

## EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING IN THE CLASSROOM

GENERAL STRATEGIES: Teach / focus on a strategy a week; create a 'Strategy of the Week' board to post examples of student use; embed EF skill instruction / practice into everyday curriculum instruction; Teacher modeling, guided practice and independent practice with feedback is key to developing EF skills.

Executive Skill	Implications in the Classroom	Classroom Strategies
<p><b><u>INHIBIT</u></b> The ability to inhibit, resist or not act on impulses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Answering too quickly without thinking or without considering all answers</li> <li>• Calling out</li> <li>• Impatiently waving a raised hand</li> <li>• Getting out of seat</li> <li>• Ignoring distractions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set clear expectations; be consistent with enforcement</li> <li>• Use predetermined nonverbal signals or visual aids to prompt / remind student of expectations</li> <li>• Put distractions away / manipulatives not being used in bucket</li> <li>• Use ample positive reinforcement- catch student doing the right thing as they are doing it</li> <li>• Be explicit in feedback: "I like how you waited for me to call on you!"</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>SHIFT</u></b> The ability to shift or move from one situation, activity or aspect of a problem to another as the circumstances demand. Requires flexible thinking.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting "stuck" on one way to answer a problem</li> <li>• Continuing to solve problems the same way as previous problems even though the task changed</li> <li>• Inability to see another viewpoint or interpretation</li> <li>• Not being able to adjust to a change in plans or routine</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structure transitions</li> <li>• Give 'warnings' for upcoming transitions</li> <li>• Use tools like time organizers, timers/ visual timers, watches, visual schedules, signs to signal change</li> <li>• Use riddles/ jokes to help students shift between word meanings</li> <li>• Have students solve problems in two or more ways</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>MONITOR</u></b> The ability to self-monitor one's performance or behavior in order to adjust as necessary to complete a task.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor ability to pay attention to language mechanics when writing</li> <li>• Fails to manage time when completing a task</li> <li>• Poor ability to notice how one's behavior appears to others-ex. being too bossy when part of a group</li> <li>• Poor ability to recognize whether current performance is adequate to complete assignment (accuracy may be impacted)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check in regularly during independent activities</li> <li>• Provide specific positive feedback so students learn to gauge the accuracy of thinking &amp; work behaviors</li> <li>• Provide activities to develop estimation skills</li> <li>• Use and teach how to use rubrics / providing guidance</li> <li>• Use checklists</li> <li>• Teach students to self-evaluate progress /work</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>INITIATE</u></b> Beginning an activity as well as independently generating ideas, responses, or problem solving strategies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting started on work</li> <li>• Generating ideas to complete a writing assignment</li> <li>• Often teams up with shifting difficulties (i.e. shifting from a preferred activity to non-preferred activity makes initiation of work more difficult)</li> <li>• Heavily impacted by perception of difficulty or unpleasantness of the task</li> <li>• Usually student does ok after he or she gets going</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check for understanding after directions are given</li> <li>• Have student repeat directions; what do you start with?</li> <li>• Use guided practice with feedback</li> <li>• Do a couple problems / sentences together; do third partially for student completion</li> <li>• Positive praise / points etc. for starting within given time</li> <li>• Graphic Organizers</li> <li>• Word banks for writing assignments</li> </ul>

<p><b><u>WORKING MEMORY</u></b> The ability to hold information and manipulate information in the mind for the purpose of completing a task.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holding onto orally presented directions especially multi-step directions</li> <li>• Processing orally presented information in the absence of visual references</li> <li>• Math calculations without the use of a calculator</li> <li>• Getting ideas on paper (student forgets sentence/ concept before he or she is able to get it onto paper)</li> <li>• Decoding for struggling readers (student cannot remember earlier sounds in order to blend sounds to read a word)</li> <li>• Reading comprehension (cannot remember concepts while reading)</li> <li>• Any task which requires mental manipulation of facts/ ideas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use multiple means of presentation and response; pair new learning with visuals</li> <li>• Make explicit connections to prior knowledge</li> <li>• Categorize new concepts, discover/point out similarities to previously learned concepts</li> <li>• Model think alouds</li> <li>• Provide active learning and peer talk opportunities</li> <li>• Use acronyms or student drawings to help memorization</li> <li>• Provide experiences for students to use new learning across multiple applications</li> <li>• Use 2/ 3 column note charts and other graphic organizers/ visual aids</li> <li>• Provide 'memory book' for student to refer to for strategies/ vocabulary etc.; tab sections for easy use</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>PLAN / ORGANIZE</u></b> The ability to manage current and future-oriented task demands. Also includes the ability to organize thoughts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having all necessary materials at the ready to perform a task</li> <li>• The ability to plan a project into meaningful and manageable parts in order to complete the overall task</li> <li>• Managing deadlines</li> <li>• The ability to organize thoughts and concepts in order to plan a coherent and organized statement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chunk work and teach students how to chunk work on own</li> <li>• Teach which graphic organizer could be used for which tasks</li> <li>• Teach and guide how to prioritize (model through think alouds) and to identify irrelevant info</li> <li>• Guide student reflection of strategies they used, what worked best for them / didn't and why</li> <li>• Use highlighting and color-coding</li> <li>• Use checklists</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>ORGANIZATION of MATERIALS</u></b> The ability to manage work, play and storage spaces</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being able to keep track of textbooks, homework assignments</li> <li>• Keeping an assignment book.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Model (with think alouds) the organization of work space</li> <li>• Minimize classroom and desk clutter</li> <li>• Set a weekly time to clean / tidy work areas</li> <li>• Set aside spot for textbooks/ journals/ work bins, etc.</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>TASK COMPLETION</u></b> The ability to finish or complete tasks appropriately and/ or in a timely manner. It is an outcome of working memory, planning, organizing and inhibitory control.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staying focused long enough to get through the task</li> <li>• Sustaining effort for an extended period of time</li> <li>• Bringing oneself back to task when distracted</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set realistic goals</li> <li>• Numbered steps for task / work completion</li> <li>• Checklists, specificity depending on student need</li> <li>• Provide guidance / feedback on incremental progress</li> <li>• Put estimated time frame for completion of chunks, (student-identified) on Checklists or top of papers</li> </ul>

**Executive function skills begin to develop shortly after birth, with ages 3 to 5 providing an important window of opportunity for dramatic growth in these skills. Growth continues throughout adolescence and early adulthood (into the mid-20's!); proficiency begins to decline later in life.**