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Facilitating Homework with ADD and/or Learning Disabled Students

The homework setting and homework process for the ADD or LD student often must be customized because what may work for other students frequently is not effective with students who have one or more of these handicapping conditions.

For the elementary school student, structure and routine is very important. The following are recommended:

- 1) Choose a study location. Close supervision is usually necessary. Minimize distractions such as TV, siblings, and toys. The table or desk ought to be clear of all but school material.
- 2) Teach yourself and the child to operate within blocks of time, such as 15 minute blocks. Use a timer to measure the 15 minutes. This visual and auditory aid helps many students remain more focused on task. The reward for finishing a block of time is to take breaks.
- 3) Many of these children, especially the ADD children, focus and study better if they have a few blocks of time to go outside and work off some energy before re-approaching the homework task.
- 4) Know your child's study limit and slowly increase from that point. Some children can do only two blocks of 15 minutes each. Begin there and over the next month attempt to raise it to 3 study blocks – in one evening. Many elementary age students have a hard time doing homework for one hour per evening.
- 5) Switch homework subjects to keep your child's attention. Study one subject for 15 minutes and then, after or not after a break, switch to another subject.
- 6) Be patient and remember they are handicapped. You may not be able to see their handicap but it is there. If they have an oral comprehension handicap, they may not hear you accurately. You may need to repeat instructions or expectations – several times. If they have a reading comprehension problem, they may need to read the material several times – as well as have it read to them.

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- 7) Keep track of the blocks of time they study per day and per week. We adults like rewards such as TV time, certain foods, movies, etc. Your children also like rewards for their efforts. Give them both praise as well as something concrete at the end of the day or week.

Middle school and high school students also need structure and routine but they are more likely to resist it than the younger child. Be patient and do not give up or give in too much to these "children in transition" to young adulthood. They often push for too much independence regarding homework. They also tend to be busier than younger children with extra-curricular activities and with friends. Compromise with these students becomes more important also. Do the following with them:

- 1) Continue to encourage/require them to study at one location with minimal distractions. If they want to change locations, have them remain in the new one for several weeks, at least, and minimize distractions.
- 2) Some students, particularly ADD students, focus better with background "noise" such as a fan, radio or some other music. Monitor their performance closely to see if these noises are distracting or helpful.
- 3) Encourage them to study in blocks of time, possibly thirty minutes. This is part of the structure. Some may want to show they are independent by studying on their own. This is ok as long as you hold them accountable for doing the work and doing it well. Have them show you what they completed.
- 4) These adolescents have more and higher expectations placed upon them by numerous teachers – not just the one or two teachers of elementary age children. Be certain to communicate initially and routinely with all your child's teachers so they know he/she is handicapped so they can intervene appropriately by teaching to the child's strengths, and so they will coordinate well with you. Life becomes more complicated for these students too, so be patient and listen to them.
- 5) When you talk with the teachers, provide them with concrete examples of your child's handicap. Share with them what works at home and what previous teachers have found to be helpful. Give them samples of your child's work and show or give them a copy of any psycho-educational testing that has been done on your child. Also, keep the teachers informed of any situations that could cause stress in your student and then problems in the classroom. Specifically, tell of deaths, divorces, housing moves, etc.