

# TEACHER INCLUSIVE PRACTICES FOR STUDENTS WITH ADHD

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## ABSTRACT

*This reflective practice addresses the problem of teaching strategies and supports within the general education setting for students with attention-deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD). This paper explores the experiences and perspectives of special education and general education teachers within a K-12 public school setting. This study examines educational challenges for ADHD students, assessing ineffective teaching methods and proposing solutions based on experience and research. It evaluates working ideas, addresses limitations, and offers critical reflections on improving instructional strategies. Some discoveries included stereotyping and stigma of ADHD, general education teacher perspectives surrounding special education, and ADHD management.*

**Keywords:** *ADHD, special education, special education preparation, general education teachers*

## PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

As both a special education teacher and a parent, I consistently observe challenges in educating students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Through personal experiences, I have seen teachers struggle to maintain expected behavior for successful school days while witnessing students in my classroom and home grapple with understanding the norms outlined in various academic settings, regardless of instructional level. These experiences prompt ongoing concerns about the educational system's ability to effectively meet the diverse needs of all learners, including those with ADHD.

As a parent, I have witnessed my child returning from school frustrated over their academic performance or overwhelmed by the expectations required and expected to be met. Reflecting on the school environment, which tends to fail accommodate every student's needs adequately, raises further concerns. From as early as young five-year-olds and onward, I have noticed an increasing workload for my students and academic demands driven by state standards and rigorous curricula, with little consideration given to the developmental needs of students, especially those who may have

experienced disruptions in their learning due to external factors like the pandemic in 2020.

Conversations with fellow parents have shown our shared frustrations. We, as parents, all grapple with the inconsistency in instructional approaches and the lack of flexibility in understanding and managing students with ADHD from year to year. While we empathize with educators and acknowledge the challenges they face in effectively engaging all students, we believe that simple adjustments in teaching methods and classroom management could significantly improve the learning experience for students with ADHD. Small changes can make a big difference. From my experiences as a parent, I have seen my child transform from disliking school to enjoying it, thanks to a teacher who recognized my child's needs and responded with remarks like, the child is "bright," "creative," and "hyper, but engaged." This has reinforced my belief that teachers can effectively support students with ADHD when they have the right tools and opportunities.

As a special education teacher at the secondary level, I regularly encounter students who struggle academically due to ADHD-related challenges that may have originated in elementary school. These

challenges manifest in impulsivity, hyperactivity, and difficulty sustaining attention during lengthy or complex tasks. Unfortunately, general education teachers often misinterpret these behaviors as avoidance or disruption rather than symptoms of underlying attention difficulties.

A common focus in my work with students with ADHD revolves around addressing deficits in executive functioning skills, such as organization, planning, and time management. These skills are essential for success in academic settings but are often impaired in students with ADHD, making it difficult for them to prioritize tasks and manage their workload effectively. As both an educator and a parent, I have learned the importance of approaching students with ADHD with empathy and understanding rather than reprimand. By engaging in open conversations and collaborating with students to develop strategies for managing impulsivity and maintaining focus, we can create a more supportive and inclusive learning environment that fosters all students' academic success and well-being.

**Unexpected/Unknown:** In my practice as a special education teacher, I need to explore why instructional strategies are not working with ADHD students.

### REFLECTIVE READINESS

For this research, there is one learning objective:

Problem Example	Type of Problem	Learning Objective
<i>It was unexpected that the teaching strategies were not more effective with these students.</i>	<i>Unexpected</i>	<i>In my practice as a special education teacher, I need to explore why instructional strategies are not working with ADHD students.</i>

To explore this unknown, I prepared and practiced Dewey's attitudes for reflection to complete the research and obtain content for the learning objectives. The attitudes of reflection exemplify an active cultivation of one's mindset to new ideas, perceptions, and experiences (Greenberger, 2020). Throughout the process, it would be important for me to remain open-minded as new experiences and perceptions were found that would allow me to recognize possible outcomes of error or support. My journey through the research demanded that I

embody all three of Dewey's reflective attitudes: approaching each discovery with open-mindedness, engaging in the process whole-heartedly, and maintaining responsibility for the integrity of my findings.

### OPEN-MINDEDNESS

The process of open-mindedness begins through active listening without immediate judgment. When reading and obtaining information from experiences and perceptions, I practiced empathetic listening to understand one's perspective. When researching and learning new perspectives, I remained open with the intentionality of exposing myself to various viewpoints and engaging from a reflexive, open-minded perspective. This allowed me to understand and increase my curiosity and provided me with an open opportunity to seek diverse perspectives and challenge my assumptions and beliefs about the problem and my experiences. I will remain curious about new content, step out of my comfort zone, and build new working ideas from mindfulness cultivated through open-mindedness.

### WHOLEHEARTEDNESS

Wholeheartedness is a holistic approach that embraces challenges and fosters authenticity (Greenberger, 2024). My readiness stemmed from wholeheartedness and the passion and courage within me regarding the problem of practice based on my journey as a special education teacher and a parent of a child with ADHD. My engagement in education has always remained strong and never diminished my dreams; instead, I continue to face challenges or uncertainties. My passion and compassion for others in special education have led to my doctoral journey. I want to explore ongoing practices to increase support for our organization's teachers, students, and families. My wholeheartedness allows me to avoid negativity and treat new experiences, ideas, and perspectives from an understanding approach (Dewey, 1922). My experiences and acts of wholeheartedness led me to this point and the cultivation of my resilience to explore, learn, and grow from diverse experiences.

### RESPONSIBILITY

The third cornerstone of reflective practice is responsibility. This involves taking ownership of thoughts, actions, and decisions and embracing

opportunities for learning and growth. This responsibility extends to remaining self-aware of personal thoughts and assumptions and gaining insight into my motivation, bias, and personal growth. Through this understanding of new perspectives and experiences, I was challenged to remain responsible throughout the process (Greenberger, 2024). From personal assumptions or bias, I was committed to remaining responsible with an open mindset and open to feedback and self-reflection as catalysts for personal and professional growth.

The cultivated practice of open-mindedness, responsibility, and wholeheartedness in reflective practices gave me a holistic approach to personal growth and ethical experiences. I was encouraged to remain self-aware, continue learning, build genuine connections with others, and continue my sense of purpose and well-being in individual and collective growth. This journey of reflection and advocacy has instilled in me a deep desire for change and improvement in the educational system, particularly in how we understand and support students with ADHD. Our collective efforts can create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for all students.

### **WORKING IDEAS**

In this section, I provide three working ideas drawn from my personal and professional experience that contributed to the unknown of the problem of practice. The working ideas are:

#### **LACK OF TIER-ONE INTERVENTION SUPPORTS**

Tier-one support is the first academic, social, and emotional learning support level (Sailor et al., 2021). It deals with students' foundational and common knowledge or needs from general teachers in their school settings. As a special education teacher, I have seen the production of Tier-1 support for students who may be at risk for specialized instruction (i.e., special education services). However, simplified interventions for students with behaviors that promote positive reinforcement for positive behavior have been observed and practiced. Students with ADHD are given opportunities to meet a score provided by their teachers throughout the day. What I have witnessed, though, is that educators feel ill-equipped to meet the diverse needs of their students without adequate Tier-1 knowledge and understanding to "score" based on the student's needs and present level. Students can

reach their goals better when positive reinforcements are coupled with social-emotional learning (SEL). Unfortunately, the concern and challenge I have witnessed is students scoring from continually overarching high expectations without flexibility. For example, a 3rd-grade student with ADHD on a field trip to a state park was skipping rocks and was deducted points due to the action of skipping rocks. This incident highlights a need for general educators to understand and support students with ADHD, as their actions are often misunderstood as disruptive rather than a manifestation of their abilities or needs for active engagement.

### **CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT INCONSISTENCIES**

Classroom management encompasses strategies and techniques educators use to create an environment conducive to learning, fostering student engagement, cooperation, and effective behavior (Shank, 2023). As a parent and special education teacher, I have observed inconsistencies regarding management and supporting students with ADHD. I have witnessed levels of inconsistencies in understanding ADHD as many general education teachers demonstrate minimal understanding of ADHD and its impact on behavior and learning. Educators need to educate themselves about ADHD, its symptoms, and effective strategies for managing it in the classroom. When students demonstrate hyperactivity, teachers refrain from thinking "outside of the box." They have stated to me, as a parent and colleague on separate occasions, "problems" in the classroom based on my student/s hyperactivity instead of understanding ADHD and taking the time to understand each student's specific needs and tailor their management strategies accordingly. For example, I witnessed a teacher who understood ADHD and provided frequent breaks for students, broke tasks into smaller chunks, and used visual aids to help keep the students engaged and positively motivated them to complete academic work to follow their plan.

There are too many experiences at the elementary level where students in Tier-1 support receive Check-In/Check-Out (CICO) that carry the intent of positive reinforcement from a point system. However, too many negative statements are provided, such as "problem," "would not listen," and "out of control." From my experiences, these occurrences demonstrate that teachers should apply

consistent language and expectations in classroom management from general education teachers.

### ROCK BRAIN THINKING

The term “rock brain thinking” refers to rigid, inflexible thought patterns that resist new ideas or perspectives, hindering adaptability and creative problem-solving while being stuck on single-minded ideas or thoughts (Crooke & Garcia, 2022). As someone who wears both the hats of a parent and educator supporting students with ADHD, I have witnessed countless occurrences of rock brain from teachers in classroom environments and professional development gatherings focused on integrating supportive measures for students with ADHD. In my capacity as a teacher leader within my district, I have observed a concerning lack of participation from colleagues in addressing the unique requirements of students with ADHD. This tendency frequently materializes through inflexible lesson plans and classroom regulations, posing significant hurdles for students who rely on adaptability and tailored support to excel. During professional development sessions, there has been an emphasis on the importance of flexibility when working with students with ADHD. However, many teachers need help to adjust their approach and provide alternative task methods.

The presence of a rock brain becomes evident within the classroom environment, where students with ADHD may exhibit impulsive behaviors. While it is the responsibility of teachers to redirect

and support these students, many react impulsively themselves, leading to escalated conflicts. A more effective approach involves practicing patience, responding calmly, and delving into the root causes of impulsive behavior through redirection and support. From personal and professional experience, I have witnessed teachers expressing frustration and feeling overwhelmed when students with ADHD struggle to follow instructions or complete tasks. Nevertheless, these moments also present opportunities for learning new strategies by listening to experts in special education and parents of children with ADHD. Educators need to cultivate a flexible mindset and embrace innovative approaches to support the diverse needs of all learners. Ultimately, as professional colleagues and educators, we must advocate for students with ADHD to ensure their needs are met and their potential is fully realized. This requires a collective effort to foster understanding, implement effective strategies, and create inclusive learning environments where every student can thrive.

### REFLECTIVE NARRATIVE

My decade-long journey as a parent and special education teacher has been filled with challenges and learning experiences. Each new task, person, and setting has brought its uncertainties. However, when I became a special education teacher, I encountered a new world of challenges, the impact of which on student progress and mental health, I had yet to comprehend fully. In Michigan, special

Figure 1.  
Working Ideas

Working Ideas	Key Concepts	Impact Statement
Lack of Tier-1 Supports	MTSS, Tier-1 interventions	Ongoing changes in MTSS and limited exposure to Tier-1 support for GE teachers fostered deficit practice. They lowered expectations for students with ADHD, perpetuating delayed learning, deficit mindset, or lower academic standards. This has significantly impacted inclusive practices and the understanding among general education teachers.
Classroom Management Inconsistencies	Out of control, unpredictable, unable	Inconsistent classroom management undermines the academic and social-emotional growth of students with ADHD. To foster their success, educators must provide consistent, structured environments that offer the stability these learners need to focus, self-regulate, and thrive in academic and social domains.
Rock Brain Thinking	negative and unexpected instructional practice.	A teacher's inflexible mindset, often called “rock brain,” can severely impair their capacity to assist ADHD students in dynamic educational settings. When teachers cling to It is an individual stuck thinking, rigid methodologies and inflexible expectations, they often must adjust their instructional approaches to accommodate varied learning needs. This lack of adaptability can breed frustration as ADHD students struggle to fit conventional learning paradigms, leading educators to potentially misconstrue ADHD symptoms as intentional misbehavior rather than manifestations of the condition.

education teachers must choose a content area of diagnosis to major in; I chose Cognitive Impairment (CI), also known as intellectual disabilities. During undergraduate studies, students are introduced to general concepts of exceptionalities. Thirteen diagnoses qualify students for an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for special education services. However, looking back, I do not recall any content being shared about supporting students with ADHD despite it affecting 8.7 million people in the US (Forbes, 2024). It wasn't until I pursued my master's in Learning Disabilities (LD) that I learned more about supportive strategies for students with ADHD and other learning deficits. Fast forward ten years: I had been teaching in a life skills program with some crossover to the ADHD population while also being a parent to a student with ADHD. I witnessed a frustrating disconnect among education stakeholders, teachers, administrators, and parents. There is a lack of understanding about the real causes behind the "behaviors" or "problems" of students diagnosed with ADHD. These experiences have driven me to emphasize the importance of understanding diverse learners, as we are all unique individuals expected to meet the same demands in rigorous settings.

The school system introduces parents to Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL). As a parent, I have experienced both and have found that when provided by special education team members, interventions and supports of PBIS and SEL are consistent, and descriptions of behaviors or incidents are stated with empathy toward the child's ADHD. However, when general education teachers implement interventions, there is often a clear gap between practice and understanding. For example, in my experience with PBIS's Check-In/Check-Out (CICO) system, there is a need for more consistency in approaching the rating scale and student expectations. The CICO typically consists of a short outline of the student's daily schedule and a rating scale based on meeting expectations, usually aligned with the school's mission (e.g., kindness, respect, responsibility). Each day, my student came home with a rating score and a happy or sad face indicating whether they achieved their goal. Depending on the teacher's assignments, there were often sadder and more discouraging days than happy and proud ones. These moments

of sadness and discouragement usually stemmed from inconsistent language, behavior, and communication from general education teachers when "scoring" a student with ADHD. Children with ADHD are known to be impulsive, active, and disorganized due to their high need for stimulation. Imagine being a seven-year-old child repeatedly told they had a "bad day" because they were "out of control." As a parent during that school year, I felt frustrated and angry because I was not being heard, consistently being told, "That does not work." When strategies and tools were suggested to support the child in the classroom, they were not implemented correctly. There were heartbreaking moments when I witnessed tears of frustration and heard my child say the teacher "hated me" due to continued negativity toward their behavior without any positivity or flexibility.

Fast forward to the next school year with the same student, set of expectations, and "behaviors" or exceptionalities. My child flourished with consistent communication from me as the parent, who provided supportive strategies and tips for an engaged student in the classroom. The key difference was that the general education teacher listened and followed through on the strategies and better understood ADHD. Continued statements like "they are being themselves" and "tomorrow is a new day" may not mean much to some, but to a parent, they mean the world. It is a stark contrast to hearing constant negative remarks addressing my student's ADHD characteristics without empathy or acknowledgment of their struggles in a continuously rigorous and demanding setting.

This story is shared to understand the challenges students with ADHD face due to misunderstandings about their diagnosis and exceptionalities, even at such a young age. It is crucial to recognize the need for a shift in the education system's approach, allowing for flexibility within a rigorous system that often does not support general education teachers in understanding students with ADHD. Instead, assumptions are made with high expectations that may be unachievable for some. As a parent, I acknowledge my potential bias due to personal experiences. However, throughout this experience and years of conversations with colleagues as a special education teacher, I realized my expectation was not to "fix" the students but to support them to the best of their ability—allowing

them to move around the classroom when needed or run down a hallway occasionally. When support and understanding of students with ADHD are given, and instruction is tiered toward diverse learning needs, the future of understanding ADHD becomes brighter.

As a secondary special education teacher, I have witnessed misunderstandings and the use of set assumptions to bias student performance. My job as a case manager is to support my students and advocate for them to receive equitable services and instruction. In one instance, a colleague approached me with concerns about a student with a learning disability and ADHD, stating, “They cannot read” and “How can I even teach them?” This raised concerns about the student’s success in the class without appropriate accommodations as per their IEP. I was initially frustrated that the teacher had not read the documents outlining strategies to support the student. However, upon reflection, I realized the teacher likely needed a foundation in understanding diagnostic characteristics or a toolbox of strategies (e.g., read-aloud accommodations and differentiated instruction).

As special education teachers, we can practice and understand different strategies for supporting students with ADHD. However, as a special education teacher, I must acknowledge that general education teachers must be given the same opportunities. They must continuously practice or develop an understanding of diverse learners and implement best practices to meet student needs. Whether in a class of ten or thirty students, special education teachers have been better equipped to meet diverse student needs. When considering how general education teachers can be better supported, I think back to teacher preparation. While an undergraduate, there was one required course for preservice general education teachers. This course was an introductory course to special education and seemed very textbook rather than observational, practical, or implemental. As a parent and colleague, I hear the frustration of teachers not meeting or understanding who the student is, allowing their judgments or biases to set the foundation for how or why the student is impulsive, and for some teachers assuming that the student “does not care.” Considering the various schedule conflicts from elementary to high school, general education teachers must meet rigorous content

expectations while addressing student needs, with little to no preservice training for students with exceptionalities. This needs to change.

Medication should not be viewed as a simple fix, either. Too often, as a parent, I have been asked, “Did they take their meds?” and then asked to leave work to bring their medication. These moments truly evoke a sense of helplessness and make me feel I am letting down my child, as their body is not regulating sensory input or overstimulation, and they are failing their CICO at every turn. It is disheartening when I have to leave my job and my classroom students to get medication that is optional for my child. School systems and educators should not be so quick to rely on medication for students. As both a parent and special education teacher, I support medication when the benefits outweigh the risks and understand when it is needed or optional. In this case, ADHD medication is optional; it is not a medical concern when the student is not on the medications, though they may be more impulsive and overstimulated. However, what if, as the parent, I chose not to medicate? How could the system and general education teachers support them? Would they continue to remove the student from their homeroom and have them sit in the principal’s office because of active movement or speaking out of turn? Or would they be forced to understand that students with ADHD have just as many needs as students with severe multiple impairments, with the only difference being that their disability is hidden?

## EVALUATION OF IDEAS

Literature continues to highlight a problem of practice and space in supporting students with ADHD. Since the 1990s, there has been a question of teacher factors when considering students with ADHD in the education setting (Green, 1995; Monteiro et al., 2022). The evaluation of the researchers’ working ideas, which consists of the literature, indicates a revision of the working ideas that not only suggest but also demonstrate the problem of practice. According to Greenberger (2020), reflective practice is a process in which researchers identify a professional problem of practice through their experience. From such experience, working ideas are presented. In this section, the previously identified working ideas are examined through scholarly literature and revised to support a more

comprehensive problem of practice from experience and relevant evidence (see Figure 1).

#### *Where are We? —Historical Knowledge*

According to Dort et al. (2020), knowledge is key to the success of implementing effective interventions and support for students with ADHD. Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a neurobiological condition characterized by persistent and severe symptoms of inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity, as described in medical literature (Daley & Birchwood, 2010). Recent statistics indicate that over 10% of children in the United States are diagnosed with ADHD, with this number continuing to rise and is the most commonly known diagnosis (Barkely, 2020; Metzger & Hamilton, 2020). As diagnoses increase, educational institutions must adapt to recognize and support affected students. In the United States, public schools are mandated to support students with ADHD and other qualifying disabilities or exceptionalities. This support is governed by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, which outlines eligibility criteria and provides a framework for support services. A follow-up to the Multi-modal Treatment study of ADHD (Murray et al., 2014) revealed that slightly more than half of students with a history of ADHD were receiving services through an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or 504 plan (Monteiro et al., 2022). However, identifying and providing support services can lead to labeling and stigmatization, potentially negatively impacting student success. This presents a complex challenge for educators and policymakers in balancing necessary support with the potential drawbacks of diagnosis and intervention.

#### *Rock Brain*

Teachers with rigid thinking patterns may inadvertently limit their ability to support students effectively. Their mindsets and views, shaped by past experiences and knowledge, can sometimes lead to the formation of labels and stigmas (Nguyen & Hinshaw, 2020). These preconceived notions may hinder their capacity to provide flexible and individualized support to students. Metzger and Hamilton (2020) report that children with ADHD are often mislabeled as lazy, violent, impulsive, and disruptive in classroom settings. This mischar-

acterization, particularly at the elementary level, can lead to teachers incorrectly assuming these students are unmotivated or troublemakers. Such negative perceptions, once formed, tend to follow students throughout their academic careers, overshadowing their actual abilities and potential. Labeling students with ADHD, even for identification purposes, can inadvertently create implicit biases. These biases may influence how educators and peers interact with affected students, potentially limiting opportunities and expectations based on the diagnosis rather than individual capabilities (Metzger & Hamilton, 2020). Labeling students underlines the importance of awareness and training to prevent misconceptions and ensure fair treatment of students with ADHD in educational environments. The labeling of students paired with the current level of teacher awareness leads to a concern of stigmatization.

Link and Phelan (2001) describe stigmatization as a process where perceived differences between individuals are distinguished and labeled. The labels assigned to individuals are amplified by prevailing cultural beliefs, reinforcing negative stereotypes. These implicit beliefs align with Lay theories based on misconceptions, contrast with the scientific understanding of ADHD as a neurological condition characterized by challenges in executive function and attention management. (Carr-Fanning, 2023). In line with lay theories, the Modified Labeling Theory (Link et al., 1989) supports the stigma surrounding ADHD, as students face devaluation and negative perceptions regarding their identities in classrooms and other environments (Nguyen & Hinshaw, 2020). This labeling and stereotyping significantly impact how students with ADHD are perceived, suggesting that teachers often hold preconceived notions about these diagnoses, thereby shaping the way peers view one another (Metzger & Hamilton, 2020). Inside the classroom, when stigmatization occurs, teachers may avoid intensive strategies such as breaking down instructions into simplified steps, providing positive feedback, and offering differentiated instruction. In classrooms where labels are present, teachers sometimes anticipate that students with ADHD will exhibit serious behavioral concerns, cause disruptions, and require additional time and effort (Metzger & Hamilton, 2020). Teachers may need help implementing

specific behavioral management strategies (Ward et al., 2022). The automatic assumptions and negative expectations lead to lower student evaluations, potentially resulting in gatekeeping actions where students are held back from more rigorous curricula (Nguyen & Hinshaw, 2020).

Metzger and Hamilton (2020) note that even in elementary school, where behavior and academic gaps are often minimal between peers, teachers continue to view ADHD as a hidden exceptionality. The ADHD label has led to stigmatization that can reinforce labeled behaviors. Moore et al. (2017) report that some teachers consider other specific learning disabilities more “socially acceptable” than ADHD, with one teacher mentioning the “shame” surrounding ADHD and the reluctance of many adolescents and adults to seek or accept support. The persistent negativity surrounding ADHD and the tendency to make assumptions about student behaviors before getting to know them indicates inconsistent strategy implementation and profound impacts (Carr-Fanning, 2023). While it is acknowledged that no one, including teachers, is immune to stereotype bias (Metzger & Hamilton, 2020), this suggests a need for better education about ADHD and supportive strategies, as well as efforts to reduce negative attitudes stemming from misguided labeling stigma.

### *Supports*

The consideration of Tier-1 intervention support is a model taught within university teacher preparation courses (Barrio, 2020). Current university special education preparation in support of students with disabilities, including ADHD, has led to 75% of teachers feeling dissatisfied with their preparation for teaching students with ADHD and other exceptionalities (Clausen et al., 2023; Poznanski et al., 2018). Approximately 150,000 new teachers enter the classroom for the first time each year. However, many beginning educators report feeling underprepared for their challenges (Poznanski et al., 2018). With concerns of unpreparedness, alarmingly 66% of new teachers consider leaving the profession after their first year (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Poznanski et al., 2018).

Ongoing research consistently reveals that many teachers need more knowledge in Tier-1 supports, classroom management, evidence-based

practices, and additional resources to support students effectively (Clausen et al., 2023; Lawson et al., 2022; Poznanski et al., 2018; Wilson et al., 2023). This knowledge gap significantly impacts teachers’ overall implementation of known supports. Monteiro et al. (2022) acknowledge the inadequacy and highlight the need for improved content learning at the preservice level and better supportive strategies in behavioral management and Tier-1 interventions to increase positive behavior and academic performance. To better understand why adequate supports are not being provided, it is crucial to thoroughly examine the knowledge base of new teachers entering the profession (Poznanski et al., 2018). Most university programs offer only one to two courses in special education training, primarily consisting of textbook knowledge without the practice of interventions and supports for students with ADHD or other exceptionalities.

Furthermore, 74% of programs must address the benefits and strategies of using praise as a positive support tool (Poznanski et al., 2018; Ward et al., 2022). It is crucial to recognize teachers’ pivotal role as implementers of interventions, instruction, and management in the classroom. Consequently, educators must receive adequate training and knowledge in implementing Tier-1 supports for students with ADHD and other exceptionalities through teacher preparation (Monteiro et al., 2022). Addressing these gaps in teacher preparation is essential for improving classroom experiences and outcomes for all students, particularly those with special needs.

### *Classroom Management*

Research demonstrates that effective classroom management strategies can significantly enhance the academic, social, and behavioral development of students with ADHD (Moore et al., 2017). However, many teachers report feeling underprepared to handle disruptive behavior and cite inadequate classroom management training (Clausen et al., 2023; Poznanski et al., 2018). This gap underscores the need to focus more on teachers’ knowledge and implementation of appropriate classroom management techniques.

General education teachers supporting students with ADHD often struggle with classroom management interventions and strategies. This difficulty largely stems from insufficient training

in special education during their university preparation (Car-Fanning, 2023). Wilson et al. (2023) note that many general education teachers lack proficiency in inclusive practices and effective management techniques, which can lead to negative perceptions, biases, and stigmatization of students with ADHD.

These biases and the limited support strategies available in classrooms highlight the pressing need for enhanced teacher preparation and ongoing professional development in this area (Moore et al., 2017). Recent research by Szép et al. (2021) explored classroom management and persistent barriers to effective support. They found that significant obstacles included overcrowded classrooms with high numbers of students with disabilities, limited instructional flexibility, and teachers' lack of knowledge about appropriate interventions and supports for students with ADHD. Monteiro et al. (2022) emphasized that effective intervention for students with ADHD requires teachers to:

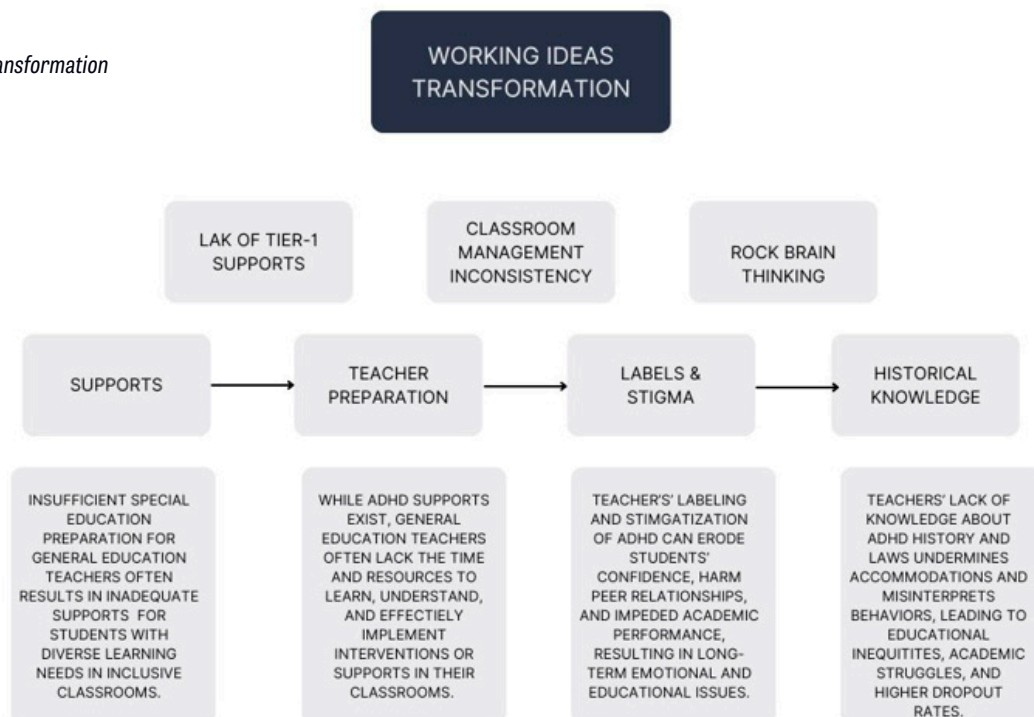
1. Have in-depth knowledge of the student.
2. Understand how ADHD-related issues manifest in school.
3. Be aware of available school-based support services.

The authors emphasize the need for comprehensive teacher training to facilitate informed decision-making when choosing interventions for students with ADHD. Effective classroom management requires a complex skill set to create an environment that promotes all students' academic, social, and behavioral learning (Moore et al., 2017; Poznanski et al., 2018). It is important to outline the inconsistencies in support and classroom management in the general education setting for students with ADHD because when barriers are present, general education teachers begin to develop a foundation of negative perceptions and stigmas toward students with ADHD, deeming them "difficult," "defiant," or taking "too much of my time" (Car-Fanning, 2023). Addressing this problem of practice is critical to ensure that teachers are well-equipped to support students with ADHD effectively, minimize the impact of potential biases, and create inclusive learning environments that cater to diverse student needs.

### NEED/LIMITATIONS

Studies highlight the critical need for comprehensive ADHD education in teacher training programs, particularly for new educators, to reduce turnover and prevent early career exhaustion. Poznanski et al. (2018) argue that teachers

Figure 2.  
*Working Ideas Transformation*



need proper preparation to recognize and address both the behavioral and academic challenges faced by students with ADHD. This view is supported by Ward et al. (2022), whose research shows that ADHD-specific training for teachers significantly improves their understanding of the condition, yielding substantial benefits. These findings emphasize the importance of incorporating thorough ADHD education into initial teacher preparation and ongoing professional development. Such training can enhance educators' ability to comprehend, identify, and effectively support students with ADHD, potentially improving these learners' classroom experiences and outcomes. Given the complexity of this issue and its ongoing relevance as a problem of practice, further research is recommended, focusing specifically on university curricula for special education and related state requirements. Figure 2 provides a review of the transformed working ideas. In reviewing current practices, I reflected on and transformed the working ideas to support the complexity while producing practical insights into the known but unexpected problem of practice, in accordance with the procedures of Greenberger's (2020) reflective practice.

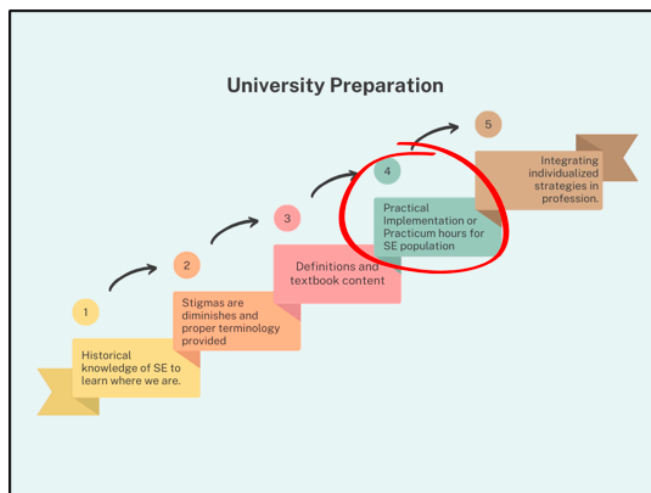
## DECISION

Educators are consistently urged to understand their students' diverse identities and exceptionalities to provide effective support. This understanding is not just a recommendation but a crucial aspect of the role of general education teachers. However, general education teachers still face challenges in daily practice when it comes to students with ADHD. A crucial element needs to be added to the current approach. While Monteiro et al. (2022) suggest classroom support for teachers, and Brock et al. (2010) propose in-class interventions, educators continue to struggle with the time-intensive nature of these interventions and a lack of adequate training and understanding of their implementation and rationale (Lawson et al., 2022). As research continues to explore perceptions and obstacles within general education settings, a clear problem of practice emerges. The issue centers on preparing general education teachers to support students with ADHD and, more broadly, students with various exceptionalities at the university preparation level. This conclusion stems from literature

reviews identifying classroom barriers reported by general education teachers and the missed opportunities due to limited knowledge of diverse interventions for students with ADHD (Lawson et al., 2022). Ward et al. (2022) emphasizes that training in ADHD interventions is critical for successful classroom implementation and student success.

To effectively address barriers to successful support in general education classrooms, it is crucial to examine the timeline of teacher preparation. General education teachers must acquire comprehensive knowledge, contextual understanding, and, most importantly, practical experience through practicum hours before starting their professional careers to gain an understanding of supports and interventions. An evaluation of current preparation programs reveals significant shortcomings. Clausen et al. (2023) point out that more university courses rely on textbook information in required courses rather than practical implementations in the classroom. Furthermore, offering just one course on special education fails to provide sufficient coverage of the diverse exceptionalities teachers will encounter in their classrooms. This limited exposure does not allow preservice general education teachers enough time to learn, develop, and implement effective strategies before entering their profession. The common factor surrounding the problem of practice stems from the preparation of preservice general education teachers and the need for preparation programs to focus on general education teachers gaining adequate

Figure 3.  
*The Missing Component and Problem of Practice*



knowledge and practical experience with interventions before starting their professional careers (see Figure 3). This problem of practice highlights the need for a more comprehensive and hands-on approach to teacher preparation, particularly in addressing the needs of students with diverse learning requirements.

### REFLECTIVE CRITIQUE

As I look back on this journey, a whirlwind of thoughts and emotions sweep over me. To truly evolve into a researcher, I dissected the two roles that drew me to this path: being a parent and a special education teacher. I knew I had to maintain an open and unbiased perspective through these lenses. It was fascinating to delve into literature that outlined numerous interventions and supports for students with ADHD and transform my working ideas to support a more complex issue. However, I wondered why the strategies given were not more evident in my everyday practice. My quest for understanding led me beyond surface-level recommendations. I needed to explore whether these state-endorsed interventions were being successfully implemented in real-world settings. Throughout this process, I constantly reminded myself to keep an open mind. My experiences might only sometimes translate directly to others' situations or challenges in the field. This realization was humbling, yet it fueled my determination to dig deeper and gain a more comprehensive understanding of the complex landscape of special education and ADHD support.

Throughout this journey, I would remain wholehearted. I state this solely because of my passion for special education and wanting the best for all students, with or without exceptionalities. My dedication to special education shines through in my unwavering belief that all students, including my own child, regardless of their exceptionalities, deserve tailored instruction and support to meet their unique needs. I continue to recognize the fundamental truth that no two learners are alike, and this understanding fuels my passion for individualized education and research into how educational organizations can initiate such practice and belief. As a special education teacher and an advocate for my child and students, I must maintain a wholehearted approach throughout my education journey; it is more than just a profession. It is a

calling and a duty to support and instruct every student to the best of my ability.

The wholehearted approach is not just beneficial but essential. It is about creating an educational environment where every student feels valued, supported, and capable of achieving their full potential. My passion drives me to continually seek ways to improve and adapt my teaching methods, ensuring that every student is included in their educational journey.

As a parent and a special education teacher, I recognize my unique responsibility to emphasize inclusive practices for all students. I understand that every individual, regardless of perceived abilities or disabilities, has their exceptionalities. This perspective drives my commitment to creating an inclusive environment that celebrates diversity in learning. My dual role gives me valuable insights into the personal and professional aspects of supporting diverse learners. It is an ethical duty to bridge the gap between research and practice, using my understanding of current literature to inform and improve real-world educational strategies.

I'm committed to providing a clear, research-based understanding of our educational system regarding inclusion and support for diverse learners. More importantly, I am wholeheartedly dedicated to promoting forward-thinking approaches that can help progress our educational practices.

### ENDING REMARKS

I aim to foster an educational environment where all students can thrive regardless of their learning differences. This involves implementing best practices in my classroom and advocating for systemic changes that support inclusion on a broader scale. By staying informed about the latest research and continuously reflecting on my practices, I aim to catalyze positive change. My role is educating students, fellow teachers, parents, and the broader community about the importance and benefits of truly inclusive education. Ultimately, my responsibility extends beyond my immediate sphere of influence. I am committed to contributing to a more significant shift in educational philosophy and policy that recognizes and values the unique potential in every learner and provides the support necessary for each student to reach that potential.

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