Attention Strategies for Educators

ALI ADLER, M.A.

Attention - Definition
The process of selecting the most relevant stimuli while filtering out less relevant information.

Conceptualizing Attention

Bottom-Up
Stimulus Driven

Top-Down
Goal Oriented
Types of Attention

- Selective attention
- Divided attention
- Alternating attention
- Sustained attention

Selective Attention

The ability to choose one stimulus over another.
Divided Attention

The ability to attend to more than one environmental factor at the same time.

Alternating Attention

The ability to switch your focus from one stimuli or activity to another.

Sustained Attention

The ability to focus on a particular task for a continuous amount of time.
Attention
The basis for all higher level skills and cognition.

Attention post-TBI vs. ADHD

• Different anatomical framework
• Recovery/improvement differences

Attention Difficulties - Manifestation
Deficits in Selective Attention

• Easily distracted
• Difficulty remembering
• Off task and can't return independently
• Difficulty following rules

Deficits in Divided Attention

• May become easily confused
• May not start a task

Deficits in Alternating Attention

• May complete one task but not switch to another.
• Difficulty with change in schedule/routine.
• May demonstrate difficulty attending to a new task, may stay stuck on the previous task.
• May make off-topic comments.
Deficits in Sustained Attention

- Difficulty attending to task for more than a short period of time
- Difficulty with increased length and complexity of language
- May not complete the assignment
- Appear spacey and forgetful
- Presents with inconsistent performance
- Difficulty following conversation/lecture
- Difficulty working independently

Treatment for Deficits in Attention

- Pharmacological Treatment
- Cognitive Retraining
- Classroom-based Strategies

Strategies

ABC's of Addressing Attention in the Classroom Setting
Accommodations

• Explicit instruction, direct attention to task
• Reduce distractions
• Clear desk
• Automatization of skill
• Help with organization to provide framework for attention
• Break assignment into manageable parts in accordance with attention span
• Provide copy of notes and directions
• Teach one concept at a time

Accommodations

• Encourage self-talk
• Number steps/tasks
• Use pictures/use bottom-up attention as needed
• Actively engage the student
• Review/overlearning
• Reduce complexity
• Reduce amount of information

Behavioral Interventions

• Provide breaks
• Frequently check for on-task behavior
• Complete FBA and BIP
**Consistency**

- Predictable routine
- Structure throughout day
- Consistency from all providers

**Direct Instruction**

Teach “attention”

http://www.understood.org/~/media/2c05e29b4dc14a27bd061da1a634359.pdf

**Environmental Cues**

http://www.understood.org/
Functional Impairment/Functional Solutions

- Make instruction real and meaningful.
- Pair with overlearned skill.
- Make instruction motivating.
- Use Multi-sensory instruction.
- Make the material relevant.
- Use bottom-up attention.

Goals

- Ensure the student understands the task.
- Have the student retell the directions to ensure focused on what needs to be done.
- Ensure attention concerns are documented on the IEP in the form of a goal.

Help

- Teach the student to ask for help.
- You, as the teacher, seek help when needed. If strategies are not working, stop and revise.
Summary

• Implement “A.B.C.’s” strategies
• Importance of Data collection
• Provide support when needed
• Role of teacher