

Topics of Discussion - Executive Functioning Presentation

What is EF and Why do we need it?

Foundational Skills - developmentally appropriate through the ages - progression of skills - sensory, communication, cognitive (learn, play and socialize - emotional and self regulation)

What kind of things can we do to support at home and at school?

Advanced Skills - skills developed through middle and high school - task initiation, prioritization, organization, etc...

What kind of things can we do to support at home and at school?

Creating habits/Strategies/Supports

SEL and Resources

Special Education Parent Resource Center (PRC)

www.apsva.us/prc

The PRC is a space and a program that provides information and support to parents, primarily those with children with disabilities, as they work with school staff to identify and meet their children's unique needs. We welcome you to borrow materials from our lending library, attend our learning events, access resources on our website, and visit the PRC. SUBSCRIBE to our weekly messages to keep up to date with PRC Events and News!



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**School and
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**Lending Library,
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APS School Talk

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Monday Message



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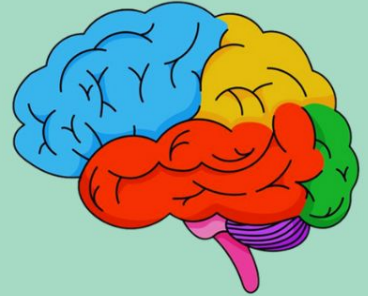
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EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING SKILLS

What to Expect and How to Support
Middle School Students

May 21, 2024



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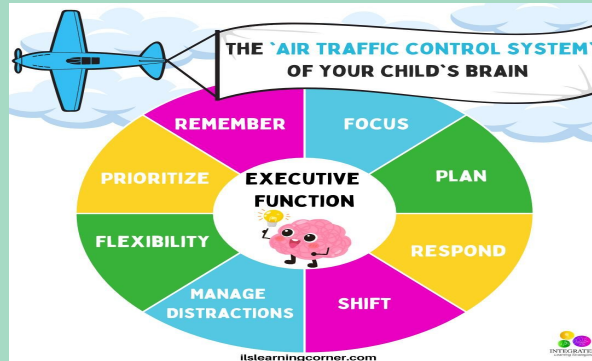
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WHAT IS EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING?

Think about an air traffic control system but in the brain. It's a set of cognitive processes that are necessary for self-control.

People use executive functioning to perform activities like planning, organizing, strategizing, paying attention to and remembering details and managing time and space.



Executive Skills Involving Thinking (Cognition)

- Working Memory
- Planning/ Prioritization
- Organization
- Time Management
- Metacognition



Executive Skills Involving Doing (Behavior)

- Response Inhibition
- Emotional Control
- Sustained Attention
- Task Initiation
- Goal-Directed Persistence
- Flexibility

Foundational Skills

Response Inhibition

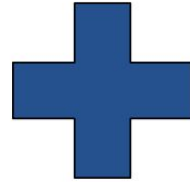
Working Memory

Emotional Control

Flexibility

Sustained Attention

Task Initiation



Advanced Skills

Planning/Prioritization

Organization

Time Management

**Goal-Directed
Persistence**

Metacognition

WHY ARE WE HERE?



- Children aren't born with these skills.
- They are born with the potential to develop them.
- Some children may need more support than others to develop these skills.
- Middle school is when many of our students start to apply their learned EF skills to academics. This is a process.
- It may feel uncomfortable, but failure is an opportunity to learn
- The long-term goal is to support our children in understanding their needs and solving problems independently.

IT WILL BE OKAY.

What's expected:

- Basic self-control
(street safety, labels own emotions)
- Understands patterns, can sort
- Plays active games *(musical chairs, tag, freeze dance)*

Strategies to support:

- Hiding Games
- Imitation
- Conversations
- Sing Songs (with fingerplay)

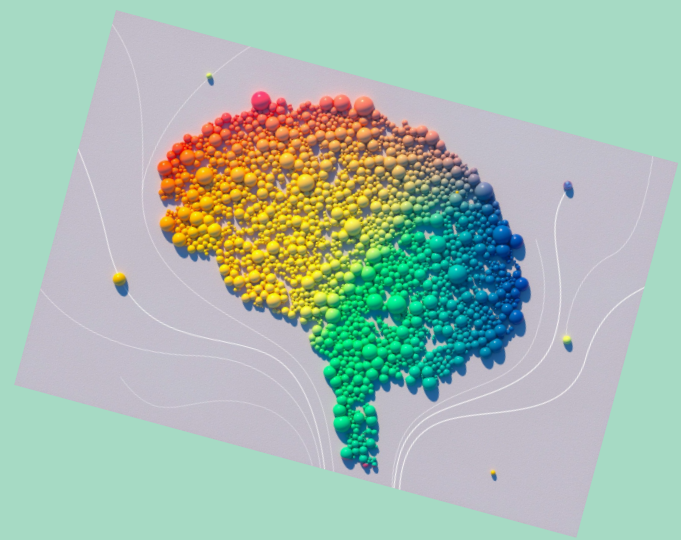
PRESCHOOL TO KINDERGARTEN

What's expected:

- Self care tasks (*washing hands, brushing hair*)
- Identifying and responding to other's emotions
- Putting toys, shoes, laundry in correct spots after using
- Directing and accepting play ideas, talks about feelings

Strategies to support:

- Play - interactive AND independent
- Imaginative
- Involve in chores and daily tasks like cooking
- Set time limits



ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

What's expected:

- Organizing (*bookbags, lunch, materials*)
- Cooperative peer work (*sharing, taking turns, listening*)
- Demonstrating independence, attention to task (~20 mins), following task lists
- Participating in social activities, sports, or clubs
- Controls tantrums and frustrations

Strategies to support:

- Provide time for organization during the day
- Create and post routines - daily, weekly, and/or monthly
- Use organizational apps
- Teach deficient skills - everybody (including you) is human

<p>Practice coping strategies (self-control)</p> 	<p>Change the ending of a movie (flexibility)</p> 	<p>List goals together (perseverance)</p> 
<p>Learn something new (metacognition)</p> 	<p>Estimate the time to complete a task (time management)</p> 	<p>Do a puzzle (working memory)</p> 

What's expected:

- Attention to task (30+ mins), can identify problems (*academic or social*)
- Follow a plan to meet a goal
- Understanding feelings, including empathy; can reflect on emotions
- Able to save money for desired objects

Strategies to support:

- Help your student send emails to teachers or coaches when they need help or are out sick or on travel
- Planning out a weekly schedule
- Organizing materials - school materials, lunch, extracurricular activities
- Create a workspace at home

MIDDLE SCHOOL- THINKING

Working Memory: The ability to hold information in memory while performing complex tasks.

Students are developing: An ability to remember expectations of multiple teachers, assignments, and may follow multi-step directions

Planning and Organizing: The ability to determine goals and priorities and to assess the actions, time and resources needed to achieve those goals.

Students are developing: An ability to formulate a plan to complete an assignment and locate materials needed to do so.



MIDDLE SCHOOL-THINKING

Focusing and Sustaining Attention:

The capacity to keep paying attention to a situation or task in spite of distractibility, boredom, or fatigue.

Students are developing: the skills to complete a chore or homework even when things are happening around them. Some students can start an assignment without being hassled, while others need adult follow-up.



MIDDLE SCHOOL - DOING

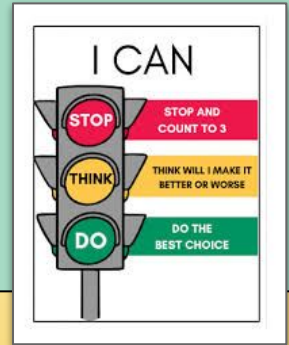
Impulse control:

The ability to stop and think before doing something

Students are developing: counting to three before saying what is on our mind. Taking our time to complete our work and consider all options.



Thinking about consequences before doing something.



Flexibility:

The ability to change strategies or revise plans when conditions change

Students are developing: being able to “go with the flow” and adjust fairly easily to a change of plans. Ability to brainstorm a Plan B. Students should be able to handle unexpected changes in their routine or move away from preferred activities without being overtaken with disappointment or irritability.

MIDDLE SCHOOL- DOING



Self-monitoring: the ability to monitor and evaluate your own performance

Students are developing: awareness of the approaches we’re using to complete assignments; recognize when we’re “stuck” and need to shift to a different approach to complete work; checking work independently. Spot errors in work and identify short-term goals.

Task initiation: the ability to notice when it is time to get started and start without procrastinating

Students are developing: establishing a set start day & time for non-preferred tasks, breaking tasks into smaller steps and writing them down, making the first step being the least demanding, identifying a reward for when you complete the task



MIDDLE SCHOOL- FEELING

Emotional Control:

The ability to regulate emotional responses

Students are developing: While teenagers are more susceptible to heightened emotional intensity, most teens should be able to manage unpleasant emotions and even generate positive feelings in an attempt to overcome obstacles. Support by teaching your child how to label emotions, ask them to predict what will happen and how they will handle it, mindfulness meditation techniques or coping strategies that work for your child.





MEET JOSH

Meet Josh, a sixth grader who struggles with executive function.
This is a day in his life.



7 A.M.

Argh! Josh knows that he has forgotten something. Ah, that's it—his cleats for today's game. He sprints back inside the house to get them ... and leaves his backpack in the kitchen. He walks right past the checklist his mom made to help him remember what he needs for school. But it's too late: The bus is here and about to pull away! He's going to miss it again.

EF Area: ORGANIZATION

11 A.M.

Josh's English teacher stands at the blackboard and asks: "Tell me how last night's reading relates to the words on the board." Every hand in the class goes up...except for Josh's. His heart sinks thinking about all the steps answering this question takes.



I don't know...
I wasn't thinking about those words when I read last night.
I'm so overwhelmed.



EF Area: **WORKING MEMORY**

Last night I was playing my video games and it was AMAZING!!! There were like eighty-five CRAZY MONSTERS and I GOT ALL OF THEM, POW-POW-POW-POW POW-POW!!

Sooooo weird.

He never lets anyone else talk!



1 P.M.

It's the best part of the school day...lunch! At a table with his friends, Josh shouts at a mile a minute and jumps in and out of his seat. He doesn't even notice that the lunch monitor is glaring at him and that his friends look annoyed.

EF Area: SELF-MONITORING, IMPULSE CONTROL

3 P.M.

Time for soccer! A teammate kicks the ball toward Josh. He knows that in soccer, you do one thing—you kick that ball as hard as you can! But where? He can't exactly remember, so he just kicks. *Wham! Uh-oh.* He's sent the ball right into his own team's net. Anger brews on his teammates' faces as Josh's heart sinks yet again.

03:00



EF Area: FLEXIBILITY, WORKING MEMORY



Moooo-ooooom.
Josh didn't put the cups
on the table AGAIN!

6 P.M.

It is time for dinner — but first, Josh has to set the table. *Hmm.* Josh scratches his head and tries to remember exactly what goes at each place setting. He thinks he has got it right this time, but his little sister reminds him that he doesn't. *How dare she!* He blows up screaming at her.

EF Area: ORGANIZATION, EMOTIONAL CONTROL

8 P.M.

After hours of cajoling from his mom, Josh finally sits down to do his homework. But, ugh, where to begin? He knows he has several projects and papers that need attention, but what's due when? What needs done for tomorrow? Overwhelmed, he puts his head down.

EF Area: **TASK INITIATION**




I don't even know where to **start**.



3 A.M.

Finally, the paper is done and Josh can catch a few hours of Z's. But he can't seem to drift off to sleep—he's worried that he didn't do the paper right. And then there's the problem he'll discover tomorrow morning: His disorganization has gotten the best of him, and he forgot to put the finished paper in his backpack.



Finally, the paper is done!
But did I even do it right?
I can never tell...

EF Area: SELF MONITORING, ORGANIZATION



MAKE AN AGREEMENT
WITH YOUR CHILD
ABOUT THE PLAN
TO SUPPORT EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS!

START TO "SCAFFOLD" INDEPENDENCE

- Gradually increase involvement and responsibility.
- Getting ready lists (*ie a sport practice/game, packing a suitcase for a trip*)
- List of things they need by the front door.
- This may require a parent or guardian to sit with new 6th graders every night to review agenda and make sure they are aware of assignments. As the first quarter progresses, and students begin to understand expectations, less and less time should be required.

MAKE A PLAN FOR HOMEWORK

- Same time every night
- Have a dedicated work space
- Parents have a plan for checking for missing work- not necessarily every day but at least weekly
- Checklists can help with staying organized and time management

"ONE BINDER SYSTEM"

Consider a one binder system for Middle School:

- Students have one binder (3 inch) with tabs for each class.
- Agendas and pencil pouches can be held in the binder.
- Students carry this one binder with them everyday.

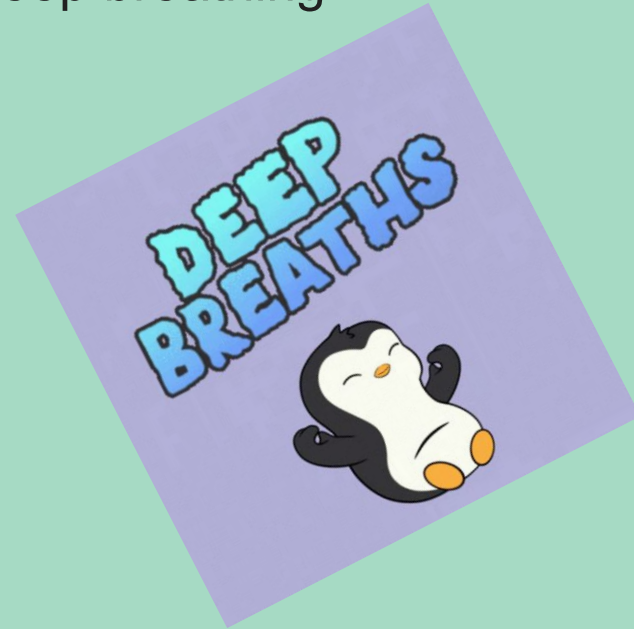


The binder may have to be replaced about midway through the year as they fall apart from use.

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL)

- Model prosocial problem solving
- Discuss and teach strategies like grounding, deep breathing techniques, positive self-talk
- Talk to your children about boundaries

A little bit of stress is okay - this teaches our kids how to work through that. It also offers our students the chance to build self confidence as they manage unpleasant emotions.



REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

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Executive Function 101, The National Center for Learning Disabilities

Enhancing and Practicing Executive Function Skills with Children from Infancy to Adolescence, Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University

Thank
you for
joining
us
today!