

A vibrant, stylized illustration of a tropical beach scene. The background is a light blue sky with a few white clouds. The middle ground shows a blue ocean with horizontal wavy lines. In the foreground, there's a sandy beach with various green plants, including a palm tree, and several colorful flowers in shades of blue and orange. The overall style is flat and modern.

Executive Function Skills: Older Learners

Amy Ruhaak, PhD

Exceptional Support Branch
Office of Student Support Services

Objectives

- Define Executive Function (EF).
- Explore various EF skills that impact student learning.
- Discuss strategies to support your child in school.



EF Skills: Putting it in Context



Consider, for example, the experience of a struggling reader in an 8th grade classroom. While engaged in a reading activity, this student must use working memory to retain information about what has been read while also decoding less familiar words, inhibit the prepotent response to skip challenging text, and control attention in the face of frustration with the task at hand. Each of these EF demands may fluctuate; perhaps the first few paragraphs cover content familiar to the student, reducing the working memory demand, but peers at the next table are doing something really interesting, increasing the need for strong attention control. In addition, depending on the length of the activity, the student must be able to persist, which involves not only the EF skills needed for sustaining attention and inhibiting inappropriate responses but also the motivation to do so. All processes that could fluctuate in the moment or day-to-day (Torgrimson et al., 2021).

Defining EF

- Take a few minutes to individually reflect on your current perception of EF and develop a definition.
- Share your thoughts with your neighbor.



Defining EF

EF is a difficult term to define.

- Several different theoretical frameworks.
- A variety of discrete, but sometimes overlapping skills.
- Historical over simplification of neural networks and behavior correlates of EF processes.
- Challenges with reliability and validity of assessments.



Defining EF

- EF skills are all founded upon the ability to self-regulate.
- Executive functions are a diverse group of cognitive processes responsible for a person's ability to engage in purposeful, organized, strategic, self-regulated, and goal-directed behavior.



Common Challenges



- Take a few minutes to reflect on common challenges children experience when they have executive function deficits.
- Share your thoughts with your neighbor.



Common Challenges

- Emotional Regulation
- Inhibitory Control
- Working Memory
- Sustained Attention
- Task Initiation



Common Challenges

- Shift
- Anticipate
- Time blindness
- Plan
- Organize



Supporting Students in School

- Evidence-Based Interventions
- Advocacy and Clear Communication
- Appropriate Accommodations
- Well-written, targeted IEP goals



Evidence-Based Interventions

Daily School Behavior Report Card

Child's name _____ Date _____

Teacher: _____

Please rate this child's behavior today in the areas listed below. Use a separate column for each subject or class period. Use the following ratings: 1 = excellent, 2 = good, 3 = fair, 4 = poor, and 5 = very poor. Then initial the box at the bottom of your column. Add any comments about the child's behavior today on the back of this card.

Behaviors to be rated:	Class periods/subjects						
	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
Class participation							
Performance of class work							
Follows classroom rules							
Gets along well with other children							
Quality of homework, if any given							
Teacher's initials							
Place comments below or on back of card.							

From *Defiant Children*. Copyright 1997 by The Guilford Press. Reprinted with permission.



Advocacy and Clear Communication

- Executive Function Worksheet



Appropriate Accommodations



- 40 Winning Accommodations for your child with ADD/ADHD

IEP Goals and Objectives



- By the next annual IEP meeting, the student will improve their self-monitoring skills by checking their written work for errors by using the COPS strategy before turning it in, with no more than 1 prompt needed per week.
- By the next annual IEP meeting, using a visual cueing system, the student will improve their ability to shift focus and transition between tasks independently when instructed to do so, with no more than 1 prompt needed per week.

Resources

- [ADDitude](#)
- [CHADD](#)





*Thank
You*