

WHAT DOES IT REALLY MEAN TO PAY ATTENTION?

WHAT REALLY WORKS CONFERENCE
CSUN CENTER FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING
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Kathy Spielman and Dorothee Chadda
Special Education Specialists

Agenda

- Students' voice
- Construct's overview
- Take away tool
- Implementation activity

They believe that paying attention is...

- ...looking at the person who is talking



- ...listening to what the person is saying

- ...being able to hear the information and write it in your own mind so that it does not go away

They say that paying attention is like...

- ...walking through a maze

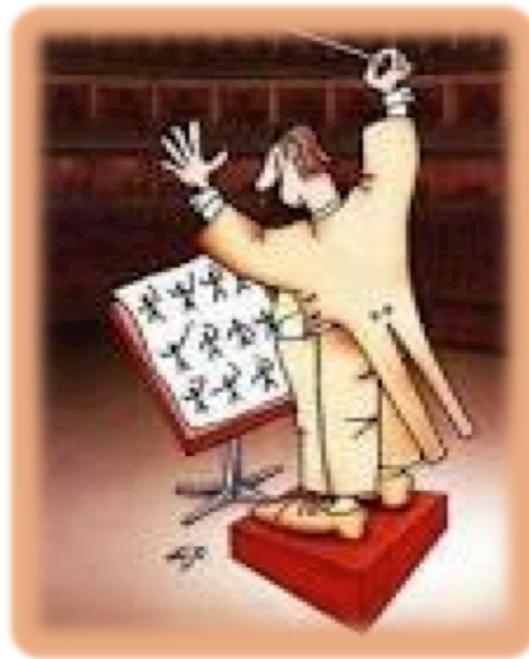


- ...a voice in the background that you listen to

- ...a fly on the wall

- ...a bird trying to get out of a cage

Attention is



the conductor of the orchestra

Chadda and Spielman March 2013

The 8 neuro-developmental constructs

ATTENTION

MEMORY

HIGHER ORDER THINKING

LANGUAGE

MEMORY

NEUROMOTOR FUNCTIONS

SOCIAL COGNITION

SPATIAL AND TEMPORAL-SEQUENTIAL ORDERING

From the work of Dr. Mel Levine and All Kinds of Minds

Mental Energy Control



- **Alertness:** attaining an effective level of focused listening and watching
- **Mental effort:** initiating and maintaining the flow of energy needed for cognitive work output
- **Sleep arousal balance:** sleeping well at night and being sufficiently alert during the day
- **Consistency:** maintaining a steady, reliable and predictable flow of the mental energy needed for dependable functioning.

Production Control



- **Previewing:** anticipating likely outcomes of actions, events and problems
- **Facilitation/Inhibition:** selecting the best option before acting or starting a task
- **Pacing:** doing tasks at the most appropriate speed
- **Self-monitoring:** watching one's own output and making necessary modifications
- **Reinforceability:** using previous experience to guide current behavior and output

Implementation Activity

Think of a student who has a challenge in attention



1. Use the Attention Checklist to identify the traits you have observed and determine which functions are possible weaknesses or strengths
2. Use the Attention Intervention Template and choose one or two weak functions that you want to help the student understand and work with
3. List strengths and affinities you will leverage
4. Use the Strategies Chart and list a few strategies that you could use to help this child tomorrow in your classroom/at home
5. Think of how you will describe the student's attention profile and how to use the strategies

Shared Strategies



kspielman@westmarkschool.org

dchadda@westmarkschool.org

Now what?



What have you learned?

What will you do differently?

STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS WEAK ATTENTION AT SCHOOL AND AT HOME

MENTAL ENERGY CONTROLS

Strategies at home

- Provide frequent scheduled breaks when studying. Such breaks can be set on a timer. A change of work site can also help children renew their mental energy
- Encourage them to stay in their room in bed with a lamp on. They can read and/or listen to music while trying to fall asleep
- Have them to read about, write about and talk about subjects they find compelling and areas for which they show a clear affinity.
- Help them get started with a task or assignment.

Strategies in school

- Allow students to stand up and stretch
- Create purposeful breaks; they can be the designated 'teacher helpers' and do jobs like filling out the stapler or handing out papers
- Allow students to be doing something with their hands while seated at a desk; performing some manual activity or fidgeting with an object helps keep them aroused
- Signal them when something especially important is about to be stated
- Routinely change up modalities such as switching back and forth from a high verbal presentation to a nonverbal activity; preview such shifts so that students know how long they have to maintain their alertness before a transition

STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS WEAK ATTENTION AT SCHOOL AND AT HOME

PROCESSING CONTROLS

Strategies at home	Strategies in school
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have children summarize the key points of a passage or chapter; discuss what is important to study for a test. • Build times into children’s schedule where they can have an outlet for their distractibility • Repeat instructions or directions and have children repeat what was just said • When reading a chapter, have children underline, summarize or whisper important ideas under their breath • Take an interest in the subject matter; discuss with children the material that is being learned at school • Try to set limits on passive processing experiences such as watching TV, listening to music or playing games • Tell children in advance how long they will have to concentrate by using a clock or timer; they need to understand that they are doing so in order to get better at focusing longer • Encourage children to become “experts” in a focused area; avoid chronic “dabbling” • Help highly insatiable children understand what this means and how important it is to learn how to delay gratification; set up a system of “work before play”; avoid over-scheduling free time with exciting activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide them with opportunities to develop skills at summarizing, finding main ideas and paraphrasing • Provide partially completed graphic organizers or outlines for note-taking; embed cues like numbers blanks for key ideas • Encourage them to make up questions that could be on a test • Make directions short and direct • Deliver information in more than one way • Leverage students’ affinities and interests to rekindle enthusiasm and active learning • Give advanced warning for upcoming information, such as “I will be telling you about 3 important key points...” • Use agreed upon signals for recognizing when a student’s mind becomes over active and they are missing important information; help student notice when this happens and let the teacher know • Tell them in advance how long they will need to stay highly focused and gently remind them to get back on track during the time period • Acknowledge problems with insatiability and encourage students to share and take turns and notice when instant gratification is inhibiting their behavior

STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS WEAK ATTENTION AT SCHOOL AND AT HOME

PRODUCTION CONTROLS

Strategies at home

- Encourage children to come up with a plan before writing a report, starting a project or drawing a picture; children need to preview consciously to visualize and describe what the outcome or result is likely to be
- Ask children questions like, “What are the different ways we might do this?” “What do you think is probably the best way to go about this?” “What would happen if you >insert negative or positive example< ?”
- Require children to proofread their work but only after an interval of hours or days

Strategies in school

- Design and model activities that accentuate the blueprints for production; Students should periodically submit their work plans and be graded on them before starting an assignment
- Have students document in advance how long they think the different stages of a task ought to take and review these estimates with them to determine if they are realistic
- Tell students how long a homework assignment ought to take and have them record on the paper how long it did take
- Reward students for finding their own errors
- Provide self-monitoring practice by giving students completed problems that contain errors and having them identify and correct the errors
- Use extrinsic reward systems and specific praise to reinforce good choices, impulse control and effective self-monitoring

RESOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION

BOOKS:

A Mind At a Time, by Mel Levine

Schools for All Kinds of Minds: Boosting Student Success by Embracing Learning Variation, by Mary-Dean Barringer, Craig Pohlman, and Michele Robinson

Educational Care: A System for Understanding and Helping Children with Learning Differences at Home and in School, by Mel Levine

WEBSITE:

<http://www.allkindsofminds.org/>

- Check out the “Attention Module:” <http://www.allkindsofminds.org/attention-module>
- The site includes a variety of useful resources for teachers and parents

ATTENTION INTERVENTION TEMPLATE

1. List 1 – 2 attention functions which are a struggle for this student and observable examples of how the functions affect the student at school/home/in life:

Attention Functions	Examples

2. List strengths and affinities you could leverage when managing attention weaknesses with this student:

3. List 2 - 3 strategies you will use to help this student:

4. Plan how and when you will communicate with the student about his/her “attention profile” and the strategies you plan to use.

5. Plan a feedback session. Share your observations on what’s working. Get feedback from the student. Revise the plan as needed.

THE ATTENTION CONSTRUCT
Checklist

Directions: If the trait is often or usually observed, put a “-“ in the weakness column. If a trait is rarely or never observed, put a “+“ in the strength column. Use “+/-“ if the traits are sometimes observed.

Controls	Functions	Traits	Strength +	+/-	Weakness -
Mental Energy Controls	Alertness	Has trouble staying alert Loses focus unless very interested			
	Mental Effort	Has trouble finishing things Has difficulty starting homework Effort is unpredictable/inconsistent			
	Sleep Arousal Balance	Has trouble falling/staying asleep Has trouble getting up in the morning			
	Performance Consistency	Has excellent days and poor days Has unpredictable behavior/work			
Processing Controls	Saliency Determination	Focuses on unimportant details Is easily distracted by sounds and visual things			
	Depth and Detail of Processing	Forgets what he has just heard Misses important information			
	Cognitive Activation	Daydreams easily Has unusual ideas or thoughts			
	Focal Maintenance	Shows uneven concentration Has trouble shifting attention			
	Satisfaction Level	Craves excitement Gets bored easily			
Production Controls	Previewing	Does not think before acting Has trouble planning work			
	Facilitation/Inhibition	Does the first thing that comes to mind Does not use strategies			
	Pacing	Does too many things too quickly Is overactive/fidgety			
	Self-Monitoring	Makes many careless mistakes Fails to notice when bothering others			
	Reinforcement	Seems not to learn from experience Keeps making same kinds of mistakes			

Source: *Educational Care, A System for Understanding and Helping Children with Learning Differences at Home and in School*, by Dr. Mel Levine, 2002.