



EmpowerED
Pickerington

Resource Series for Special Education Support
Focus - Supporting Every Learner, Supporting Every Family, Every Day

February 2026

Presenters:
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Erin Jones, Special Education Coordinator



Welcome to Student Services

Mission

Our mission is to provide a safe and inclusive learning environment where all students have the opportunity to succeed.

Purpose

To provide educators and families with information about the Whole Child by pursuing and completing evaluations to develop plans to help ensure that students are able to receive a free and appropriate education, regardless of their disability.



District Goals: We will...

- Cultivate **Academic Excellence** by engaging all students in relevant and rich learning experiences that prepare them for career, college, and life.
- Provide **Modern Facilities** that are physically safe and offer diverse opportunities to all students.
- Ensure **Operating Efficiency** to be financially accountable to our community, maximize resources, and ensure that we are lean and efficient.
- Be **Pillars of our Community** by relentlessly pursuing opportunities to engage with all residents.



What are Executive Functions (EF)?

Executive functions involve everything that you do every day to manage your own behavior(self-management).

These involves skills and processes such as:

Make plans

Keep track of time and finish work on time

Keep track of more than one thing at once

Meaningfully include past knowledge in discussions

Evaluate ideas and reflect on our work

Ask for help

Wait to speak until we're called on



Development of Executive Functioning

Executive skills develop gradually and at different rates for different people. Most children struggle with one or more areas of EF.

Children who have learning and attention issues complicates the development of EF.

These students require additional support and accommodations.

Remember: Progress in executive functioning is developmental and varies from child to child.

According to a Harvard Study,

“No One Is Born with Executive Function Skills, but Nearly Everyone Can Learn Them.”

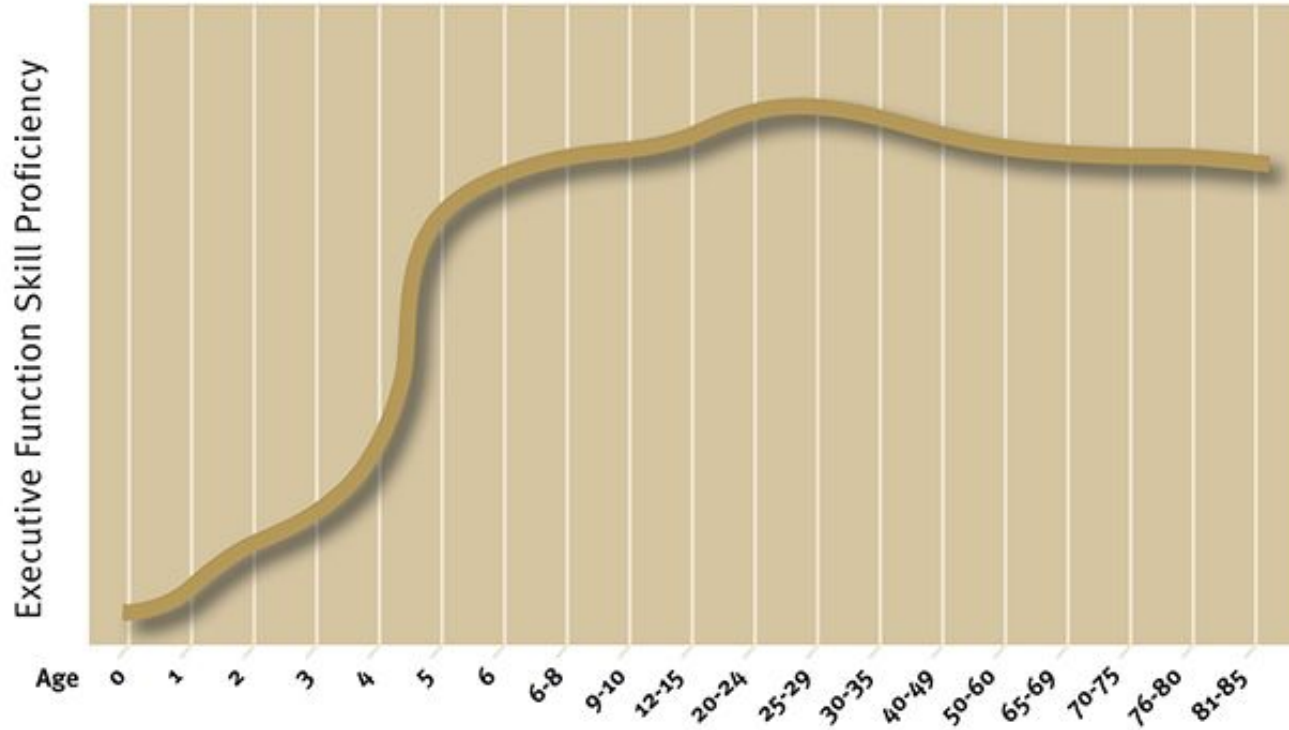
“Building Children’s Executive Function Skills Benefits Everyone.”

<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/what-is-executive-function-and-how-does-it-relate-to-child-development/>



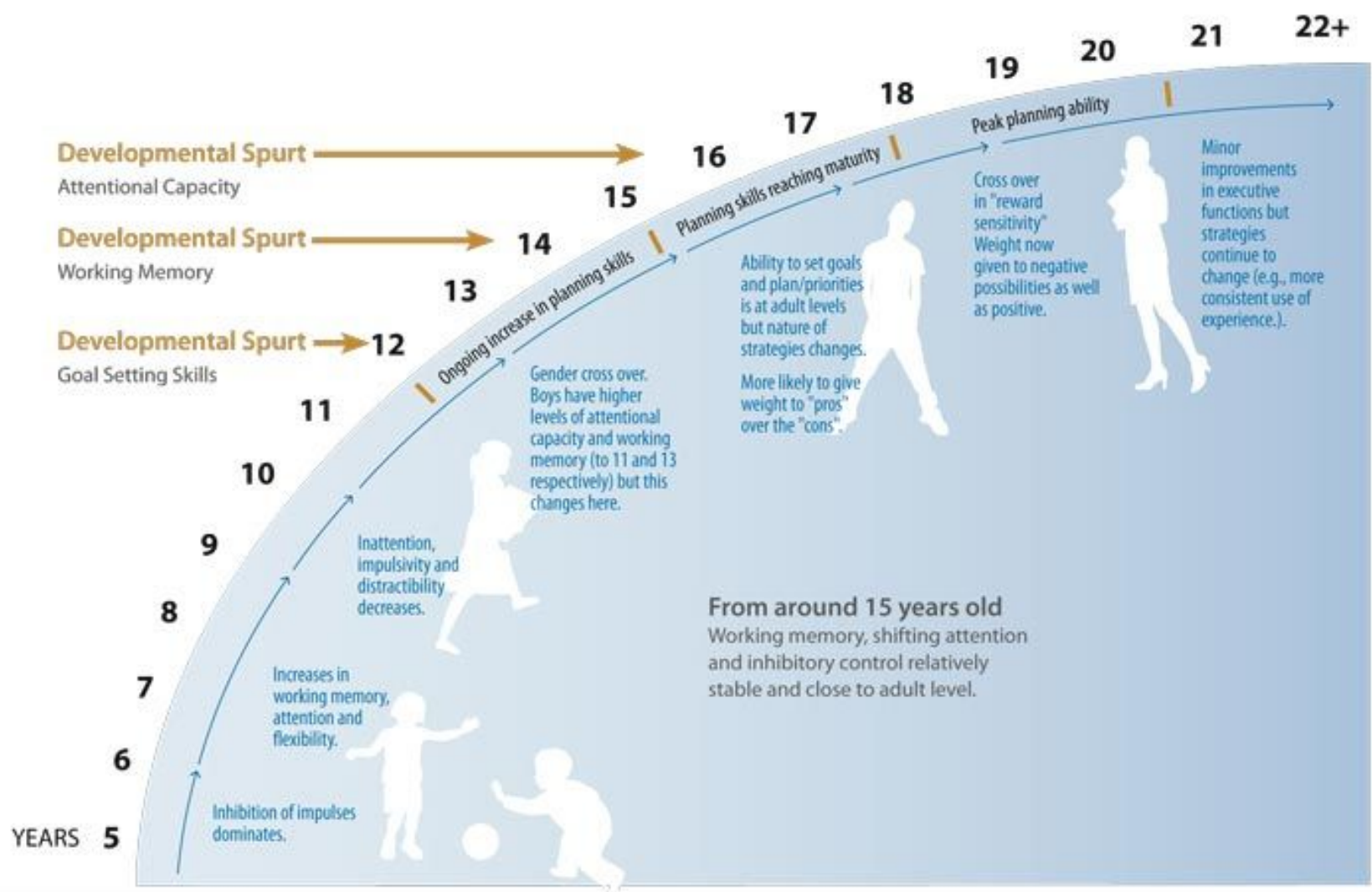
Harvard Research

Executive Function Skills Build Into the Early Adult Years



<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/inbrief-executive-function/>

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<http://ceril.net/index.php/articulo?s?id=534>

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Harvard Research

WORKING MEMORY

ADULT Can remember multiple tasks, rules, and strategies that may vary by situation

5-16 YEARS Develops ability to search varying locations, remember where something was found, then explore other locations (e.g., a game of Concentration or hiding a penny under one of three cups)

4-5 YEARS Comprehends that appearance does not always equal reality (e.g., when given a sponge that looks like a rock)

3 YEARS Can hold in mind two rules (e.g., red goes here, blue goes there) and act on the basis of the rules

9-10 MONTHS Can execute simple means-to-ends tasks and two-step plans; also able to integrate looking one place and acting (e.g., reaching) at another place

7-9 MONTHS Develops ability to remember that unseen objects are still there (toy hidden under a cloth); learns to put two actions together in a sequence (remove cloth, grasp toy)

INHIBITORY CONTROL

ADULT Consistent self-control; situationally appropriate responses (e.g., resists saying something socially inappropriate, resists “tit for tat” response)

10-18 YEARS Continues to develop self-control, such as flexibly switching between a central focus (such as riding a bike or driving) and peripheral stimuli that may or may not need attention (road signs and pedestrians vs. billboards and passing houses)

7 YEARS Children perform at adult levels on learning to ignore irrelevant, peripheral stimuli (such as a dot on the side of a screen) and focus on the central stimulus (such as a picture in the middle of the screen)

4-5 YEARS Reductions in perseveration (persisting with following a rule even when knowing that the rule has changed). Can delay eating a treat; also can begin to hold an arbitrary rule in mind and follow it to produce a response that differs from their natural instinct (sort colored cards by shape rather than color)

9-11 MONTHS Able to inhibit reaching straight for a visible but inaccessible reward, such as a toy on the other side of a window, and instead delay a moment to recognize the barrier and detour around it

8-10 MONTHS Begins to maintain focus despite distractions during brief delays in a task

6 MONTHS Rudimentary response inhibition (able to not touch something instructed not to touch)

COGNITIVE FLEXIBILITY

ADULT Able to revise actions and plans in response to changing circumstances

13-18 YEARS Continued improvement in accuracy when switching focus and adapting to changing rules

10-12 YEARS Successfully adapts to changing rules, even along multiple dimensions (okay to shout on playground, not okay in school, okay sometimes in theater rehearsal)

2-5 YEARS Succeeds at shifting actions according to changing rules (e.g., takes shoes off at home, leaves on at school, puts on boots for rain)

9-11 MONTHS Develops ability to seek alternate methods to retrieve objects beyond directly reaching for what’s in view

Sources: Best & Miller (2010)¹⁰⁰; Diamond (1991a, 1991b, 2002, 2006).^{101,102,8,103}

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Areas of Executive Functioning

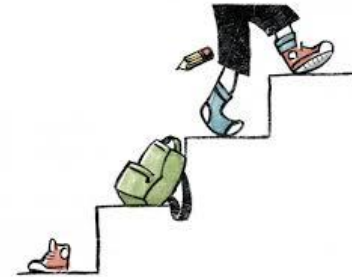
- Organization
- Planning/Prioritizing
- Task Initiation/ Task Completion
- Working Memory
- Self-Monitoring/Self-Checking
- Flexibility/Shifting
- Emotional Control/ Self-Regulation
- Impulse Control/ Inhibition

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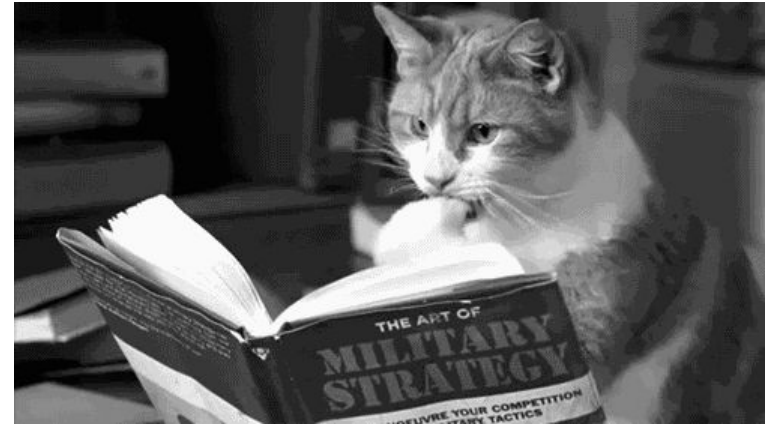
Organization

- The ability to create and maintain systems to keep track of information or materials.
- Tied to planning,
- Tied to setting priorities and task initiation.
- THE ABYSS= lose permission slips, assignment sheets, notebooks and library books.
- Consequences=failing grade
- but don't improve their organizational skills in response to these consequences.
- May understand the value of organization but are unable to learn how to keep track of things.



Planning/Prioritization

- ❑ Planning/Prioritizing the ability to create steps to reach a goal and to make decisions about what to focus on
- ❑ Children who have difficulty planning and setting priorities are easily overwhelmed by complicated, multi-part tasks.
- ❑ They can't independently impose structure and order on ideas.
- ❑ They have trouble thinking through the steps required to achieve a goal.
- ❑ They tend to underestimate a project's complexity and time requirements.



Task Maintenance



- The ability to recognize when it is time to get started on something and begin without procrastinating
- Put off projects until the last minute.
- They're sometimes seen as lazy or unmotivated;
- May procrastinate because they really don't know how to start.
- Difficulty beginning a task, maintaining a task, generating ideas, responses
- Difficulty problem solving
- So overwhelmed=doing nothing at all.

Working Memory

- The ability to **hold information** in mind, *remember it, manipulate it and use it* to complete a task.
- Unable to remember and apply crucial information in order to move to the next step of a task.
- Multi-step direction or tasks are difficult.
- They falter when a task requires that they remember a series of directions, generate ideas in response to the directions and then express their ideas.
- Information just doesn't "stick" for them.



Self-Monitoring



Self -Monitoring the ability to monitor and evaluate your own performance

Low self-monitoring:

- ☐ May not notice that they're not following directions until someone points this out.
- ☐ They are often completely surprised by a low grade on a test or project.

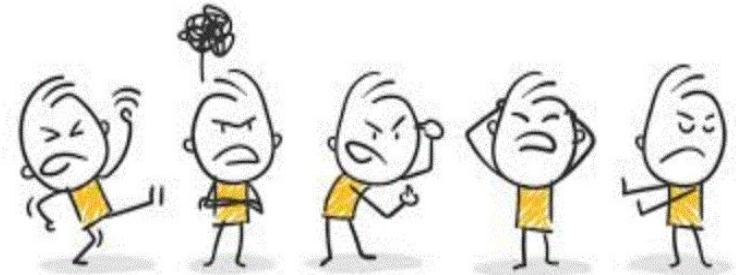
Flexibility-Shifting



- The ability to move freely from one situation, activity, aspect, problem to another as circumstances demand.
- The ability to change strategies or revise plans when conditions change
- Inflexibility:
 - Does not react well to changes in plan or routines.
 - Does not react well or takes a while to warm up to new situations.
 - Wants things done in a specific way and becomes upset if they are changed.
 - Perseverates on topics and activities.
 - Has difficulty interacting in unfamiliar social situations.
 - Does not want to try new things.
 - Has particularly limited varieties in food or toy preferences.
 - Dictates to others how they are "supposed" to do things.

Emotional Control

- The ability to manage their feelings by thinking about their end goals and values.
- Low Emotional Control:
 - They have trouble accepting constructive criticism.
 - Can't keep eyes on the goal when unexpected things happen.
 - They are quick to call the situation as unfair.
 - They overreact to losing a game or being called in in class.
 - They have difficulty sticking with school- work when distressed.
 - Tends to overreact to situations when compared to same-age peers.
 - Remains upset about a situation for longer than same-age peers.
 - Is short tempered and has emotional outbursts.
 - Has mood swings
 - Reacts to small problems as though they are major problems.



Impulse Control/Inhibition

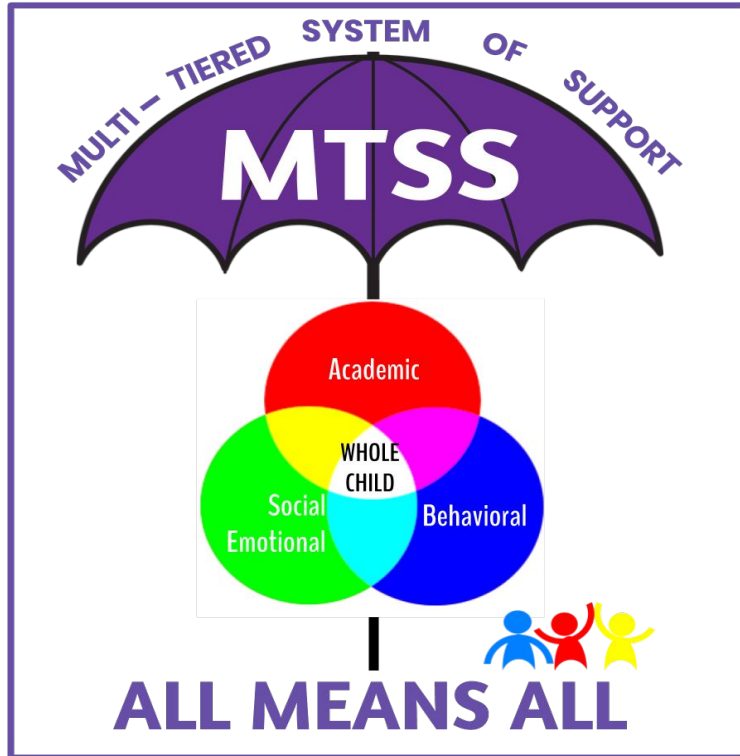


Impulse Control the ability to stop and think before acting. To inhibit, resist, or not act on impulse.

Low Impulse Control:

- ☐ They often say or do things without using a cushion of time to reflect.
- ☐ NO FILTER
- ☐ Do whatever without considering their obligations or commitments.
- ☐ Often speed through schoolwork, sacrificing accuracy and completeness along the way.

Ways Schools Identify Executive Functioning



Multi-Tiered Systems of Support Teams collaborate to identify students who may benefit from executive functioning centered accommodations or interventions.

Teams often use the following methods to identify students who may need executive functioning based supports:

- direct observations
- behavior referrals
- progress monitoring data

Ways Schools Identify Executive Functioning

There are ways that the school based team may access additional information and data through tools to understand how executive functioning difficulties negatively impacts or has an adverse effect on a child's educational progress.

Collecting this additional data is a team based decision. The consideration of collecting more information should be dependent on the child's response to intervention.



SCENARIOS

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING AROUND THE CLOCK

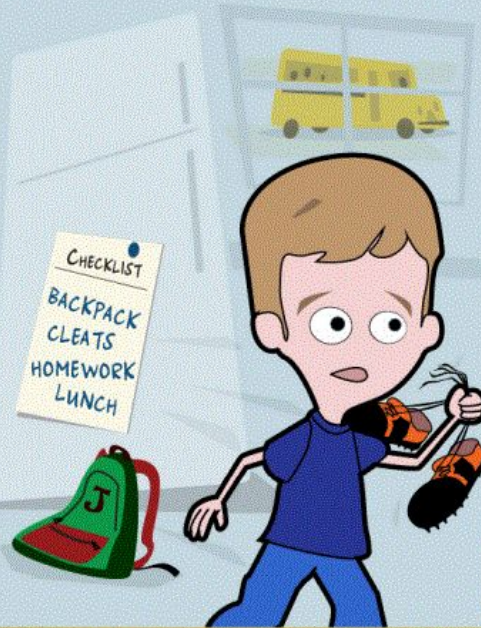
<https://genetic.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Exec-Function-e-book.pdf>



EXECUTIVE FUNCTION AROUND THE CLOCK



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

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3 P.M.

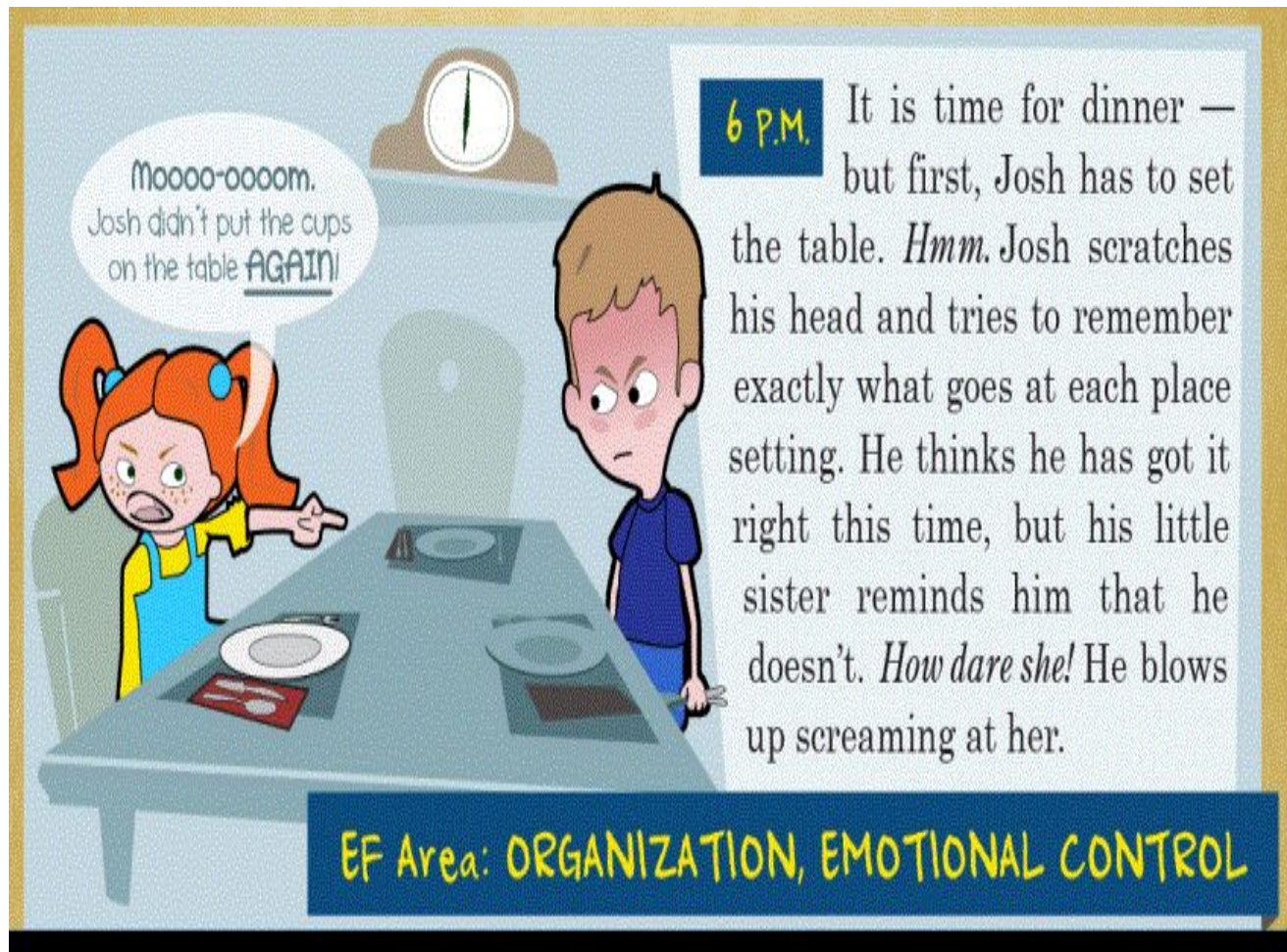
Time for soccer! A teammate kicks the ball toward Josh. He knows that in soccer, you do one thing—you kick that ball as hard as you can! But where? He can't exactly remember, so he just kicks. *Wham! Uh-oh.* He's sent the ball right into his own team's net. Anger brews on his teammates' faces as Josh's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

03:00



EF Area: FLEXIBILITY, WORKING MEMORY

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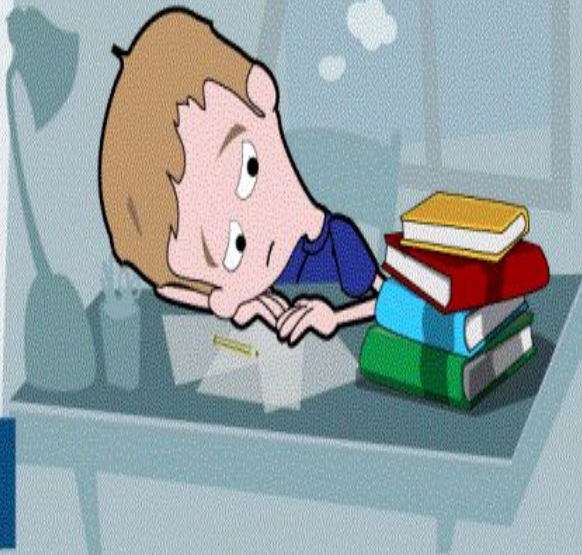
8 P.M.

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.

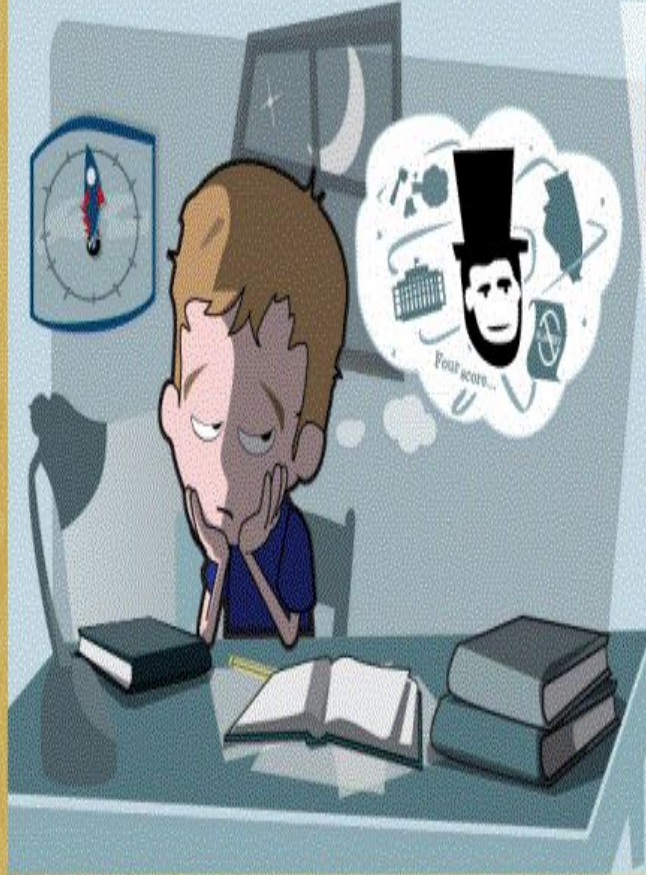
EF Area: TASK INITIATION



I don't even know where to start.



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12 A.M.

Delays and procrastination mean that Josh is burning the midnight oil. He is exhausted, but his history paper is due tomorrow. But he just can't figure out a structure for his paper and the steps he needs to take to get it done.

EF Area: **PLANNING & SETTING PRIORITIES**

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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

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Classroom Strategies



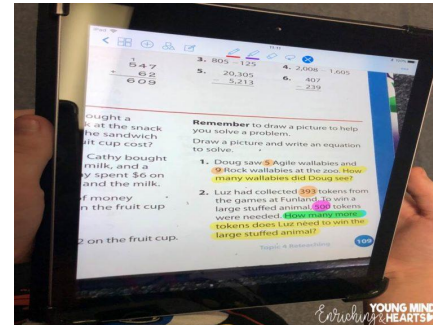
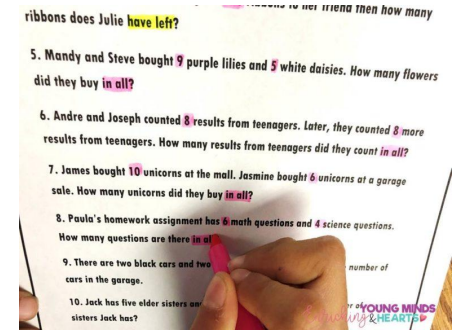
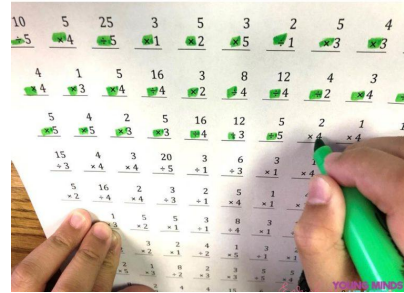
Presentation

- Seat near the teacher/instruction
 - Stand near student when instructing
 - Alternate seating/Allow for choice
 - Bean bag
 - Desk instead of floor
 - Rocking chair
 - Wiggle seat
- Assign student to low-distraction area
 - limit access to items,
 - limit visual around student
- Seat near positive peer models



Presentation

- Adjust workload
 - Reduce similar problems
 - Provide alternate assignment
- Highlight/Circle/underline key words:
 - Instructions
 - Reading passages
 - Math word problems
 - + - x /
 - Spelling patterns
- Scaffold or break items down into steps



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Presentation

Limit verbal interactions

Use visuals

Regular classroom routines post in the room as rem

Use nonverbal cues

point to hand picture to remind of hand raising

Point to shhh picture to remind of talking out

Create your own and teach the signal

EXTRA Wait time

(Count to 10-20)

EXTRA Processing time

(Count to 10-20)



**STAY
SEATED**



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Strategies- Behavior Support

Provide a warning to prepare for a transition
(verbal or non-verbal)

Checklists for what tasks to begin first,
second, etc.

Allow for student choice in tasks

Give clear, simple, behavior expectations

Be consistent

Follow through with the consequence or praise

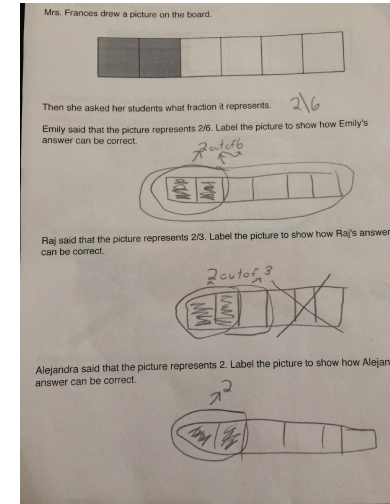
Ask students to repeat the instructions or directions for clarification.



Class Rules	
1.	Listen when others are talking.
2.	Follow directions.
3.	Keep hands, feet, and objects to yourself.
4.	Work quietly and do not disturb others.
5.	Show respect for school and personal property.
6.	Work and play in a safe manner.

Page Layout

- Remove clutter or distractions
- Provide extra space
- Divide page into clearly marked sections
- Use a large simple font
- Turn line paper side ways to line up math problems
- Use graph paper to support organization of letter/numbers
- Place similar types of problems together
 - Matching, Addition, Short Answer, etc.
- Use single sides (limit flipping back and forth)
- Keep all problems on the same page



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Breaks

Monitor your students' attention during lessons

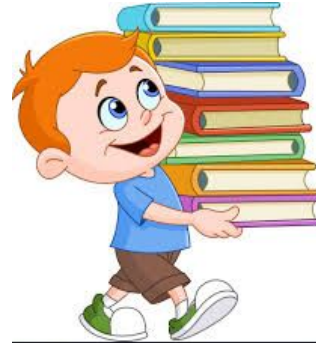
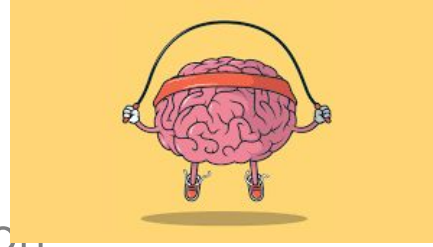
Allow for breaks every 10-15 minutes

Quick yoga poses

Quick brain breaks

Create a classroom job

Have a student run a
"imaginary errand"



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Resources

- **References:**

Najdowski, A.C. (2017). Flexible and Focused: Teaching Executive Function Skills to Individuals with Autism and Attention Disorders

Websites:

- <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/what-is-executive-function-and-how-does-it-relate-to-child-development/>
- <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/guide/a-guide-to-executive-function/>
- <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/How-Early-Experiences-Shape-the-Development-of-Executive-Function.pdf>
- [What is Executive Functioning](#)
- [Executive Functioning 101 pdf](#)
- [Executive Functioning at Different Ages](#)
- [Understood.org](#)



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