

From “Eddie Enough” to “Eddie Just Right:” Using Children’s Literature to Help Prospective Teachers Understand and Teach Students with ADHD

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Abstract

Teacher education students can learn about the characteristics for identifying children with ADHD and strategies for supporting their positive behavioral development by using the children’s book, *Eddie Enough!* Characteristics of ADHD are outlined in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* of the American Psychiatric Association. Teacher educators can employ many strategies, such as perspective taking, role play, and discussions of various strategies to help perspective teachers acquire the knowledge and skills to support children with ADHD in their classrooms.

“Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is neither a new nor rare condition confronting children” (Fritz, 2000, p. 1). In fact, the most recent report provided by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control estimated that nearly 7.8 percent of school-age children demonstrate some type of ADHD, also known as Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) (Journal of the American Medical Association, 2005). This means that the typical teacher in the U. S. will have at least one or two students affected by ADHD/ADD in their own classrooms (Brown, 2007). Within this context, it is critical that ADHD/ADD receive considerable attention in teacher preparation curricula and the college classroom.

The following describes the way I use the children’s picture book, *Eddie Enough!*, by Debbie Zimmet (2001) and illustrated by Charlotte Murray Fremaux, to help prospective teachers better understand the characteristics of students with ADHD. This understanding will ultimately help prospective teachers provide effective instruction, meaningful educational interventions, and classroom management strategies that are appropriately individualized to meet

the needs of this population of students. I also describe how I use the story and illustrations from *Eddie Enough!* to discuss theory and pedagogy related to ADHD. Critical areas of focus include identifying ADHD behaviors, from general to specific, such as impulsive and inattentive behaviors, as well as demonstrating strategies for responding to these behaviors. Although these foci are by no means exhaustive, they do center on the issues that are of particular interest to many teachers who have students with ADHD in today's classrooms.

Eddie Enough! and ADHD General Precursors

The main character of the children's book *Eddie Enough!* is a third grader named Eddie who has ADHD. One of the first pages of the book presents an illustration of Eddie hurriedly running down the staircase at his home. His hands are flying in all directions and his feet are jumping down several steps at a time. Eddie comments about this aspect of his behavior, "I have always been in a hurry. Grandma says I was born running." (Zimmet, 2001, p. 4). The book further tells us that Eddie not only always runs fast but tends to talk too much as well. "Some people say that I talk a lot. My mom tells me my first word actually was a sentence, and I haven't stopped talking since," admitted Eddie (Zimmet, 2001, p. 4).

As we read these first pages of the book in the college classroom, I discuss with the prospective teachers the fact that behaviors associated with ADHD can be identified early in children. In fact, Deutscher and Fewell (2005) maintain that "hyperactivity and associated characteristics of impulsivity and inattention can be identified as early as 3 to 4 years of age" (p. 72). Some of the most typical ADHD precursors may include "chronic inattention, distractibility, disorganization, poor self-monitoring, impulsivity, and over-activity" (Deutscher & Fewell, 2005, p. 72).

In addition to an awareness that the onset of ADHD may occur in early childhood, I make prospective teachers aware that collecting pertinent information from a parent when a teacher suspects that a child may have ADHD can be one of the first steps in the process of early diagnosis of ADHD. “The parents can offer information on a child that is not seen by teachers or other staff members,” argued Pierangelo and Giuliani (2009, p. 111). Within this context, an interview with a parent should be scheduled in order to detect behaviors associated with ADHD when a teacher suspects that a child may have ADHD as early as possible. The following is a list of early signs of possible ADHD which may serve as a sound starting point for preparing for an interview with a parent. The list was developed by the National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities (“ADHD Fact Sheet,” n.d., para. 3).

A child with ADHD might:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have a hard time paying attention • daydream a lot • not seem to listen • be easily distracted from schoolwork or play • be in constant motion or unable to stay seated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • forget things • squirm or fidget • talk too much • not be able to play quietly • act and speak without thinking • have trouble taking turns • interrupt others
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The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders and Its ADHD Definition

It is at this point that I introduce the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders and its definition of ADHD. According to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (, 2000), ADHD is a complex and chronic developmental disorder with two distinct conditions: inattention and hyperactivity-impulsivity. Inattention refers to six (or more) of the following behaviors that have persisted for at least 6 months to a degree that is maladaptive and inconsistent with developmental levels:

Inattention

- (a) often fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes in schoolwork, work, or other activities;
- (b) often has difficulty sustaining attention in tasks or play activities;
- (c) often does not seem to listen when spoken to directly;
- (d) often does not follow through on instructions and fails to finish schoolwork, chores, or duties in the workplace (not due to oppositional behavior or failure to understand instructions);
- (e) often has difficulty organizing tasks and activities;
- (f) often avoids, dislikes, or is reluctant to engage in tasks that require sustained mental effort (such as schoolwork or homework);
- (g) often loses things necessary for tasks or activities (e.g., toys, school assignments, pencils, books, or tools);
- (h) is often easily distracted by extraneous stimuli;
- (i) is often forgetful in daily activities. (American Psychiatric Association, 2000, p. 92)

Hyperactivity-impulsivity refers to six or more of the following behaviors that have persisted for at least 6 months to a degree that is maladaptive and inconsistent with developmental level:

Hyperactivity

- (a) often fidgets with hands or feet or squirms in seat;
- (b) often leaves seat in classroom or in other situation in which remaining seated is expected;
- (c) often runs about or climbs excessively in situations in which it is inappropriate (in adolescents or adults, may be limited to subjective feelings of restlessness);
- (d) often has difficulty playing or engaging in leisure activities quietly;
- (e) is often "on the go" or often acts as if "driven by a motor;"
- (f) often talks excessively.

Impulsivity

- (g) often blurts out answers before questions have been completed;
- (h) often has difficulty awaiting turn;
- (i) often interrupts or intrudes on others (e.g., butts into conversations or games).
(American Psychiatric Association, 2000, p. 92)

After the review of the ADHD definition from this manual, I ask the prospective teachers to go back to the original text in the children's book and to cite specific ADHD-like behaviors

exhibited by Eddie that matches the characteristics provided by the manual (See Table 1 for selective examples from this activity). Direct citations, such as these in Table 1, help to scaffold a deeper and more authentic understanding of the symptoms behind ADHD. Through this exercise, the language employed by the experts in the field, as in the following statement, “often runs about or climbs excessively in situations in which it is inappropriate,” (American Psychiatric Association, 2000, p. 92) is suddenly translated into a more concrete and vivid experience, as in Eddie’s direct words, “*I have always been in a hurry...I was born running*” (Zimmet, 2001, p. 4). Perhaps it is worth noting that these direct words are accompanied by an illustration depicting Eddie at his home taking the stairs two at a time. Using images in picture books and text simultaneously in this way in my college classroom helps the prospective teachers absorb, both visually and verbally, highly theoretical concepts related to ADHD, which in turn, leads to better understanding and recall of such difficult constructs (Zambo, 2005).

Table 1

Eddie Enough! vs. the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders

Behaviors from the Children’s Book <i>Eddie Enough!</i>	Corresponding ADHD Characteristics in the <i>Diagnostic & Statistical Manual Of Mental Disorders</i>
<p>“<i>I have always been in a hurry...I was born running.</i>” (Zimmet, 2001, p. 4).</p>	<p>Hyperactivity</p> <p>(c) often runs about or climbs excessively in situations in which it is inappropriate</p> <p>(e) is often ‘on the go’ or often acts as if ‘driven by a motor’</p>
<p>“<i>I talk a lot. My mom tells me my first word actually was a sentence and I haven’t stopped talking since.</i>” (Zimmet, 2001, p. 4).</p>	<p>Hyperactivity</p> <p>(f) often talks excessively</p>

<p>“Then, halfway to school, I remembered that I forgot my lunch.” (Zimmet, 2001, p. 8).</p>	<p>Inattention</p> <p>(i) is often forgetful in daily activities</p>
<p>“Sometimes Mrs. Pinck does call on me and I don’t hear her right away.” (Zimmet, 2001, p. 6).</p>	<p>Inattention</p> <p>(c) often does not seem to listen when spoken directly</p>
<p>“My favorite subject is Math. I try not to call out but I get excited when I know the answer.” (Zimmet, 2001, p. 6).</p>	<p>Impulsivity</p> <p>(g) often blurts out answers before questions have been completed</p>
<p>“Neil was holding two books on baseball. I figured he didn’t need them so I took one. Nobody heard him complain because the lunch bell started to ring.” (Zimmet, 2001, p. 15).</p>	<p>Impulsivity</p> <p>(i) often interrupts or intrudes on others (American Psychiatric Association, 2000, p. 92)</p>

Through this initial reading of the children’s book and a study of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* references to ADHD, I heighten prospective teachers’ awareness regarding the identification of the ADHD precursors and increase their sensitivity to learning about a child’s home environment in order to help better understand ADHD behaviors. Prospective teachers also begin to make connections that such knowledge will enable them to choose appropriate educational approaches for each student with ADHD in their individual teaching contexts.

Eddie Enough! and Predominantly Hyperactive-Impulsive Behaviors

As we continue reading *Eddie Enough!* we learn more about Eddie’s ADHD behaviors. Some of these behaviors include calling out answers before anybody in the class has a chance to respond to the teacher’s questions, tardiness to class, and attempting to look onto a peer’s paper in order to catch up on missed words during a spelling test. As I infuse theory from the ADHD

research (Brand, Dunn & Greb, 2002; Deutscher & Fewell , 2005; Houghton, 2006), I make a note that the behaviors described above are not just a coincidental series of mishaps but rather potential symptoms of ADHD. Such behaviors typically are ongoing in nature and may be caused by impairments in a self-regulatory cognitive management system, known as executive functioning (Litner, 2003). Brown (2007) offered the following explanation of what happens when executive functioning is impaired in ADHD individuals:

... Visualize a symphony orchestra composed of talented musicians. Regardless of their expertise, the musicians need a competent conductor who will select the pieces to play, make sure they start at the same time and stay on tempo, fade in the strings and then bring in the brass, and manage them as they interpret the music. Without an effective conductor, the symphony will not produce good music. In individuals with ADD, the parts of the brain that correspond to the individual musicians often work quite well. The problem is with the conductor, with those executive functions that, in a healthy individual, work together to accomplish task. ADD impairs neural circuits that function as the conductor of the symphony. (p. 23)

In brief, children with ADHD tend to experience problems managing such tasks as following directions, obeying rules, waiting their turn, sustaining attention, and acting and speaking without thinking.

Eddie Enough! and Predominantly Inattentive Behaviors

As we read further, we learn that Eddie not only moved and talked fast but also could never sit still, and, as a result, continued to have behavior problems at school. In another example, Eddie arrives late to school after forgetting his lunch. Then he does not hear his name being called by the teacher. Other activities throughout the day continued be challenging for

Eddie. He had a very difficult time in selecting a book for a free reading period until his exasperated teacher declared, “Eddie, you have thirty seconds to choose a book and start reading.” (Zimmet, 2001, p. 14). Then, even though he put his best effort to please the teacher and complete the reading assignment, he could not finish the task. Eddie explained,

I opened the book and began to read. It actually wasn't a bad book. It was about a man who rescues wild animals. It sounded like a cool job. Until I read, 'injured animals must be approached slowly and quietly or they may become fearful and try to attack.' I closed the book. I guess that's not a job for me! (Zimmet, 2001, pp. 14-15)

Nor could he stop himself from intruding upon his peer. Eddie confessed, “Neil was holding two books on baseball. I figured he didn't need them both so I took one.” (Zimmet, 2001, p. 15).

By again referring to the extensive research on ADHD (Brand, Dunn, & Greb, 2002; Deutscher & Fewell, 2005; Houghton, 2006), I make the prospective teachers aware that Eddie's behavior problems stem from a difficulty in exercising behavioral self-control, another characteristic of ADHD. Without such a monitoring mechanism, the abilities of students with ADHD to “withhold a planned response, halt a response that has been started, protect an ongoing activity from interfering activities, and delay a response” are impaired (Rubia, Oosterlaan, Sergeant, Braindeis, & van Leeuwen, 1998 as cited in Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2007, p.83). Inabilities to stay on task for an extended amount of time, lack of attentive listening skills, being easily forgetful, along with lack of organizational skills only further hinder these individuals' chances for success in their immediate and future academic endeavors and private lives. Greenfield, Spira, and Fischel (2005) agree: “Children with ADHD are at an increased risk for

academic and social difficulties, including learning disabilities, peer rejection, and decreased teacher expectations” (p. 755).

Active Ways of Learning about Children like Eddie

Direct citations, as used in the example below, with visual images are also a sound starting point for introducing the prospective teachers to a “phenomenological perspective” (Rodis, Garrod, & Boscardin, 2001, p. xi). This perspective explores the ways in which ADHD is experienced by those directly confronted with it. To illustrate this perspective, I use the following citation from *Eddie Enough*’s story:

Lunch is usually my favorite subject, but not that day! As soon as I got to the lunch room, Neil started singing, ‘Eddie Enough thinks he’s tough!’ It didn’t take long before the entire table joined in. Even Vladimir, who doesn’t speak English, was trying to say the words. I felt like I got punched in the stomach. So I smashed Vladimir’s banana.

(Zimmet, 2001 p. 16)

As we analyze this quote, I ask the prospective teachers to place themselves in Eddie’s shoes and to consider how the lunchroom incident would have impacted their own emotional health and well-being. This is a natural lead into a class-wide role playing activity. Three randomly selected prospective teachers are designated roles as Neil, Vladimir, and Eddie and act out Eddie’s lunchroom incidence. The rest of the class takes on a role of a lunchroom table crowd. Additionally, to stimulate imagination and to establish the setting for this dramatization, I display an enlarged picture from the book that corresponds to the scene they act out.

Following this role playing, the prospective teachers reflect on the lunchroom incident and share the feelings they experienced during the activity. Typical responses include feelings of anger, aggression, humiliation, and fear of further ridicule. Through this activity, the prospective

teachers begin to make a personal connection with the main character, Eddie, and to understand the impact of his actions on his social relationships with others. We then discuss how children with ADHD, like Eddie, often end up being the first to be picked on, laughed at, or called names by their class peers because of a lack of understanding of their problems. I point out that these negative experiences have recursive effects on children with ADHD in some more pronounced cases (Litner, 2003). This discussion also allows me to describe some effective strategies for establishing and maintaining positive peer interactions within and outside their own classrooms to make all of their students feel welcomed and accepted, including children with ADHD.

Strategies for Supporting Children with ADHD

One such strategy is *Circle of Friends* (“Circle of Friends,” n.d.). It has been designed to facilitate successful peer relationships between students with and without disabilities. When exploring this strategy, the prospective teachers use four concentric circles to help describe and discuss their current relationships with the important people in their lives. Each circle asks them to identify individuals from their lives that they have the closest relationships with (first inner circle) to those that are hired to be in their lives (the fourth, outermost circle) (“Circle of Friends,” n.d., para. 3.). As they review their own Circles of Friends, they learn strategies for problem solving dysfunctional relationships as well as strategies for sustaining healthy relationships. We then examine the ways in which they can adapt these strategies to support the development of meaningful friendships in the lives of their students with ADHD.

Strategies for responding to predominantly hyperactive-impulsive behaviors. Fowler (1994) suggests giving written directions that are a visual description of the task to a student as well as asking a student to repeat orally the steps necessary to complete the task. These modifications will help the student to accurately follow the directions presented. She further

recommends giving students opportunities to provide their responses to a task in their preferable style of learning, as a way to encourage compliance with the classroom rules.

Sousa (2001), on the other hand, calls for the incorporation of mind tools to help students with ADHD see the connections among concepts they study. Illustrations and graphic organizers as well as the use of multiple types of questions during the presentation of the new content encourage students to use higher order thinking and sustain their attention.

I invite the prospective teachers in my college classroom to think out of a box and with cooperation of the physical education department, and perhaps community agencies, to incorporate the elements of the wilderness adventure program such as, “Success Oriented Achievement Realized,” (n.d.), into their extra curricula activities to help their students compensate for the challenging behaviors related to ADHD. This unique program uses activities such as horse riding, SCUBA diving, rock climbing, white water rafting or sea kayaking, to allow students with ADHD to “develop problem-solving skills, effective communication strategies, increased self-awareness, and social skills.” All these skills, in turn will “empower them to make healthy choices, learn more about themselves, overcome challenges, and relate lessons learned from these experiences to other aspects of their lives” (“Success Oriented Achievement Realized,” n.d., para. 3.).

Strategies for predominantly inattentive behaviors. Strategies such as behavior therapy and modification, counseling, and pharmacological treatment have also been proposed in the literature as effective approaches (Kean, 2005; Wigal, Swanson, Regono, Lerner, Soliman, Steinhoff, Gurbani, & Wigal, 1999) to improve students’ with ADHD chances for success. However, one of the first behavioral strategies that recommended in working with children with ADHD is to teach them how to slow down or how to stop in the midst of their activities in order

to gain a perspective leading to an appropriate course of action. Kutscher (2002) concurs, “Typically, when calm and unthreatened, even the ADHD brain will make the correct choice” (p. 16). In my college classroom, we discuss a variation of this approach, the STAR strategy (Stop, Think, Act, and Review). We find examples of this application in *Eddie Enough!* In the book, Eddie is asked to use this strategy to help self-monitor his behavior and to learn how to stay out of trouble, or as Kutscher (2002) puts it, to “pu[t] on the brakes” (p. 4) against daily distractions, frustrations, and forgetfulness.

Another simple, yet effective strategy is the use of hand gestures as spontaneous accompaniment to verbal clues to assist in the reduction of inattentive behaviors in students with ADHD. To illustrate this approach, I use an example of verbal teacher directions, such as, ‘Put these two pieces of puzzle together’ and at the same time bring the left hand to the right hand to imitate putting two things together. In a study of children with ADHD, Wang, Bernas, and Eberhard (2004) confirmed that such use of hand gestures in conjunction with speech is an effective scaffolding strategy in the teaching and learning of students with ADHD. This was evident when in response to both verbal and hand gesture teacher modalities, the children with ADHD in their study “were clearly more responsive, focused longer on the tasks and were more successful in completing them” (p. 226) than when not exposed to such modalities.

As we wrap up our reading of *Eddie Enough!*, I emphasize the profound impact that their words and actions have on all students, and in particular on students with ADHD like Eddie. I establish an expectation for exemplary behavior, speech, and pedagogy. I use the school principal’s, Mr. Thomas, response in the book to illustrate this point. Mr. Thomas, concerned about Eddie’s emotional well-being, encouraged a kind of emotional cleansing, as in this exchange of his with Eddie:

“Bad day? asked Mr. Thomas. ‘It’s the worst day of my life!’ I told Mr. Thomas about Dad’s orange juice and the sea monkeys and scaring Tiny and the colored chalk. ‘But the worst thing is that all the kids call me Eddie Enough! Pretty soon they’ll call me Eddie Too Much.’” (Zimmert, 2001, p. 24)

Mr. Thomas also provided strategies and resources (psychological testing and treatment) to help Eddie understand how to be himself and how to know how to manage his out of control ADHD behaviors in interactions with others. As we finish reading the book, we learn that the implementation of an effective support system led to a happier life for Eddie because he was not “Eddie Enough!” anymore. Eddie explains the nature of this transformation: “The best part of all is that I’m not Eddie Enough anymore. And deep down inside, I actually feel like Eddie Just Right!” (Zimmert, 2001, p. 38).

I challenge the prospective teachers in my college classroom to accept the charge to act as role models to their students. In this way, they can learn about and respond to the needs of students with ADHD, so that, as did Eddie, they may also undergo a transformation from *Eddie Enough* to *Eddie Just Right* in both the classroom and their lives. It is hoped that books like *Eddie Enough!* and the strategies described in this article for exploring such texts in the college and P-12 classrooms will empower many other teachers to accept the charge of role models to their own teaching contexts. Teacher education and professional development programs have a responsibility to assist teachers in this process.

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