

PRIDE's

Supporting Executive Functioning Parent-Training

Presented by B.H. Child Study Team (CST):

Maryann D'Alessandro, M.A., LDT-C

Meredith DeBello, LCSW, Social Worker

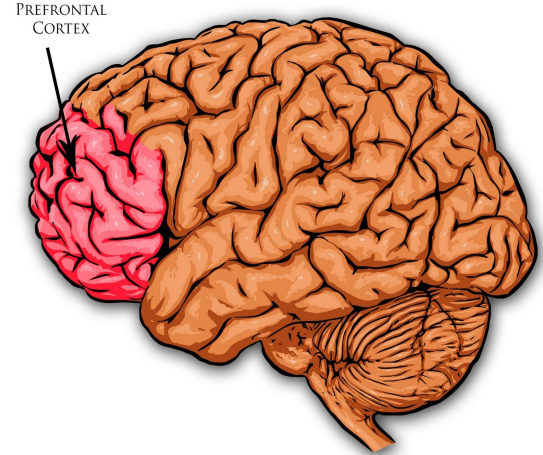
Mallory Seidman, Psy.D. School Psychologist

What are Executive Functions?

Executive functions (EF) are a set of higher-order cognitive processes located in the prefrontal cortex in the frontal lobe of the brain

Commonly referred to as 'CEO' or 'RAM' of our brains

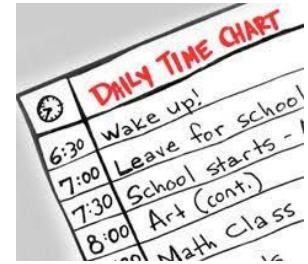
EF allow us to engage in goal-directed behaviors, problem-solve, make decisions



Executive Functions continued...

Ability to:

- Initiate (getting started; generating ideas)
- Organize (materials and thoughts/ideas)
- Prioritize
- Manage time
- Cognitively shift (i.e., flexible thinking; sorting; make adjustments from feedback)
- Self-Monitor
- Self-Regulate (emotional control, inhibitory control)
- Working Memory



Development of Executive Functioning

- The brain is still developing, especially in the frontal lobe region, from early childhood through adolescence and young adulthood
- Spectrum of Executive Functioning
 - Typically developing children
 - Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) & Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
 - Difficulties with: inhibitory control; self-monitoring; working memory; time-management; organization; shifting; self-regulation
- Start Young! We must **model** for our preschool students *how* to use strategies for fostering healthy development of EF.



Executive Functioning Strategies In the Classroom



Follow Directions: working memory; initiate; self-monitoring

Strategies: visual models; visual schedule; visual checklists; teacher check-ins; helping students create awareness

Turn-Taking, Raising Hand, Sitting on Rug, Patience: impulse control

Strategies: redirecting students when calling out; praising students for raising hand and waiting to be called on; movement breaks to help build stamina and reduce impulsivity/hyperactivity

Persevere: shift instead of perseverating

Strategies: Help student come up with alternative strategies for problem-solving

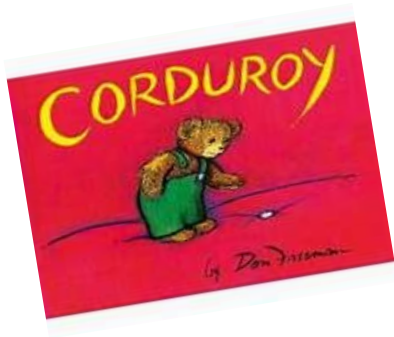
Emotional Awareness: self-regulation; self-monitoring

Strategies: Encouraging verbal expression of emotions; feelings chart; coping strategies

Ages 3-4 in the Classroom

At this age, the pre-academic skills that are focused on are:

- Paying attention to a storybook for up to 3 minutes
- Asking for help when needed rather than struggling for an extended period or giving up
- Children are encouraged to assign roles to others during pretend play
- Children begin to label feelings in his/herself or others



Ages 4-5 in the Classroom

At this age, the skills that are focused on are:

- Encouraging children to ask about future events
- Taking turns and following simple rules in games
- Children will begin to show the ability to decide between 2 or 3 similarly desirable options
- Children will begin to display a delay in gratification and wait for short periods of time



What Does This Look Like in the Classroom?

The classroom is divided into Centers and Activities such as:

- Make Believe/Imaginary Play Center where a variety of props and toys are available such as firefighter and police officer costumes, dolls and doll houses. Younger children tend to play alone or in parallel play, children are learning to play cooperatively and help regulate each other's behavior.
- Writing Center where children can dictate a story and teachers transcribe the story. Children can draw pictures to create their own book. Generation of ideas and/or responding to an open ended questions.
- Toys and Games Center encourages children control attention through quieter activities that require children to reduce stimulation and focus attention.
- Quiet Games like matching and sorting activities where children can sort by different attributes (color, shape, same or opposite) promote cognitive flexibility.

What Does This Look Like in the Classroom? continued...

- Increasing exposure to complicated puzzles exercise visual working memory and planning skills.
- Movement Breaks is where teachers will play music and have children dance very fast, then very slow, or Freeze Dance. When the music stops, children must inhibit action and shift their attention.
- Gym Teachers/ Classroom Teachers can also set obstacles for children to maneuver and encourage complex motions.
- Songs that repeat or add on are great challenges for working memory. Also songs that require movement, motion, or finding partners. Familiar songs that are often played: Wheels on the Bus, 5 Little Monkeys, Hello Song.
- Cooking is often incorporated into classroom activities. The skills used when cooking allows for practice when waiting for directions, working memory while holding directions in mind and focus attention when pouring, measuring, and counting.

Executive Functioning Strategies at Home

Following Directions:

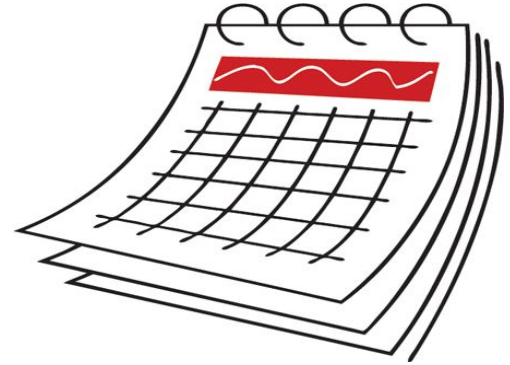
1. Have your child start to perform simple chores.
2. Help to pack for a trip (eg. get three t-shirts and three shorts and put in the suitcase).
3. Allow your child to help with simple cooking tasks (e.g. stirring & pouring).



Executive Functioning Strategies at Home continued...

Planning / Organizing:

1. Keep a large family calendar.
2. Create a visual schedule so your child can plan for the day.
3. Use a timer to help plan transitions.
4. Assign a color/ color code your child's items- towel, tooth brush, water bottle, backpack, and on the calendar to help with organization.
5. Label toy and art bins with a picture of what belongs in each bin so your child can sort, clean up and stay organized.



Executive Functioning Strategies at Home continued...

Emotional and Inhibitory Control:

1. Model/ share how you react appropriately to something that is upsetting.
2. Make a list of choices or options that your child has when she is upset.
3. Play board games like Candyland- practice turn-taking, modeling positive reactions
4. Practice having your child wait rather than interrupting a conversation.
5. Delaying gratification.
6. When reading stories, help your child identify different feelings and how to make good choices.



Executive Functioning Strategies at Home continued...

Working Memory:

1. When reading to your child, stop and ask them questions about the story. Help them make connections to their own experiences.



2. Ask them to remember 3 things you need at the grocery store.

3. Ask your child how they made a project that they bring home from school.



4. Play games like Memory, Go Fish.

5. Learn/ practice/ sing songs that they are learning in school or that they like at home.

Executive Functioning Strategies at Home continued...

Shifting Attention & Focus

1. Going to the playground- try new playground equipment which requires sustained focus
2. Make an obstacle course for your child to practice new skills and maintain attention.
3. Make a craft with your child- have them use an example to copy.



Executive Functioning Strategies at Home continued...

Flexible Thinking, Perseverance and Grit

1. Try taking a different route to school.
2. Model how to problem solve when something unexpected happens.
3. Pretend play with different roles. Switch characters to allow for new ways of doing things.
4. Make something creative with your child out of household objects.
5. Allow for mistakes- encourage new activities that are a little more challenging.

Questions?