

TEACH. APPLY. ADVOCATE.

How to Overcome Executive Functioning Barriers In The Classroom

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How Did We Get Here?

- Special Education Diagnoses = OHD
- Elementary to Middle School Transition
- Needs For Mental Health Awareness Has Increased
- Negative Connotations with ADHD Label
- Structure of the Day Has Changed



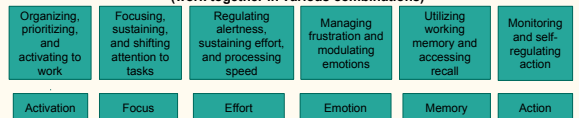
Goals For Today

- 1) Understand the importance of teaching executive functioning language to all learners.
- 2) Assist students in identifying their individual strengths and weaknesses of executive function.
- 3) Teach students how to advocate for their individual executive functioning needs.
- 4) Create a classroom environment for executive functioning self-management.
- 5) Strategies for implementing 504 and IEP accommodations in a general education classroom effectively.

What are Executive Functions?

Thomas E. Brown-2013

Executive Functions
(work together in various combinations)



Executive Skills Involving Thinking: Cognition

- **Working Memory**- ability to keep certain information in mind in order to complete a task
- **Organizational Skill**- ability to establish and maintain order
- **Time Management**- accurately estimate how long a task will take and to make efficient use of time
- **Self-Understanding (Metacognition)**-ability to assess how well you understand yourself
- **Planning/Prioritizing**- ability to create a roadmap to reach a goal or complete a task

Executive Skills Involving Doing: Behavior

- **Emotion Control**- ability to stay calm even when faced with situations that can cause you to get upset, angry, sad, or frustrated
- **Response Inhibition**- ability to think before you act
- **Attention**- ability to stay focused on a task that is interesting to you, especially with distraction
- **Initiative**- ability to start projects or tasks without having someone tell you to
- **Persistence**- ability to stick with a boring task from start to finish
- **Flexibility**- ability to make changes in your behavior or schedule

What Is the Difference Between ADHD & EF?

- Many ADHD symptoms are actually problems with executive functions.
- ADHD is an official medical diagnosis; Executive Functioning Deficits are not.
- Problems with executive functions aren't just exclusive to people with ADHD.



Which Student Has Needs in Executive Functioning?

Student A: **Student B:**

- Academically-100% (or higher), partial grade advancement next year
- Socially-works well individually and in group situations, internally motivated
- Outside Interests- swimming, orchestra
- Academically-difficulty turning in completed work
- Socially-struggles in class to keep body to himself, needs significant assistance with organization
- Outside Interests: Boy Scouts, Legos



4 Tiers of Support

- 1) Teach Common Language 🍏
- 2) Identify Strengths and Areas of Need 🔍
- 3) Teach Self-Advocacy Skills 🧑🏫
- 4) Set-up A Classroom To Support All Students



1: Kid Friendly Language

- Executive Function is the term that describes the "stuff" required to carry out daily responsibilities.
- Strengths are the things we can do well with little assistance.
- Areas of Need are the areas we might need need some help.

#2: Identifying Strengths & Areas of Need

- Executive functioning lesson and interactive activities
- Students complete an executive functioning survey (online resources, school psychologist, local medical professionals)
- Inservice for teachers/administrators

Survey Takeaways for: Parents

- Conferences
- Lays the groundwork for other conversations
- We ALL have strengths and areas of need
- Adults--make our own accommodations-Teach students to do the same!
- Easier to talk about Executive Functions than ADHD

Student Introduction to Executive Functions

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0gl7DZz1p7o>



#3: Teaching Self-Advocacy Skills

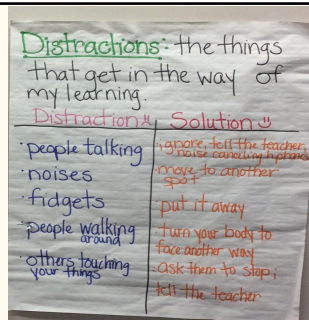
- Identify strategies to match areas of need
- Brainstorm together as a group
 - Management of materials
 - Alternate Seating
 - Movement Breaks
 - Auditory: silent/background noise



#4: How Does This Work In A Classroom?

- Importance of set-up/buy in for students AND staff
- Different norms for each class-constructed by students
- Refer back to norms if problems arise
- #1: Tools are available for all students

Shiny and New

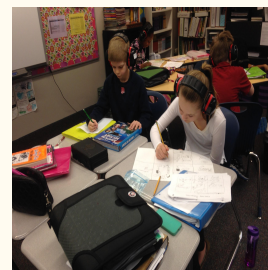




Auditory Monitoring

- Noise-Canceling Headphones
- Headphones/Ear Buds
- Ipods/Music

Blocks out unwanted noise to limit distractions.



Movement Breaks

- Stationary Bikes
- Foot Pedal Bikes
- Foot Bands

Can be used during structured or unstructured times.

*Refer to classroom norms.



Alternate Seating

- Standing Desks
- Lap Desks
- Wobble Chairs
- Study Corrals

Assists the body attend to tasks but do not make any noise.



Focus/Time Management

- TimeTimers
- Analog Clocks
- Iphone Reminders

Assists students with tracking the amount of time it takes to complete a task.



Fidgets

Fidget vs. Toy---Important!

- Stress Balls
- Rubberbands
- Anything small

Increases focus/attention and mental engagement.



Common Concerns

- Classroom Management
- "Fun" Teacher
- Management of Materials
- Time
- Funding



IEP/504 Accommodations

- Accommodations are designed for a specific student
- Parents/students less likely to feel singled out
- Formal accommodations will still need to be put in place



Overall Goal For Students

"Environmental modifications (including teacher support) are important tools that can help children with weak executive skills function successfully, but the ultimate goal should be to help students develop their own executive skills so they can function independently."

MAKE IT
happen

Peg Dawson, Richard Guare, "Executive Skills in Children and Adolescents"

How Do I Pay For These Resources?

- **Education Minnesota Foundation for Excellence in Teaching and Learning**
 - Classroom Grant: up to \$3,000 for licensed personnel who work with students and wish to improve their practice and student achievement. Includes classroom teachers, guidance counselors and others who require a license to carry out their work with students.
- **MN Educators of the Gifted/Talented Grant**
- **Business Donations**
- **Parents**



Professional Resources

Executive Functioning Workbook For Teens, Sharon A. Hansen
Smart but Scattered, Peg Dawson/Richard Guare
Executive Skills in Children and Adolescents, Peg Dawson/Richard Guare
A New Understanding of ADHD in Children and Adults, Thomas E. Brown
Understanding Girls with ADHD, Nadeau/Littman/Quinn

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