



Transcript:

What Teachers Should Know about ADHD: Supporting Diverse Students & Families (Part 2)

Presenter: Tandra Rutledge
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ANN SCHENSKY: Hello, and welcome everyone. We're going to give people a minute or so to get in and get settled. And then we will get started.

All right, we're going to get started. I know people are still trickling in. But welcome everyone to the part 2 of what teachers should know about ADHD, supporting diverse students and family. This is brought to you today by the MHTTC and SAMHSA. The Great Lakes ATTC, MHTTC, PTTC are funded by SAMHSA through the following cooperative agreements.

The opinions expressed in this webinar are the views of the speakers and do not necessarily reflect the official position of DHHS or SAMHSA. The MHTTC network believes that words matter. And the MHTTC network uses affirming, respectful, and recovery-oriented language in all its activities.

We have some housekeeping details for you today. If you are having technical issues, please individually message Stephanie Behlman or Kristina Spanbauer in the Chat section below and they'll be happy to help you. If you have questions for the speaker, please put them in the Q&A section at the bottom of your screen.

A copy of the PowerPoint slides as well as the recording will be available on the MHTTC website within a week. If you missed the first of these two sessions, that information is on our website. And we will also provide the link in the chat.

You will be directed to a link at the end of this presentation to a very short survey. We would really appreciate it if you could fill it out. It probably takes about three minutes. And it's how we report our activities back to SAMHSA. We will be using automated captioning during the presentation today. And certificates of attendance will be sent to all who attend the full session. Those go out via email. And they can take about 7 to 10 days. If you would like to see what else we're up to, please follow us on social media.

We are very lucky again today to have Tandra Rutledge as our presenter. Tandra is the director of business development at Riveredge Hospital, a freestanding psychiatric facility in Illinois. Tandra is a mental health advocate and suicide prevention educator. She promotes wellness and resilience through a social justice and racial equity lens.



Tandra also serves on the board of directors for the Illinois chapter of American Foundation of Suicide Prevention and is a member of the Illinois Suicide Prevention Alliance. She is an AMSR trainer, a certified suicide prevention educator for the QPR Institute, an adult mental health first aid instructor, and a crisis intervention team instructor with the Chicago Police Department. Again, we are thrilled to have Tandra. And I'm going to turn it over to her.

TANDRA RUTLEDGE: Thank you, Ann. And thank you all for joining us this afternoon for part 2, "What Teachers Should Know About ADHD-- Supporting Diverse Students and Families." This is, as I mentioned, part 2 of our webinar. And I do see some familiar-- I would say faces, but names, those individuals who joined us last week. So thank you for returning. And for those of you who were not with us last week, the link and the recording as well as the slides are being provided. There is a link in the chat and you can check out part 1.

So today, in today's webinar, we will be outlining best practice classroom strategies for supporting the success of all children. And we will be highlighting the importance of the school-home collaboration for children with ADHD. As a mental health provider, I have worked with many families impacted with ADHD for many years. But it was not until my son was diagnosed with ADHD that I fully realized the critical role that teachers play in the success of a child with ADHD.

Now, I do want to give a disclaimer. Throughout the presentation, I will be sharing real life examples from my own experiences with my son. My experiences should not be taken as expert advice. My hope only is that through sharing my experiences, my own story and lessons learned, that we can address stigma and misinformation about ADHD. With that being said, I do want to hear from you. I encourage you to share your experiences with students and with parents and ask any questions so that we can lean in and learn from one another.

I want to start our discussion this week where we ended last week's discussion with this video. "Dear Teacher-- Heartfelt Advice for Teachers from Students." And I want you to listen as children with disabilities, including ADHD, talk about how their brain works and offer simple ways that teachers can help.

[VIDEO PLAYBACK]

- Dear teacher, I know it doesn't always seem like it, but I really do want to listen and learn.
- It's just my brain is kind of different.
- So this is what I'd like you to know about me.
- I have to move or I really can't pay attention.
- Even though I'm not looking at you, I can still listen to what you're saying.



- If you tell me sit up straight, now I have to use all of my brain to do just that.
- It makes me feel sad when you told me to try harder, even though I've already tried as hard as I can.
- I actually listen better when I'm rocking in my chair.
- When you give me a bunch of directions, I start to think I will never remember all of this.
- Sometimes, my mom and dad end up doing all of my homework.
- So here is how you could maybe help.
- Let me get up and move while I'm learning.
- Let me look wherever I want when you talk to me.
- Let me rock or slouch in my chair.
- No matter what, please don't take away my recess.
- Give me homework I can do all by myself.
- Make directions very short.
- Just ask me, what does your brain need right now?
- And one more thing, my brain might be different than yours. But it's still amazing.
- Sincerely, your student.
- Your student.
- Your student.
- Your student.

[END PLAYBACK]

What are some of your reactions to that video? It's a very, very powerful video. Thoughts or reactions? I love so many parts of that that resonate with me as a mom of a child with ADHD. One of the things that one of the young children said was don't take away my recess, right? It's very important. Yes, it helps really hearing directly from young people, from children.

Someone said, I can really relate to not having to look at someone to be listening. What do a lot of adults say? They say look at me when I'm talking to you. Well, for kids with ADHD, that might not be the case. I do agree. I love the what does your brain need. Because of that video, I've cooperative that in my communication with my son. The video made me feel a bit heartbroken. Yeah, yeah.

Interestingly enough, last week when we showed the video, someone made the comment-- and it's here on the screen-- there are some kids that I need to apologize to. That's a really powerful statement. And so I wanted to start our conversation today with the words and the voices of children.

What we know about ADHD is that it is one of the most common neurological disorders in children. It's not just a matter of trying harder. A child with ADHD is trying hard, much harder than other students. Think about this for a moment. Imagine-- I gave this example last week-- if you had a party in your head all the time. My son has used that analogy when he said to me that he



feels like his brain is on 100. And it takes him a long time. He tries and tries and tries to get his brain on 1. And he just can't.

So imagine if you had a party in your head all the time, just like children with ADHD. And not only do they have a party in their head, but they also have to ignore that party and behave like other children so that they are not labeled as bad children. And the effort that requires is exhausting.

My son's second grade teacher said to me that she can tell how hard he's working. She said because she can see smoke coming out of his ears when he is sitting at his desk. And she would go over to him because she realized the effort that it took him to just complete assignments. And she would tap him on the shoulders and give him a break because she knew how much energy that it required for him to focus on that task because of the party that's in his head.

Attention deficit hyperactivity is usually characterized by problems paying attention, controlling impulsive behaviors. And sometimes, children may act without thinking about what the result will be. Or they may be overly active. But it's important for us to keep in mind that not every high energy or impulsive child has ADHD.

Children are diagnosed with ADHD only if they demonstrate these symptoms so often that they are causing real difficulty in at least two settings, in school or at home, and that the pattern of behavior is causing them serious impairment. And the behavior must persist for at least six months.

In addition to the symptoms of inattentiveness, impulsivity, and hyperactivity, children with ADHD have impairments in executive functioning that affect their ability to organize, to plan and manage their thoughts and actions. And children with ADHD have trouble completing tasks. They forget important things and may not consider the long-term consequences of their actions. And although the causes and risk factors for ADHD are not really well known, current research shows that there is a genetic role in ADHD. ADHD often runs in families. And researchers have found trends in specific brain areas that contribute to attention.

So why do some children with ADHD exhibit disruptive or aggressive behaviors? Well, defiance and emotional outbursts are not themselves symptoms of ADHD. But kids with ADHD are at a higher risk for developing these behaviors. Some kids with ADHD tend to become frustrated and overwhelmed by the demands placed on them that they cannot consistently fulfill because of inherent deficits in paying attention, reining in impulses, and controlling their activity level.

So what may seem like misbehavior could be because he is overwhelmed, frustrated, or embarrassed. If he is feeling any of these emotions, his brain



responds by fighting, fleeing, or freezing. It's a natural stress response. School can be very stressful for a child with ADHD.

And in terms of treatment, in most cases, ADHD can be treated successfully with a combination of medication and behavior therapy. For younger children, for preschool aged children with ADHD, behavior therapy, particularly parent training, is recommended as the first line of treatment before medication is tried. What works best can really depend on the child and on the family.

However, research indicates that there are racial and ethnic disparities in the identification, the diagnosis, and the treatment of ADHD in children. There is consistent evidence that white and English speaking children are more likely to be identified, diagnosed, and treated for ADHD, even though children of color, including Black and Latino children, show symptoms at the same rate as white children.

The reasons for these disparities are complex. But we can't ignore the impact of them. All children with disabilities deserve to get help, regardless of race or ethnicity.

When ADHD is properly diagnosed and treated, children with ADHD can and do learn to manage their symptoms and subsequently reduce their risk for more severe outcomes, including depression, low self-esteem, poor social functioning, drug abuse, poor overall health, risky behavior, education failure, underemployment, or unemployment, and possibly involvement in the juvenile justice system.

For many parents, the process of considering medication is difficult for a lot of reasons. As a mother of a Black son with ADHD, my experiences of racism and discrimination, as well as cultural stigma and lack of trust in the health care system, were some of the factors I grappled with in deciding the best course of treatment for my son. Ultimately, I decided that medication and therapy were best for him. And my experiences are not unique.

For many parents, regardless of race or ethnicity, medication is often not the first choice. So as teachers, you must educate yourselves about these issues and seek to understand and validate the experiences of your students and families if you expect to build supportive, collaborative relationships in which children can thrive.

Speaking of relationships, the Search Institute has identified five elements expressed in 20 specific actions that make relationships powerful in young people's lives. They refer to it as the Developmental Relationships Framework. Student-teacher relationships play a critical role in student motivation and learning. But current research also highlights key gaps in student-teacher relationships from students' perspectives.



A few findings indicate that middle school students who reported high levels of developmental relationships with teachers were eight times more likely to stick with challenging tasks, enjoy working harder, and know that it's OK to make mistakes when learning when compared to students with low levels of student-teacher relationships. Think for a moment about your favorite teacher. It's the relationship that you had that mattered most because they made you feel mattered. And that inspired you.

Additionally, students who reported stronger developmental relationships with their teachers were more likely to have higher grade point averages, feel connected to school, feel culturally respected and included, and rate the instruction they receive as high quality. These are all factors that are considered protective for young people.

Another finding that the Search Institute discovered is that, despite the importance of student-teacher relationships, too few students report not having strong relationships with their teachers. Across various studies, only about 1/4 to 1/3 of students report strong relationship with teachers. For example, a study of 675 middle school students in a diverse suburban district found that only 29% of students experienced a strong developmental relationship with their teachers. Students are most likely to report that teachers challenge growth and that they are least likely to report that teachers expand possibilities for them.

So as we look at this slide here, the Developmental Relationships Framework, we see five key elements of the framework-- express care, or show that I matter to you; challenge growth, push me to keep me getting better; provide support, help me complete tasks and achieve my goals; share power, treat me with respect and give me a say; and finally, expand the possibilities, connect me with people and places that broaden my world. We're going to put a link in the chat for a very brief video that you can take a look at, at your convenience, that talks about and reveals these key elements of the Developmental Relationships Framework and the actions that are associated with the framework.

So now what I'd like for us to take a minute and do-- I want us to use that Developmental Framework because that Developmental Framework is going to be the foundation for building strong relationships with all students. And for children with ADHD, expressing care, challenging growth, sharing power, providing support, and expanding possibilities becomes even more critical. So I want you to look through the Developmental Framework lens. And I want you to respond in the chat. Share some ideas that help address these challenges that are common with children with ADHD. What are some ideas or strategies within that Developmental Framework of those five elements of expressing care, challenging growth, sharing power, providing support, and expanding possibilities could we adopt and incorporate in working with children with ADHD?



And I am going to ask the team to help with sharing some of those things that we can do as teachers through that lens of developmental relationships. We know that there are some common challenges that children with ADHD face. And those include hyperactivity or impulsivity, written expression challenges, and problems with reading comprehension, math computation.

Additionally, children with ADHD have executive skill challenges, including problems being organized, getting started on assignments, completing, and returning assignments, and difficulties and challenges in working memory and memorization. So what are some of the strategies or ideas that you can think of that can help address some of those challenges?

PRESENTER: Someone said it's acting like a facilitator and helping them find larger networks, or groups, or fellow students. Another said create a container for them in a safe place for hyperactivity or impulsivity to help ground them. Create a group agreement as a class that they are inclusive to youth with ADHD.

TANDRA RUTLEDGE: Those are some great suggestions. If you have others, please share them in the chat. I'll share a few of them as well. To show support for students, you would give them opportunities for movement. The video, the young -- men two of the young men in the video talked about I learn best when I move, right? Let me move around. So finding opportunities for movement can be really supportive and helpful in the learning environment for children with ADHD.

Also, one of the things that my son had a very difficult time with is writing stories. He is so very creative. He has a great imagination. And he comes up with the wildest things. But when it came time to putting those ideas down on paper, he struggled. And thankfully, the teachers recognized that. And so one year, we tried having him use the speech recognition through his iPad, where he could just speak. And then the device would keep everything up. Now, of course, we'd have to go back and correct it. But that was a way for him to get his ideas out because the task of writing was so exhausting for him. The graphic organizer idea, using that and writing key components didn't quite work with them so much. But I know that it can be a useful tool for students with ADHD.

In terms of reading comprehension, children with ADHD have difficulty remembering what was read and identifying key points. And that's really a very important part of ELA, is remembering what's written, recalling facts, and identifying key points. And children with ADHD really struggle in that area. And that feeling of reading a paragraph, or two, or two pages, or 10 pages can be really overwhelming.

So a really neat strategy could be where they read to the clip. So you could put a colored paper clip at the end of the required reading section to divide long reading assignments, to divide longer reading assignments into shorter



segments. That can be an effective strategy. And it shows that you care and that you understand that this is very overwhelming.

Math was definitely a challenge. Interestingly enough, when I asked my son a couple of weeks ago, I said, this has been a challenging year for everybody. Where have you seen the most growth? He said in math. Yes, because it has been really challenging for him to grasp the concepts.

So when the teacher gave him a multiplication grid, I was like, yes. It's very, very helpful. And he got the support he needed. And he's doing very well in math. And he has shown, even on standardized measures, the greatest growth in math.

And then if you think about executive functioning skills, one of the things that you can do is-- and I think someone mentioned it-- is having ADHD children work in pairs or partnering with another student can really be helpful at times, as long as that student with ADHD doesn't distract the other students from being able to remain on task. Getting started also in doing assignments-- during the remote learning time, we had someone who came to the house to help provide some support for my son. And they would take brain breaks before starting a new assignment or when my son needed it, when the smoke in his ears started coming out. And that would involve maybe playing Uno, or throwing a football, or listening to music. But scheduling brain breaks and giving children with ADHD an opportunity to take those breaks is really important.

And then they also have difficulty completing and returning assignments. Interestingly enough, my son does not struggle with that. He usually is pretty on top of that. But I know that many students do. They just forget. And so training students to write their assignments down in a homework notebook or even using a digital calendar or using their phones and setting reminders-- our Alexa device has been really helpful at home with helping my son actually develop a lot more independence, where I can say to him, set a timer before you do the next task. And he does that. And it's been really helpful. And I've noticed how he is actually now using his Alexa device as a timer.

And then in terms of working memory and memorization, reducing demands on working memory through the use of prompts and using that graphic organizer again that lists key parts of the essay and circulate copies of lecture notes because it's really hard for children with ADHD to be able to listen and attend to parts of the lesson that are most important. So making lesson notes available and allowing students to maybe share notes, that student with ADHD being allowed to share notes with another student.

Are there any more thoughts or questions around some strategies that you can utilize to support children with ADHD?

PRESENTER: Yeah, we have quite a few the chat. I'll go and read them out. Someone had said that you could provide a dedicated space or a quiet space



where they could take breaks if they're feeling overwhelmed or if they need a brain break, as the speaker had said. Another person said that their siblings benefited from having digital textbooks that would have the option of the textbook being read out loud.

TANDRA RUTLEDGE: Yes, very helpful.

PRESENTER: Someone else said having regular breaks between activities and doing GoNoodle activities, which I personally haven't heard of. And that way they get the means to kind of continuously move around and dance to get out their energy. Someone else said that when they were growing up having ADHD, one of the things that helped me get started was when teachers gave me time to get started. If I needed to write or draw-- is there a lot of feed coming through for you? Or is it just me? Do I sound OK?

TANDRA RUTLEDGE: You sound OK. You're going in and out. But I don't hear feedback. I don't know if other folks are having any difficulty hearing you.

PRESENTER: OK, it might just be me. I'll keep going. There's only a couple more. So I apologize for stopping in the middle of that. So being given time to get their thoughts together was really helpful to them. And I think that was about it. But another thing that I know I've personally heard of is having standing desks or desks where you're able to switch from sitting to standing. But yes, I think that was all for the chat.

You're still muted.

TANDRA RUTLEDGE: I'm sorry. And flexible seating. I feel like flexible seating was the greatest invention in the world, where kids have opportunities to sit on a pillow on the floor, or sit at a large table, or sit at a desk. Or some classrooms might have a special chair or a special seat. So yes, thank you all for sharing. We shared some really great ideas that are not only helpful for school, but also for us parents to utilize at home as well.

So I want to talk about now the importance of parent-child collaboration. The quote that you have on the screen-- I'm going to read it. But it was a quote from someone who attended part 1. And she said, my son has ADHD. His coping mechanism was drawing, which helped him listen to the teacher. He got in trouble for drawing on his worksheets.

I told the teacher that if I cut his hands off, my son would draw with his feet. I explained that my son was listening to her and was making good grades in her class. She was annoyed by him drawing on her worksheets. I thank you for sharing that comment. And I want to highlight it here because I too share that experience.

My son also likes to draw and would draw all over his worksheets. And it would be challenging to see where his answers started and where his drawing ended. And it was really hard trying to advocate, as in this example, with the



teacher to let the teacher know that this is one of his coping mechanisms. And it is healthy and adaptive for him to have.

One year, a teacher gave my son a notebook. And it was his special drawing notebook. And she actually encouraged him to use the notebook. And he could draw any time he wanted to. And so instead of drawing on his worksheets, he now had a notebook that he could draw in. And it was a special one.

And it meant so much to him that his teacher gave it to him. He didn't bring it home. He didn't put it in his book bag. He used it in class. And you know what wound up happening? After several months, by the second semester of the school year, he no longer needed it. He was no longer drawing on his worksheets. I think that that highlights the importance of the parent-teacher collaboration and parent-teacher communication.

A school psychologist, Dr. Terry Lyles, has outlined a model of disability that I think is really helpful. And if you are a teacher or parent, I want you to consider this model of disability. One model she says is the behavioral model. And both models are based on assumptions about behavior, assumptions that teachers and parents use to understand children with academic and behavioral problems.

So in the behavioral model, it is believed that the behavior that is being shown is the result of motivation. And if it's result of motivation, then it's voluntary. And then if it's voluntary, then the response is more likely to be anger because the behavior is being perceived as being willful versus the academic model of disability, which says that someone believes that the behavior is resulting from a neurological cause, which ADHD is a neurological disorder. And if it's from a neurological cause, then it is involuntary. So when that child blurts out an answer or jumps out of his or her seat, that is the result of an involuntary process. And if it's involuntary, then instead of anger, there is empathy. And if there's empathy, then the teacher then provides remediation and support.

So it's important for us to now understand what is my view, what is my model of disability. And if you're here and you're a teacher, is it the behavioral model? Or is it the academic model? And if you're a parent, the same. And I think that if we examine what our view of disability is, that can help us not only support children with ADHD. But it also allows parents and teachers to be able to come together in meaningful ways to collaborate and support all children who have ADHD.

So let's take a look at-- I want to highlight for us four strategies for improving parent-child collaboration. The first one is you have to prioritize open communication. Parent-teacher partnerships can influence and do influence child outcomes for children with ADHD. Being available and prioritizing communication with each other can be very helpful.



Trust can be formed by repeated authentic interactions, where there is a safe space to share concerns for both the teacher as well as the parent. Try focusing on the common goal of supporting the child. And that hopefully will open up space for genuine communication and non-defensiveness and receiving feedback. Building trust takes time. And a few positive meetings or encounters may help to begin to build that foundation.

One helpful tip I will give you is that it's important for parents and teachers to sandwich feedback when providing it to each other. So this means provide positive feedback first, growth-based feedback next, and finally another piece of positive feedback. So sandwich the growth-based feedback between positive feedback because every child has something about them that's special. And we need to, as parents, recognize those things.

Another effective strategy is to appreciate the uniqueness of each other's perspective. Parents likely have an incredibly significant understanding of their child that is informed by their history and a multitude of interactions with their child. Teachers also do. Teachers are likely to have a broad perspective of same age peers, education, and experience and can view a student within the context of their past and current classmates. Both parents and teachers have a unique perspective to bring to the table. And so open communication and respect to each other's perspective is so very important to share knowledge, to understanding the whole child across settings.

Another suggestion is you want to notice any negative thoughts or assumptions about yourself and others. It's very important to do so. Within the context of the greater stress that may be more likely to be experienced in supporting children with ADHD, parents and teachers may be at a higher risk of thinking more negatively both about themselves and about each other. An initial step towards not letting these thoughts affect mood and behavior is to notice these thoughts in the first place.

And if these negative thoughts arise, try to work on understanding them. Take time to examine where these negative thoughts may be coming from. That may be helpful. Are there implicit biases that you have about the student, the parent? These thoughts that you have or biases may or may not be reflective of reality. And finding evidence for and against these thoughts can help in your understanding of what the next steps could be. Trying to understand the perspective of the person can be helpful in deciding if the thoughts are reflective of reality.

Continuing to openly interact with the other person can also provide more information and context to support or disprove specific thoughts. It may be the case that negative thoughts, such as I just cannot work with this parent, may be actually more extreme than the situation warrants or may actually be untrue, in which case reflecting on where these thoughts are coming from may help reduce the negative intensity of these thoughts.



Relationships are unique. And they develop at their own pace. We know that there are multiple barriers to relationships. And there are barriers to effective parent-teacher collaboration. But given the significance of home-school collaboration for children with ADHD, the above strategies that we just talked about can be helpful in improving home-school partnerships. After all, children need adults who will never give up on them. And that includes teachers as well as parents.

The late Dr. Rita Pierson was an educator who believed that every child deserves a champion or an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connections, and insists that they become the best that they can possibly be. She is quoted as saying, parents make decisions for their children based on what they know and what they feel will make them safe. And it is not our place as educators to say what they do is wrong. It is our place to say, maybe we can add a set of rules that they don't know about. As we wrap up our time together this afternoon, we will take a look at why she believes every kid needs a champion.

[VIDEO PLAYBACK]

- I have spent my entire life either at the schoolhouse, on the way to the schoolhouse, or talking about what happens in the schoolhouse. Both my parents were educators. My maternal grandparents were educators. And for the past 40 years, I've done the same thing.

And so needless to say, over those years, I've had a chance to look at education reform from a lot of perspectives. Some of those reforms have been good. Some of them have been not so good. And we know why kids drop out. We know why kids don't learn. It's either poverty, low attendance, negative peer influences. We know why.

But one of the things that we never discuss or we rarely discuss is the value and importance of human connection, relationships. James Comer says that no significant learning can occur without a significant relationship. George Washington Carver says all learning is understanding relationships.

Everyone in this room has been affected by a teacher or an adult. For years, I have watched people teach. I have looked at the best. And I've looked at some of the worst. A colleague said to me one time, they don't pay me to like the kids. They pay me to teach a lesson. The kids should learn it. I should teach it. They should learn it. Case closed. Well, I said to her, you know kids don't learn from people they don't like.

[APPLAUSE]

She said that's just a bunch of hooey. And I said to her, well, your year is going to be long and arduous, dear. Needless to say, it was. Some people



think that you can either have it in you to build a relationship or you don't. I think Stephen Covey had the right idea. He said, you ought to just throw in a few simple things, like seeking first to understand as opposed to being understood, simple things like apologizing.

You ever thought about that? Tell a kid you're sorry, they're in shock. I taught a lesson once on ratios. I'm not real good with math. But I was working on it. And I got back and looked at that teacher edition. I taught the whole lesson wrong. So I came back to class the next day and I said, look guys, I need to apologize. I taught the whole lesson wrong. I'm so sorry. They said, that's OK, Ms. Pierson. You were so excited, we just let you go.

[APPLAUSE]

I have had classes that were so low, so academically deficient that I cried. I wondered, how am I going to take this group in nine months from where they are to where they need to be? And it was difficult. It was it was awfully hard. How do I raise the self-esteem of a child and his academic achievement at the same time?

One year, I came up with a bright idea. I told all of my students, you were chosen to be in my class because I am the best teacher and you are the best students. They put us all together, so we could show everybody else how to do it. One of the students said, really?

I said, really. We have to show the other classes how to do it. So when we walk down the hall, people will notice us. So you can't make noise. You just have to strut. And I gave them a saying to say, I am somebody. I was somebody when I came. I'll be a better somebody when I leave. I'm powerful and I am strong. I deserve the education that I get here. I have things to do, people to impress, and places to go. And they said, yeah. You say it long enough, it starts to be a part of you.

[APPLAUSE]

I gave a quiz, 20 questions. A student missed 18. I put a plus 2 on this paper and a big smiley face. He said, Ms. Pierson, is this an F? I said, yes. He said, then why did you put a smiley face? I said, because you're on the road. You got two right. You didn't miss them all. I said, and when we review this, won't you do better? He said, yes ma'am, I can do better. You see, minus 18 sucks all the life out of you. Plus 2 says, I ain't all bad.

[APPLAUSE]

Four years I watched my mother take the time at recess to review, go on home visits in the afternoon, buy combs, and brushes, and peanut butter and crackers to put in a desk drawer for kids that needed to eat, and a washcloth and some soap for the kids who didn't smell so good. See, it's hard to teach



kids who stink. And kids can be cruel. And so she kept those things in her desk.

And years later, after she retired, I watched some of those same kids come through and say to her, you know Mrs. Walker, you made a difference in my life. You made it work for me. You made me feel like I was somebody when I knew at the bottom I wasn't. And I want you to just see what I've become. And when my mama died two years ago at 92, there was so many former students at her funeral it brought tears to my eyes not because she was gone, but because she left a legacy of relationships that could never disappear. Can we stand to have more relationships? Absolutely. Will you like all your children? Of course not. And you know your toughest kids are never absent. Never. You won't like them all. And the tough ones show up for a reason. It's the connection. It's the relationships.

And while you won't like them all, the key is they can never ever know it. So teachers become great actors and great actresses. And we come to work when we don't feel like it. And we listen to a policy that doesn't make sense. And we teach anyway. We teach anyway.

[END PLAYBACK]

I'm going to-- I actually thought that that was the 2 and 1/2 minute version. I think that this one here is about seven minutes. But I want to be thoughtful of our time and allow for some questions and responses. As we close our time together this morning, you are looking at a picture of my 10-year-old son, Matthew. He is the reason that I am here with you today and providing this Lunch and Learn.

I have learned so much not only as a mother, but as a mental health professional from him. And I thank you all for joining us, whether you just joined us for part 2 or if you joined us for both of them, for giving me the opportunity to take some of those experiences and provide a perspective based in best practices and research to help teachers and parents connect with one another and support children with ADHD. I will pause now to answer any questions or share any comments that any one might have.

ANN SCHENSKY: Tandra, thank you. We do have a couple of questions. And again, we encourage anyone who has questions to put them in the Q&A section. Any suggestions on working with more than one child in a classroom living with ADHD with different learning styles?

TANDRA RUTLEDGE: Well, you definitely need to utilize resources through the school district with making sure that both of the students, or three of those students, however many students are in the classroom do get individualized and differential learning that they need.



It's really important to do so. If you are seeing children struggle and they have not been identified or diagnosed, it's important for you to open up the communication with the parent, talk to other teachers to see what they might be seeing, and be thoughtful about how you approach parents about concerns. If you do have a student that has been diagnosed, you want to make sure that you, as a teacher, are fully aware of how they are managing it, what works at home, what are some of the struggles or challenges that the parents or guardians might be facing with the student.

And then be a resource and require the school district to make sure that your class and the students in your class are getting their needs met. We know that that is through a process, through 504 plans and IEPs. But all of us, collectively, parents and teachers, have to advocate to make sure that all students with disabilities get the help and support that they need.

ANN SCHENSKY: Great. Thank you. Someone else asked, what is the solution for parents who distrust the public education system?

TANDRA RUTLEDGE: That is a very important question. Thank you for asking that because that is a reality. And there are reasons that people distrust our public education system, the institution of the public education. There is a lot of research that highlights disparities and biases in our public education system, access to resources, all of the above, all of the above.

And so it is important for parents to be knowledgeable about and involved in their local school district by attending board meetings and getting to know the team and also finding ways that you can advocate as an individual parent, but also getting involved with other parents, whether there's a parent group like a PTA, or PTO, or some other parent group so that you can get together with other parents and advocate on behalf of all students as well as your own student.

The lack of trust that many people in our communities across the nation have in the public education system is something that we need to talk about. And so I would encourage you to talk directly and openly. If you're a parent, share your concerns with the school, with the administrator, with the teacher, and have an open, honest discussion about your concerns and issues.

ANN SCHENSKY: Great. Thank you. Someone else asked, what are your suggestions when you come into contact with staff who deem students lazy or dumb who are obviously struggling academically and/or behaviorally?

TANDRA RUTLEDGE: Great question. Well, one of the first things I would probably do, since you've attended this webinar, and that model of disability that we talked about, understanding that that individual probably has a behavioral view or a behavioral model of disability versus an academic view. So if I take that frame of reference, then I would be able to engage with them and find out how they view disabilities because they're angry. And if the child



is unmotivated and those types of things where there might be a disability there, then that helps you not be so defensive because you can understand and educate that person about that particular disability, whether it's ADHD or some other learning disability or neurological disorder.

So education is important in arming yourself with that and saying, well, actually, my child has ADHD. And that's a neurological disorder. And so here is some information. And so the things that you are seeing in class are symptomatic of children like that. And then you can share the link to the video if you want, if that will be helpful.

ANN SCHENSKY: Thank you. The next question is, when will standards in teacher education training embrace the whole of each child?

TANDRA RUTLEDGE: So I actually don't have a very specific answer to that because I am actually not involved in teacher education. So I'm not sure where things are on that continuum. Having conversations and having teachers who are friends and family, I know that there is a lot of training that teachers are being provided with and equipped with, and it's a lot that teachers have to learn. Lots of schools are embarking on the trauma-informed and learning about mental health issues and things of that nature.

So I think that the training is happening. I don't know in terms of specific education, educational training for teachers to become teachers, what that looks like necessarily. But don't lose faith. I think that our educational system understands and realizes the importance of understanding trauma and doing their very best to equip teachers with the information and tools that they need to make sure that all children are treated equal.

ANN SCHENSKY: Thank you. And just a comment from someone in the chat said that they found that some of the students wanted to meet together so they could share feelings with each other and what they were going through. So they started a friendship group, a peer support group.

TANDRA RUTLEDGE: Absolutely. I love that. That's a great idea. Yes, absolutely. You can do that formally or informally.

ANN SCHENSKY: So we have time for one last question. Wouldn't it be better to show people they have a superpower with ADHD and that it's not a disability?

TANDRA RUTLEDGE: So we actually did-- I actually did a parent webinar at the beginning of the month for parents in unleashing their child's superpower. So I know where you're coming from with the question. And it's both and, right? It's yes, when I look at my son in particular, I see how incredibly creative he is, how compassionate he is, how giving he is. I want to nurture all of those things that make him unique, and his perspective, and the way he looks at the world.



But I also don't want to minimize that he actually has a neurological condition that makes some of the things around learning more challenging for him. So it's yes and. It's yes, we want to highlight their powers. And we want them to get support and help for their mental health condition, their disability that does impact them and put them at a disadvantage. So it's yes and. Thank you very much for that question. Very important.

ANN SCHENSKY: And that seems like a great way to end our session today is to remember that they are all special and unique. But they do need our help. So thank you very much, everyone, for your time and especially you, Tandra, for an incredible series on ADHD for parents and schools. Again, the recording for part 1 and part 2 will be on our website. And we will also include any of the links to videos that we talked about today. And I would like to thank everyone for their time. And have a fantastic afternoon.

TANDRA RUTLEDGE: Thank you. Bye-bye.