



# Language & ADHD

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# Language & ADHD

- Many children with ADHD experience difficulty with social relationships (Landau & Moore, 1991)
- Disorders of written expression are more likely to occur in children with ADHD (Mayes & Calhoun, 2006)

# Cognitive Underpinnings of Language Development

- Sustained Attention
- Selective Attention
- Working Memory
- Inhibition
- Processing speed
- Sequencing

(Archibald & Gathercole, 2006; Dispaldro et al., 2012; Ebert & Kohnert, 2011; Leonard et al., 2007; Marton et al., 2014; Shafer et al., 2007; Smith et al., 2010)

# ADHD & Social Skills

- 56% of children with ADHD do not have established friendships
  - Almost double the percentage of typically developing children (Hoza et al., 2005)
- Children with ADHD tend to lose friendships much more frequently and much faster than typically developing children (Normand et al., 2013)

# ADHD & Social Skills

- Deficits that act as turn-offs :
  - Impulsive actions, interjections, and contributions
  - Limited awareness of verbal and non-verbal communication
  - Poor turn-taking
  - More limited ability to manage emotions (may seem immature)
  - May appear bossy or overly competitive
  - May make more self-serving choices during game-play
  - Unreliable

(adapted from Kennedy-Moore, 2015)

# Supporting Social Skills

- **Gentle and neutral-sounding guidance about how negative behaviors affect others**
  - E.g., I understand how X may be frustrating. When you do Y you may make your friends feel like you do not care about their feelings.
- **Help your child make good friend choices and build individual friendships**
  - Help your child select peers who seem like a good “fit”
  - Play dates
    - Keep them short
    - Plan in advance
    - Do a practice run

(adapted from Kennedy-Moore, 2015)

# Supporting Social Skills

- **Plan ahead!**

- Help your child think through possible challenges that might occur
  - Play-dates, practice, sports competitions
- Brainstorm possible ways to respond to or head-off those challenges

(adapted from Kennedy-Moore, 2015)

# ADHD & Written Expression

- **Generating Ideas and/or Explaining/  
Elaborating on Ideas**
  - Difficulty with generation of ideas and explanations
    - These children often have comorbid expressive language disorders
  - Ideas and explanations are long-winded, convoluted, and/or off-topic

(adapted from Anders, 2018)



# ADHD & Written Expression

- **Organization**

- Difficulty with sequencing narratives and logical arguments
- Difficulty maintaining topic
- Poor central coherence

(adapted from Anders, 2018)

# ADHD & Written Expression

- **Fluency**

- Composition feels stilted and disconnected
- Ideas and sentences do not flow well together
- Expression is limited to the bare minimum

(adapted from Anders, 2018)

# ADHD & Written Expression

- **Voice**

- Limitations in voice (creative, rich detail and sense of story-teller's style) stem from:
  - Difficulty generating ideas
  - Difficulty generating content
  - Poor expressive language skills

(adapted from Anders, 2018)

# ADHD & Written Expression

- **Vocabulary**

- Simple vocabulary
- Repetitive/overuse of words
  - Particularly GAP (general all purpose) words
  - Limited use of synonyms or alternative wording

(adapted from Anders, 2018)

# ADHD & Written Expression

## ○ **Conventions**

- Poor awareness of or attention to conventions
  - E.g., punctuation, capitalization, spelling and grammar errors
- Limited stamina and/or tolerance for editing work and catching errors

(adapted from Anders, 2018)

# Supporting Written Expression

- **Teach specific structure and use visual support when necessary**
  - What are the components of a story? A persuasive essay? An analytical essay?
- **Utilize graphic organizers and pre-writing strategies (e.g., outlines) with *direct support***
  - Turn prompts from pre-writing strategies into questions
    - E.g., in order to develop a thesis statement ask the student what they want to communicate to or teach their audience
    - Help students learn to ask themselves these questions in order to learn how to independently generate ideas and content

(Grahm, MacArthur, & Fitzgerald, 2013)

# Supporting Written Expression

- **Create individualized editing checklists with student specific common errors**
- **Teach positive self-regulation strategies, specifically positive self-talk**
  - Identify aspects of writing that student struggles with the most and begin by developing positive self-talk and strategy development around that

(Grahm, MacArthur, & Fitzgerald, 2013)

# Resources for Materials and Education

- Pinterest.com (graphic organizers and pre-writing supports)
- Shmoop.com
  - Essay writing lab with specific prompts for many common middle and high school texts
- <http://www.thinksrsd.com/free-materials/>
  - Essay structure mnemonics and worksheets to develop positive self-talk specifically for writing
- <http://johnmccgarvey.com/apworld/student/thesiscreator.html>
  - Step-by-step guide to generate a thesis with examples



# Contact

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