

**Inside the School**

**Five Things  
Every Teacher  
Should Know  
about ADHD  
and LD**

By Joanna Marx-Talarczyk

**Special Report**

# Inside the School

## Inside the School Team

Bill Haight  
President

Diane Trim  
Editor and Content Manager

Joe Blewett  
Marketing Specialist

James Pederson  
Web Developer

Debra Lovelien  
Art Director

David Rice  
Technical Director

Mark Beyer  
Customer Service

Diane Heberlein  
Customer Service

Theresa Sandmire  
Customer Service

## Advisory Board

Amanda Barnett  
Middle school teacher, S. Carolina

Heather Warren  
Bilingual and Literacy Instructional  
Resource teacher, Wis.

Huckle Rahr  
Technical college instructor

Suzanne Zentner, Ph.D.  
Superintendent, Wis.

For More Special Reports Visit  
[www.INSIDEtheschool.com](http://www.INSIDEtheschool.com)

## Contact Information

Inside the School  
2718 Dryden Drive  
Madison, WI 53704  
800-433-0499 ext. 2  
[support@magnapubs.com](mailto:support@magnapubs.com)

Inside the School is a division of  
Magna Publications, Inc.



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents .....	1
ADHD and ADD are the same thing .....	3
ADHD symptoms look similar to behavioral problems .....	4
Many students with ADHD also have a learning disability.....	5
Teachers aren't doctors .....	6
Teachers are an important part of observing students' behavior .....	7

# FIVE THINGS EVERY TEACHER SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ADHD AND LD

In a symphony orchestra, the conductor leads individual musicians to play in harmony. The conductor and the musicians are all necessary to play a piece successfully. If one musician is unable to play properly or the conductor is absent, the whole symphony falls apart.

“For example, if you have a violinist whose strings are broken on the violin—that’s like having a specific learning disability,” ADHD and LD expert Sandra Rief said. “The executive functions [are] like the conductor’s role in a symphony orchestra and if there is executive functioning impairment [ADHD], it’s like having a poor or absent conductor.”

Rief is a leading author, speaker and educational consultant on helping students with learning, attention and behavioral challenges. From Rief’s online seminar, *What Every Teacher Needs to Know about ADHD and LD*, here are five things teachers should know about these disorders.

## ADHD AND ADD ARE THE SAME THING

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is now the umbrella term for the disorder, but there are three different types of ADHD.

“Some people like to differentiate by saying ADD as opposed to ADHD when the student doesn’t have ‘H,’ the hyperactivity,” Rief said. According to Rief, ADD refers to the predominately inattentive type of ADHD. These are students who are inattentive, distractible, off-task and lack focus. They may be impulsive, although not to an impairing degree and don’t have the hyperactivity component. According to Rief, many of these students are girls and go undiagnosed since they aren’t disruptive.

The second type of ADHD is the predominantly hyperactive and impulsive type. These are students who don’t think before they act or can’t sit still.

“If a child is diagnosed when they’re four, five or six years old, many times they’ll receive that second type of classification, because inattention when you’re a little kid is not significant because all kids are a little inattentive,” Rief said.

Most people with ADHD have the third type of the disorder, which is the combined type. They exhibit a significant number of symptoms in three areas: inattention, impulsivity and hyperactivity.

## ADHD SYMPTOMS LOOK SIMILAR TO BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS

Things like talking out in class, blurting out, not wanting to be called on and out-of-seat behavior are all related to the impulsivity and lack of inhibition associated with ADHD.

“Because they’re not stopping and thinking, they tend to get in trouble with authority figures,” Rief said. “They will speak what’s on their mind and not censor what they want to say, which can get them in trouble and they tend to be a much greater challenge both to motivate and discipline.”

These students have a hard time with memory. These are students might look like they aren’t following directions, when really they just can’t *remember* the directions. They act out in the same way or make the same mistakes over and over. To a teacher this looks like deliberate defiance, but really these students are acting impulsively and don’t stop to think about past experiences.

“What they need from us is more cueing, reminding, and prompting before they change classes or engage in certain activities. We need to remind them what they need to do when they get in their cooperative groups, to remind them of the behaviors that you want to see that you’re going to be evaluating them on,” Rief said. “They just need that reminding.”

## MANY STUDENTS WITH ADHD ALSO HAVE A LEARNING DISABILITY

About 30 to 60 percent of students with ADHD also have learning disabilities. Learning disabilities are neurological problems that make processing information difficult. These problems are unexpected based on the child's age, developmental level and other abilities.

"We know that they are skilled and capable and cognitively have at least average intelligence, but for some reason, they're having trouble learning," Rief said.

Learning disabilities are a problem with processing the input, perception, integration, retrieval or output of information; these students take longer to process information. Students with ADHD but without a learning disability learn well, but are unable to show what they know.

"I want you to be aware that there are a lot of gifted kids who have learning disabilities or ADHD or both," Rief said. "With those students, it's quite a challenge, because their disabilities may mask that giftedness."

## TEACHERS AREN'T DOCTORS

Just because a child is inattentive or hyperactive, it doesn't mean he has ADHD. It could be a number of other disorders, conditions or situations that might cause that same kind of behavior. Teachers should never suggest treatment or diagnosis.

"So we are not the diagnosticians," Rief said. "We have to be very careful as educators that we don't look at a student and just make an assumption."

The same goes for medication. Two treatments are available for ADHD: medication and behavioral therapy. Rief cautions that teachers keep their opinions about medication to themselves.

"Regardless of your own bias about medication or how you feel about it personally, be aware that as educators, it's strictly 100 percent a choice and a decision between parents and their child's physician," Rief said. "We have nothing to do with recommending medication or requiring medication."

## TEACHERS ARE AN IMPORTANT PART OF OBSERVING STUDENTS' BEHAVIOR

Although teachers shouldn't make suggestions about diagnosis and treatment, they should be observing behaviors. It's okay to share observations about a student's performance with a parent. Students do spend a significant amount of time at school.

"Keep in mind that by the time you have them at your level, these students have often had years of negative experiences at school and parents have had years of having to either fight with the school or feel like they're not on the same page or feel like they're being blamed for their child's behaviors," Rief said.

These five things: ADHD and ADD are the same thing, ADHD can look like behavioral problems, learning disabilities can accompany ADHD, teachers aren't doctors and teachers have an important role in observing students' behavior should help teachers understand these disorders and their roles in managing them.

"For those of you who really believe in the student's success and see their strengths and try to nurture their strengths, it goes a long way," Rief said.



2718 Dryden Drive  
Madison, WI 53704  
800-433-0499 ext. 2 · [www.InsideTheSchool.com](http://www.InsideTheSchool.com)  
[support@magnapubs.com](mailto:support@magnapubs.com)