

Educational Implications of Social Skills Weaknesses in ADHD

It is important to:

- Teach, model, and scaffold the child's ability to exhibit pro-social behaviours to increase the occurrence of appropriate behaviours: teach a behaviour you want to replace the one you do not want.
 - Provide high levels of positive feedback to reinforce pro-social behaviours (for example, "Thank you for raising your hand").
- Be proactive by being aware of which students are at risk and gathering information to develop a good assessment. Recognize and support the student's competencies and promote protective factors that the children may have difficulty achieving on their own.

(Program III, Section 3: Inattention and Academic Underachievement) and illustrated in the diagram below, attention problems are related to weaknesses in both working memory and academic achievement. In turn, these two variables relate to each other. For instance, studies indicate that children with working memory deficits — regardless of whether or not they have ADHD — tend to perform worse on tests of academic achievement than those students without such impairments.⁵⁰

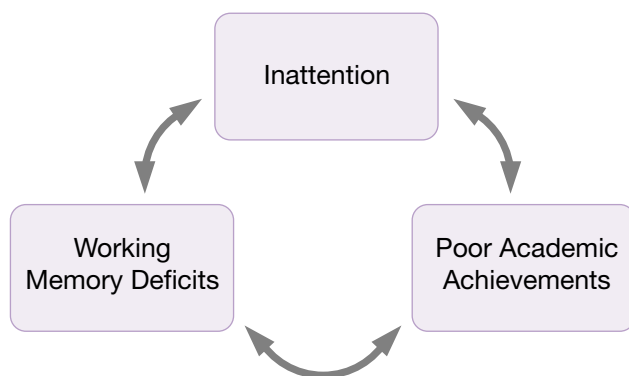


Figure 4–2 Triad of Problems in ADHD

Beyond behaviour: factors affecting school success in students with ADHD

In the classroom, two common characteristics of students with ADHD are their struggle to achieve and their low productivity (that is, they often have difficulty completing tasks or assignments). As indicated in the preceding sections, children with ADHD often

experience significant weaknesses in many academic domains. Hence, the academic problems experienced by children with ADHD are not just due to their behavioural symptoms, but are also associated with their difficulty developing academic skills (for example, reading) and supportive academic enablers (for example, study skills, level of engagement).³⁴

For example, researchers have demonstrated that academic grades in reading for children with ADHD are predicted both by academic skills and by teachers' ratings of students' academic enablers (for example, level of engagement, study skills). This finding suggests that academic achievement in children with ADHD may be enhanced by increasing the student's engagement in the task (for example, using instructional techniques that enhance engagement) and by using various instructional strategies to boost academic skills (for example, peer-assisted learning strategies, instructional supports, study strategies, and organizational techniques).

A second group of factors influencing academic success for students with ADHD is weakness in memory and executive functions.^{51,52} It has generally been found that children with ADHD who have poor working memory and executive function capabilities often underachieve academically^{51,52} (see also Chapter 3, "Rethinking ADHD from a Cognitive Perspective").

These findings are important because they suggest that interventions to support learning and academic success for children with ADHD need to address both potential cognitive and academic skill weaknesses and not just focus on the reduction of the behavioural symptoms.