



# Creating inclusive, supportive learning environments for students with ASD & ADHD

What every educator should know

Understanding the connections between autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is helpful for creating inclusive, supportive learning environments.

## Rising prevalence

Incidence of ASD:

**1 in 36**

children in 2023, up from **1 in 150** children in 2000<sup>1</sup>

Incidence of ADHD:

**11.4%**

in 2023, up from **7%** in 2000<sup>2</sup>

A Surprising Reality:

**50–70%**

of students with ASD also present with ADHD<sup>3</sup>

## What's causing the surge?

The increase in ADHD and ASD cases is largely not due to over-diagnosis. Three contributing factors:

- **Heightened awareness** from practitioners and the general public
- **Dual diagnoses** allowed under DSM-5 starting in 2013
- **Diagnostics** practices and assessment tools

**The result? Greater recognition, earlier diagnosis, better support.**



## Symptoms of co-occurring ASD and ADHD

While ASD and ADHD have many separate symptoms, these are shared:

- Easily distracted/impacted by processing delay
- Unresponsive to common stimuli/over-responsive to sensory stimuli
- Lack of concern for/inability to react to other people's emotions and feelings
- Demonstrates impaired social interaction

Co-occurring ASD and ADHD impact three critical areas:



Academics



Behavioral regulation



Social interactions

## Building a better classroom for students with co-occurring ASD and ADHD

Here are strategies that positively impact all students — including those with ASD and ADHD.

**1**

Implement flexible instructional methods:

- Visual schedules
- Group projects
- Active brain breaks
- Sensory-friendly classrooms

**2**

Foster a positive and inclusive classroom culture:

- Promote peer-to-peer support among students
- Use inclusive language and materials that reflect diverse backgrounds
- Encourage active listening and conflict resolution skills
- Recognize student achievements

**3**

Build social competencies:

- Conversational skills
- Active listening
- Problem solving
- Conflict resolution



## A team approach is vital

To effectively support students with ASD and ADHD, incorporate these habits into your school community:

- Prioritize professional development to boost awareness.
- Encourage educators to note atypical behaviors.
- Reinforce the critical nature of early diagnosis.
- Work with school resource team to understand and implement 504 plans and IEPs.
- Maintain open lines of communication with families.

**Want more information on how to support diverse learning needs?**

For more information on co-occurring conditions, related assessments and other helpful tools, visit Pearson's [Mental Health](#), [ADHD](#), and [Autism](#) Resource Centers.



1. <https://www.cdc.gov/autism/data-research/index.html>  
2. [https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db70\\_tables.pdf#1](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db70_tables.pdf#1)  
3. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8918663/>