers better understand known causes for symptoms and can recognize that the traits seen in ADHD are just that—traits, and not acts of “willfulness”—they will find greater success when implementing this book's recommended interventions. In Chapter 2, we highlight two important topics: temperament and executive functioning. We felt temperament was important to discuss in light of the behaviors that young children typically bring to school and because we are often asked questions on the role of temperament in a young child's behaviors. We introduce to the reader the concept of “executive functions” because of increasing evidence of their important role in understanding the behavior of children with ADHD.

Chapters 3 through 6 cover social skills development, behavioral management, writing strategies for young students, academic and behavioral classroom accommodations, civil rights protections for ADHD children (Section 504 Plan), and changes in special education services (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004).

Chapter 7 explores answers to questions frequently asked about medication and the pros and cons of medicating very young children with ADHD. The chapter also offers a brief overview of alternative treatments for ADHD. Information is provided on possible side effects from ADHD medications that you may observe in a child on medication.

Chapter 8 discusses the importance and benefits of positive communication with parents and other caregivers. We offer specific ways to improve communication with these critically important people in children's lives by answering common questions such as “How do I tell the parents that I think their child may have ADHD?” and “Why didn't the parents tell me their child was on medication?”

The last chapter, Chapter 9, covers recommendations on self-care for teachers. No job is more satisfying than teaching children; however, no job in education is more demanding or stressful than being a classroom teacher. You will find in the appendices a list of Web sites on ADHD, vignettes giving an overview of ADHD case examples, developmental stages of ADHD, associated disorders found with ADHD, disorders and conditions that can mimic ADHD, as well as a list of books for teachers on ADHD.

## THIS BOOK'S PURPOSE

The purpose of this book is not to discuss guidelines for diagnosing ADHD in young children. Rather the focus is to provide teachers with two critical tools:

- A better understanding of this disorder and how it impacts a child's educational and social/emotional development.
- Hands-on practical strategies that teachers can use in the classroom that will help them have a positive, lasting influence in the lives of the children that they teach.

An important first step for teachers in helping a young child with ADHD is to become familiar with the disorder so that they can recognize that problematic behaviors expressed by children with ADHD are not willful. Becoming familiar with behavioral and academic interventions will help minimize these behaviors and will prevent children with ADHD from being labeled “bad kids” and carrying that label throughout their educational careers.

This book will provide you, the early childhood educator, with hundreds of practical suggestions and interventions to help you minimize the effects of ADHD in your classroom and provide positive classroom outcomes for all of your students, but especially those with ADHD.