



Executive Functioning: Managing Schoolwork and Everyday Life

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Executive Function and Developmental Expectations

Elementary School	Middle School	High School	College/Post Secondary
Same teacher majority of day	Multiple teachers – team approach	Limited coordination among teachers	Independence with professors
Lack of ‘shifting’	Moving between classes, expectations, relations	Tests on same days - juggling	Multiple responsibilities from each class – up to student to balance work
Limited homework	Homework for each class	Final exams, limited strategies provided for overall approach	Papers, exams, outside course work – different in each class
Parent involvement is expected and encouraged	Decrease in parent involvement	Continued decrease in parent involvement	Parent involvement discouraged, prohibited without waiver
Parent Signatures	Some signatures	Only with major issues	Not allowed
Problems identified by teacher and individualized approaches offered	Teacher identifies need for extra help - encouraged, sometimes ‘required’	Extra help offered, sometimes encouraged, up to student to follow through	Office Hours - independent

Transition Towards Independence – The Issue:



Micromanagement



Executive Function:

Skills

Systems

Development

Support

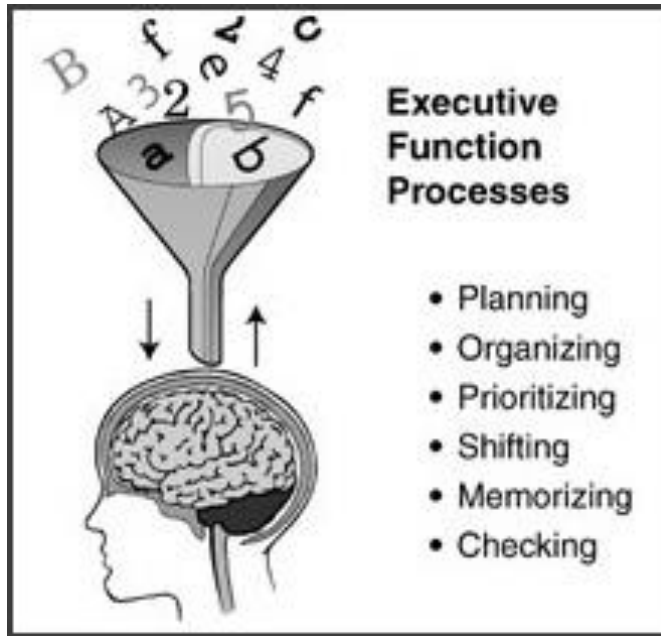


Sink or Swim



What are Executive Function Skills?

“The CEO of the brain”

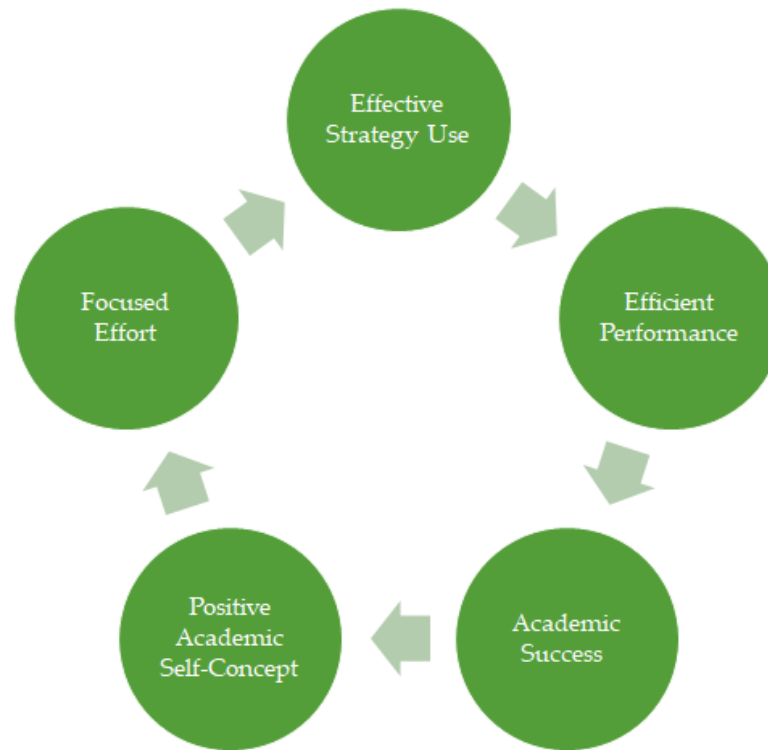


How we achieve goals



Our guiding behaviors

Why are Executive Function Skills Important?



Academic Success
Cycle: Meltzer,
Reddy, Sales Pollica,
and Roditi (2004b)

Executive Function Skills

Executive functions include:

- **Goal setting:** Identifying short-term and long-term goals
- **Cognitive flexibility/shifting:** Switching easily between approaches or things; thinking flexibly, “go with the flow”
- **Organizing, planning and prioritizing:** Sorting and ordering information (or things) based on relative importance
- **Time management:** Estimating and allocating time and staying within designated time limits and deadlines
- **Accessing working memory:** Remembering and manipulating information mentally
- **Response inhibition and self-control:** Resisting impulse and thinking before acting
- **Metacognition, self-monitoring and self-checking:** Managing oneself in the problem solving context, identifying and correcting personal errors
- **Sustained attention:** Ability to attend to a task regardless of distractions and non-interest
- **Task initiation:** Beginning tasks and completing in a timely fashion
- **Goal directed persistence:** Following a goal through its completion



Executive Function Challenges

Forgetting information or things (i.e., homework, lunch, instructions, responsibilities, etc.)

Difficulty organizing thoughts, environment, materials, etc.

Difficulty activating (i.e., starting a task)

Getting places late

Misplacing things

Difficulty breaking down larger tasks or responsibilities into smaller pieces

Struggles with problem solving (knowing when there is a problem and how to fix it)

Executive Function Considerations

Executive functioning

is the part of the brain that manages the skills we need to complete tasks in our daily lives.



mindfulrambles.blogspot.com

EF challenges have a major impact on day-to-day functioning and crosses all domains, including academic, social, personal, etc.

Some individuals develop EF skills by picking them up, while others need to be explicitly taught

Executive function skills are developed well into one's 20's

EF Skills Important for the Transition to Middle School and Beyond

- Using a system to organize schoolwork
- Follow a more complex school schedule
- Longer term prep needed for quizzes and exams
- Plan and carry out longer term projects and assignments



What is the Caregiver's Role?

Teach and reinforce EF skills with younger children

Have children be part of the process (don't just do for them)

- Scheduling (Home routines, homework, etc.)
- Find solutions to homework problems (rather than providing solutions)
- Teach them how to communicate with their teachers
- Model how to cope with stress, getting started on and persisting through challenges

Demonstrate empathy

- Put yourself in their shoes...what would I do if I was presented with this issue? How would I feel? What would I find helpful?

Understand their learning profile

- Identify their strengths. What are they good at? What good habits do they follow? How did they get to that place?

Instead of "Can't do"...model "Can't do yet" language

- Encourages a growth mindset instead of a fixed mindset

Encouraging EF Skill Development

Assess expectations vs. current skillset

Use visual supports to teach organization

- Create daily/weekly schedules with visual blocks of time
- Show sequential steps in a task such as a bedtime routine or getting dressed
- Make a “to do” list

Break down larger tasks/responsibilities into smaller parts

- Getting ready for school: Get up, get dressed, eat breakfast, brush teeth, brush hair, put on shoes, get backpack, etc.

Have a clear and explicit (labeled with words and/or pictures) system to organize materials

Don't do for them, teach and coach them through doing it themselves

- In order to learn, one needs to practice!

Externalize the metacognitive process, explain the why, ask questions, model out loud

Set aside extra time (and patience) to work on these skills

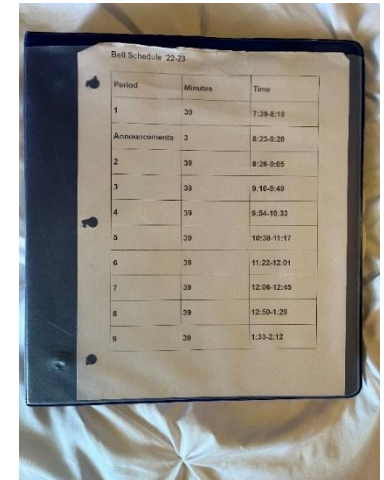
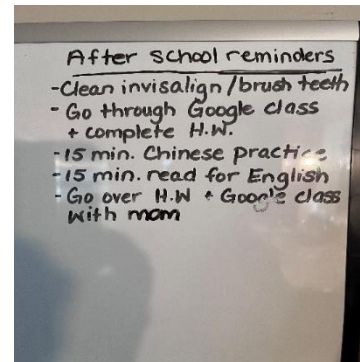
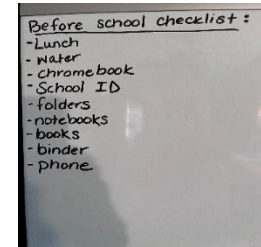
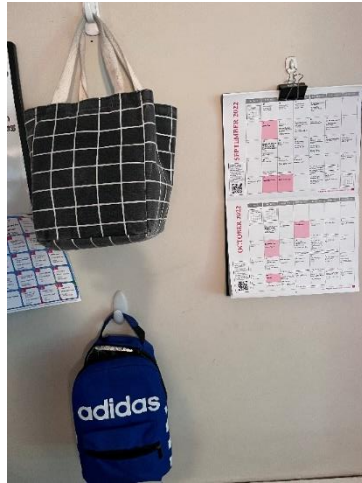
Establish routine and stick to it

Practical Tools to Develop EF

- Checklists
- To-do lists
- Time limits
- Time blocking
- Planner
- Calendar
- Graphic organizers
- Rewards
- Color-coding



Examples:





QUESTIONS? COMMENTS? FINAL THOUGHTS?

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