

Supporting Successful Transition to High School

The STRIPES Peer Coaching Program

EXPERTS TELL US that ninth graders who struggle with ADHD are at an increased risk for failing classes, not finishing school, and a host of other negative outcomes down the road. They also tell us that a number of these students are not being effectively reached at school. In an effort to remedy the problem, Margaret Sibley, PhD, and her colleagues at the University of Washington are piloting an innovative new model.

Known as STRIPES (Students Taking Responsibility and Initiative Through Peer Enhanced Support), the program pairs academically successful eleventh or twelfth graders with ninth graders who struggle with ADHD symptoms. The pair meets once a week during the day. During their meetings, the peer coaches help the students with ADHD stay abreast of day-to-day school responsibilities, chart weekly goals, chart progress toward these goals, organize materials in their book bag, manage homework (including planning the best time of day to complete it), explore ways to communicate effectively with teachers, and learn ways to stay self-motivated in school. The peer coaches also check in with their students a couple times a week to make sure things are on track and going well with their new skills.

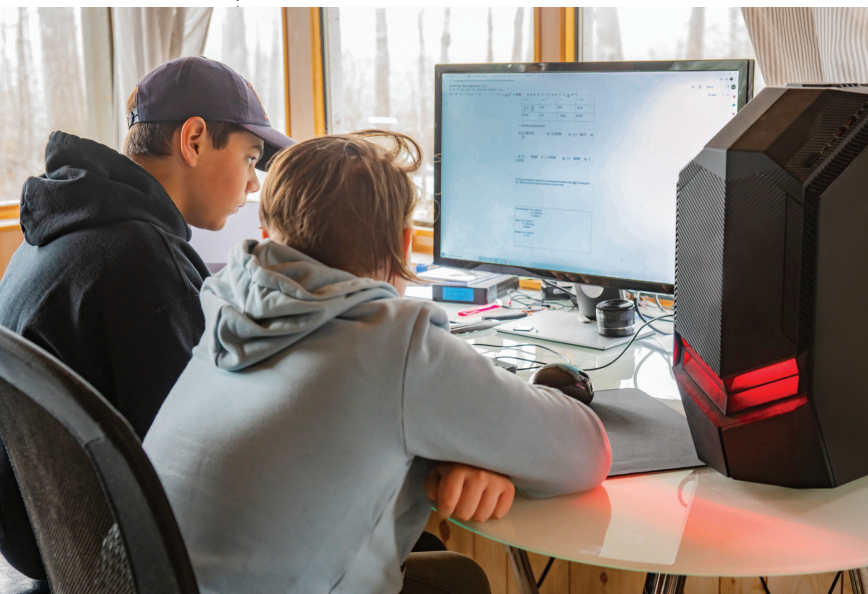
Thus, ninth graders who struggle mightily to understand and manage the demands of high school now have an older student to whom they can look for support and guidance. Their peer coach can help them understand the lay of the land. Students who participated in the program talk about it in a video posted on Dr. Sibley's website.

All STRIPES meetings are supervised by a school sponsor. Before assuming their role, the peer coaches receive four hours of training on how to effectively implement STRIPES. The training includes demonstrating strategies that currently exist for addressing problems in organization, time management, and motivation. Peer coaches also receive weekly supervision from a school sponsor overseeing the program. The school sponsor, in turn, receives ongoing supervision from Dr. Sibley and her team after each supervision session. Peer coaches also earn community service credits for their participation, a requirement for graduation.

Dr. Sibley and her colleagues have implemented STRIPES at several high schools in both Miami, Florida, and Seattle, Washington. They continue to study the program's effectiveness and refine the model based on their findings. They also gather feedback from participants and follow participant progress over time.

STRIPES incorporates a number of important features. First, it reaches out to help ninth graders with ADHD who might not otherwise receive the help they need. And, as noted, without access to this help, those students remain at risk for a range of negative outcomes down the road. Second, these students learn important strategies at the point of performance, or in the actual situation where their problems occur. Experts say this is far better than learning the same strategies in an office or center, and then having to generalize them to situations at school, something that students with ADHD often have difficulty doing consistently.

Third, some students with impairments in attention and executive function may not have qualified for special education services or a 504 plan, and yet they're still at risk for serious educational and other problems. The model helps to identify these students and provides them with help. Fourth, the help is in the form of peer coaching, which, at



least for some students, may be preferable to special education services or other supports they find embarrassing or stigmatizing. And finally, the model provides struggling students with proven practices that are less costly than some other available services.

Dr. Sibley's vision is to continually refine their peer-to-peer model, and to eventually export it nationally. Currently a member of CHADD's professional advisory board and *Attention's* editorial advisory board, she hopes to keep us updated on how to bring STRIPES to high schools across the United States. **A**

To watch the video on STRIPES, go to <http://www.margaretsibley.com/2016/11/29/new-video-stripes-peer-mentorship-program>

A clinical and consulting psychologist, Mark Katz, PhD, is the director of Learning Development Services, an educational, psychological, and neuropsychological center in San Diego, California. As a contributing editor to Attention magazine, he writes the Promising Practices column and serves on the editorial advisory board. He is also a former member of CHADD's professional advisory board and a recipient of the CHADD Hall of Fame Award.

ADDITIONAL READING

Sibley MH, Morley C, Rodriguez L, Coxe SJ, Evans SW, Morsink S, & Torres F. (2020) A Peer-Delivered Intervention for High School Students with Impairing ADHD Symptoms, *School Psychology Review*.

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