

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD) And Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

Students with ADHD and students with TBI are sometimes confused with students with a learning disability because of similar learning profiles. There are some significant differences, however, among students with learning disabilities, ADHD, and TBI.

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder is a neurological condition that affects learning and behavior. ADHD is sometimes classified as an “invisible” disability because it is not as readily apparent as other types of disabilities such as mobility impairments and sensory disabilities. ADHD is characterized by inattention, impulsivity, and/or hyperactivity. Students with ADHD may have a learning profile typical of a student with a learning disability, i.e. auditory perception problems, memory problems, etc. Often students with ADHD also have a learning disability. Other disabilities such as psychiatric impairments may also be present. The student’s primary diagnosis however is ADHD. Following are examples of **difficulties** that a student with ADHD may experience:

- staying focused for long periods of time
- being easily distracted
- organizing information, tasks and self
- establishing and maintaining a routine
- following through and completing tasks, projects, etc.
- attending to detail

ADHD may impact a student in a variety of academic activities, such as attending to lectures, participating in discussions, studying, taking tests, preparing written work, etc. Some students with ADHD may take medication. Some students with ADHD will need academic accommodations to succeed as seen in the following examples:

- A student with ADHD who has difficulty listening to lecture and taking notes may need to tape record portions of the lecture
- A student with ADHD who is easily distracted by extraneous stimuli (i.e. pencil tapping, throat clearing, chair squeaking, etc.) may need a low distraction area for testing

- A student with ADHD with lessened processing speed skills as a side effect of medication may need extended test time
- A student with ADHD may need to negotiate additional time to complete specific assignments if there are several competing deadlines within a short span of time

A student with ADHD typically has the necessary skill and strategies to be a successful learner, but may not have the ability to develop an environment for keeping himself/herself focused and on track.

Common accommodations:

- preferential seating near the front of class and away from other possible sources of distraction such as open doors, windows, etc.
- access to class notes
- tape recordings of class lectures
- access to materials/text in electronic format
- extended test time and /or testing in a low distraction area
- additional time to complete assignments
- availability of lecture notes, learning materials, practice tests, etc. in electronic format

General classroom considerations

- concise course syllabus
- providing written lecture outlines, copies of overheads, study guides
- breaking large amounts of information or new or difficult concepts into smaller parts or steps
- starting each class with an overview of materials to be presented: concluding each class with a review of key points and providing a time for questions
- reinforcing written instructions verbally
- providing print copies of project descriptions, detailed instructions for a research paper, etc. not already specified in the course syllabus
- including use of board, overhead projector, handouts, videos, group discussions, role-playing, etc. when presenting (*All students benefit from seeing, hearing, and experiencing information, especially new information, when presented in such a manner.*)
- visual, aural, and tactile demonstrations incorporated into instruction

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) is a neurological impairment as a result of an injury to a part or parts of the brain often resulting in physical, mental, and emotional difficulties. Though not always visible and sometimes seemingly minor, a brain injury is often complex. Effects can be temporary or permanent. Depending on the extent and location of the injury, symptoms can vary widely. Some common symptoms:

- loss of coordination
- difficulties with speech
- lessened social skills
- loss of memory
- limited ability to concentrate
- loss of reasoning skills

Students with TBI may have the profile of a student with a learning disability; however, the weakness and strengths may be more pronounced depending on the area(s) of brain injury. Additionally, students with TBI may have psychiatric impairments, as well as physical impairments (i.e. mobility or sensory) and/or chronic health problems.

Common accommodations

- access to class notes
- tape recordings of class lectures
- extended test time
- alternative test formats
- alternative evaluation methods (i.e. portfolio, video presentations, etc.)
- access of lecture notes, learning materials, practice tests, etc. in electronic format

General classroom considerations

- concise course syllabus
- providing written lecture outlines, copies of overheads, study guides
- breaking large amounts of information or new or difficult concepts into smaller parts or steps
- starting each class with an overview of materials to be presented:
concluding each class with a review of key points and providing a time for questions
- including use of board, overhead projector, handouts, videos, group discussions, role-playing, etc. when presenting (*All students benefit from*

seeing, hearing, and experiencing information, especially new information, when presented in such a manner.)

For more information go to: www.ldonline.org and www.washington.edu/doi/Faculty