

ADHD and Giftedness: The Same or Different?

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COMPARING BEHAVIORS ASSOCIATED WITH ADHD AND THOSE WITH G/T	
ADHD DSMIV, 1994	G/T SILVERMAN, 1983
• Difficulty with Sustained attention; day dreaming	• Poor attention, often due to boredom; day dreaming
• Failure to concentrate unless in one-on-one, low stimulus environment	• Lack of persistence on task that seem irrelevant or are of low personal interest
• Failure to complete independent activities	• Task completion often reliant on personal interest alignment
• Ability to listen attentively seems diminished	• Often appears bored during discussions
• Messy, disorganized environment	• Possible disinterest in organization
• Impulsivity, poor judgment in situations	• Judgment lags behind intellectual development
• Problems adhering to rule for regulating behavior	• Intensity possibly leading to struggles with authority
• Trouble following directions	• Questions rules, directions

BEFORE AN ADHD REFERRAL ASK:
• Is there any reason to believe there are indicators of giftedness and/or talent in this child? • Could the observed behaviors be in response to inappropriate placement, over/under stimulating curriculum, or lack of peer challenge? • Have curricular modifications been tested before behavioral modifications as a means for altering the behaviors? • Has the child been interviewed to secure his/her view of the behavior? • Has the child been taught social skill strategies? • Can the child explain why tasks and activities remain incomplete? • Do disinterest, boredom, and/or lack of relevancy play a part? • What prompts interruptions or excessive talking? • Can the “inattentive” child repeat what has been said? • Does the child thrive on working on multiple tasks? • Do the behaviors occur at certain times, during particular subjects, with certain teachers, or in particular environment?

BEFORE AN ADHD REFERRAL ASK, continued:

- Have the patterns of various behaviors been “mapped” at school and at home to determine any consistency of stimuli?
- Is there a record of changes in instruction as well as in home stimuli to ascertain the child’s responses?
- Have there been collaborative efforts between school and home to structure activities around the child’s strongest areas of interest?
- Is the “label” critical to securing and guaranteeing appropriate educational services?

10 STEPS FOR ACCOMMODATING NEEDS BEFORE AN ADHD REFERRAL

1. Assess student interests; figure out what each child cares about both in and out of school.
2. To the greatest extent possible, determine how each student handles information.
3. Purposefully look at students for their strengths and not merely their weaknesses.
4. Offer instruction that accommodates a wide diversity of styles and preferences.
5. Integrate enrichment activities into instruction for all students.
6. Create opportunities for students to pursue their interests.
7. Allow student time to “blow off steam” during the course of instructional time.
8. Teach students about systems for managing their time and energies.
9. Be prepared to offer students an opportunity to “compact out of “ previously mastered material.
10. Learn how to engage students in meaningful independent investigations, projects, and assignments.

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