



Helping Students Develop Critical Executive Function Skills

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Special Education Citizens Advisory Committee
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TODAY'S TOPICS

- Introduction
- Defining Executive Function
- Executive Function Facts vs. Myths
- Signs of Executive Dysfunction
- Habits & Routines at Home
- Organizational Systems
- Portals & Planners
- Q&A



WHAT IS EXECUTIVE FUNCTION?



“Executive function and self-regulation skills are **the mental processes that enable us to plan, focus attention, remember instructions, and juggle multiple tasks successfully.** Just as an air traffic control system at a busy airport safely manages the arrivals and departures of many aircrafts on multiple runways, **the brain needs this skill set to filter distractions, prioritize tasks, set and achieve goals, and control impulses.**”

“Executive functioning skills **provide critical supports for learning and development,** and while we are not necessarily born with these skills, we are born with the potential to develop them through interaction and practice.”

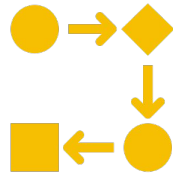
- Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University

WHY IS EXECUTIVE FUNCTION IMPORTANT?



EF SKILLS allow us to:

Control Impulses & Emotions
Be Flexible
Plan & Organize



EF SKILLS help us to:

Set Goals & Plan Ahead
Self-Manage Amidst Distractions
Follow Multi-Step Processes
Meet Goals & Complete Tasks



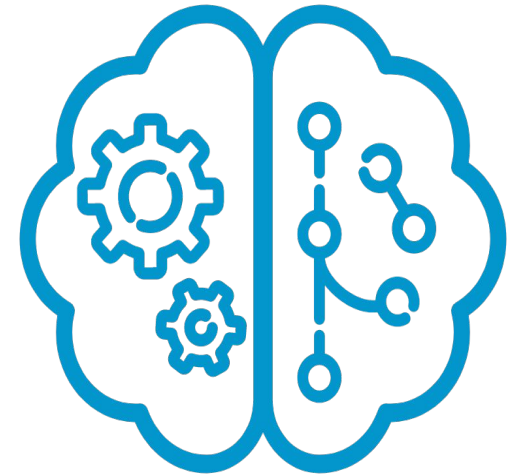
EF SKILLS enable us to:

Manage Ourselves
Without Being Told
Step-by-Step What To Do
Next

WHY IS EXECUTIVE FUNCTION SO IMPORTANT FOR LEARNING?

- **Working Memory** governs our ability to retain and manipulate distinct pieces of information over short periods of time.
- **Mental Flexibility** helps us to sustain or shift attention in response to different demands or to apply different rules in different settings.
- **Self-Control** enables us to set priorities and resist impulsive actions or responses.
- **Self-Motivation** enables us to motivate ourselves without an immediate external consequence.

THE CEO OF THE BRAIN



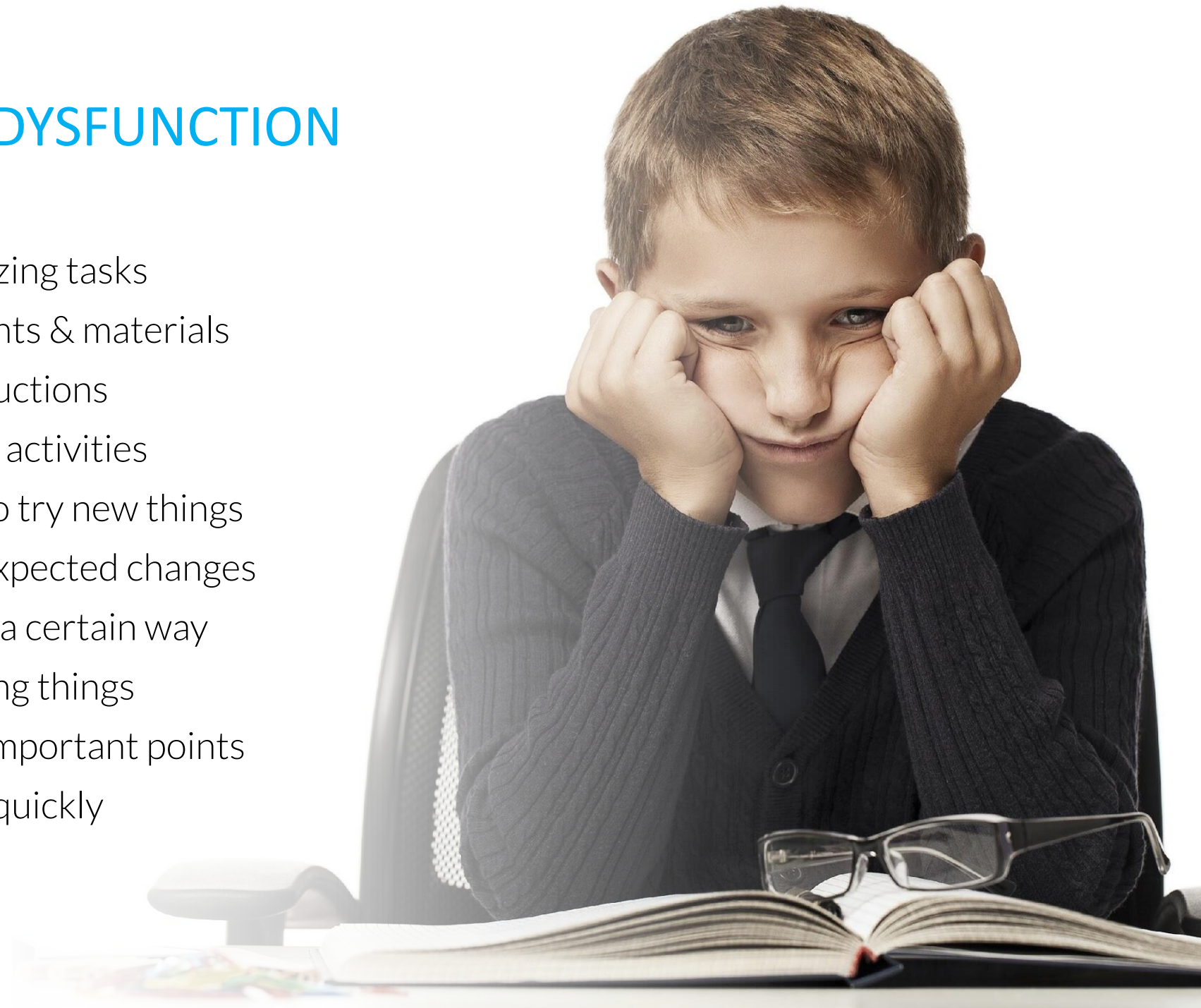
EXECUTIVE FUNCTION: FACTS VS. MYTHS



- Executive Function Disorder (EFD) is NOT a formal diagnosis
- EF issues often occur with other LDs
- Professionals can evaluate for EF issues
- Exact causes of EF issues are unknown
- Genetics do play a role
- True EF issues are present in all areas of life
- EF issues can improve with practice

SIGNS OF EXECUTIVE DYSFUNCTION

- Difficulty ordering or prioritizing tasks
- Issues with organizing thoughts & materials
- Trouble with multi-step instructions
- Problems switching between activities
- Giving up easily or refusing to try new things
- Overreacting to small or unexpected changes
- Insistence upon doing things a certain way
- Repeatedly bringing the wrong things
- Consistently focusing on unimportant points
- Forgetting instructions very quickly



BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

- Develops from Back to Front
- Not fully developed until after college years
- Frontal Lobe fully developed in 20's and 30's
- Kids don't necessarily have the capacity to make the best choices
- Likely to have executive function challenges if your child fits a number of symptoms





HABITS & ROUTINES AT HOME

- Create a consistent flow to the week and stick to it.
- Keep written checklists of daily responsibilities around the house in strategic places.
- Maintain appropriate positive and negative reinforcement systems and be consistent about enforcing them.
- Model productive routines and live by the same expectations you have for your kids.
- Have a healthy “digital diet” at the home for gaming and electronics.
- Recognize effort more than results or deliverables to encourage the development of a growth mindset.
- Establish a consistent place for completing schoolwork outside of the bedroom.

Additional Suggestions

- Have specific places for things and use labels to keep things organized.
- Expose your kids to the things you do to maintain a functioning household.
- Answer questions from your kids meaningfully and thoroughly.
- Ask your kids to repeat instructions and expectations back to you to check for understanding.
- Reinforce that failure represents important learning moments.
- Share your own goals with your kids and verbalize the steps you are taking to achieve them.
- Reward steps in the right direction rather than the end product or deliverable.
- Make use of visual timers and keep several around the house.
- Be your kids' biggest and loudest cheerleaders.

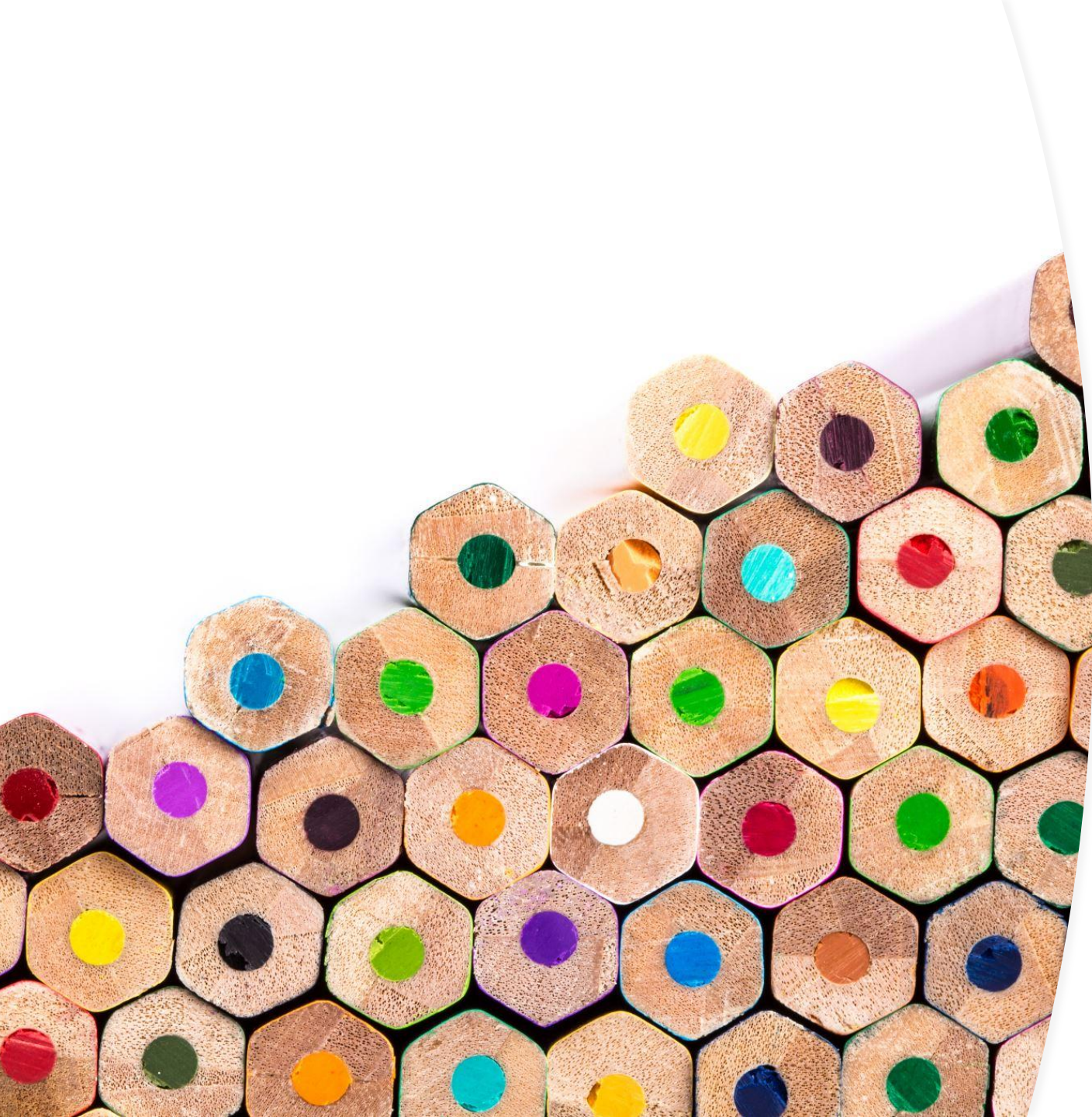




HOME STUDY SPACE

Selecting a Location

- not too noisy...not too quiet
- some natural light
- good ventilation
- strong internet connection
- accessible power outlets
- printer nearby



HOME STUDY SPACE

Supplies

- pens, pencils, highlighters, erasers
- hole-puncher, stapler
- paper, note cards, stickies
- dry erase board
- device stand
- fidget toys, jump rope
- noise-canceling headphones
- snacks, water bottle
- calculator
- visual timer

ORGANIZATION: BINDERS & E-BINDERS

- create a place for everything paper & digital
- color code dividers & computer folders
- digital files should be stored safely in a cloud
- title & name everything meaningfully



Portals & Planners

- Portals are resources for info
- Portals are where teachers share deadlines, materials, & grades
- Planners are task management systems (i.e., to-do lists)
- Planners are where students prioritize tasks and make an execution plan
- Planners are highly individualized

today

projects and exams

DESCRIPTION	DEADLINE
TRAVEL BROCHURE class: SPANISH 3A details: use new vocabulary to write a travel brochure to a state in Mexico * grammatically correct * 10% of final grade	Feb. 12 IMPORTANT DATES: progress report - Jan. 12 completed <input type="radio"/>
MID TERM class: SPANISH 3A details: multiple choice-vocab matching written questions grammar true/false * 20% of final grade	Mar. 5 IMPORTANT DATES: office hours: M-W 2:00-4:00 Pre-Test: Mar. 1 completed <input type="radio"/>
SHORT STORY class: SPANISH 3A details: use a folk story but make it modern. 100% correct grammar + spelling * extra credit for oral presentation * 15% of final grade	Apr. 7 IMPORTANT DATES: • outline: Feb. 7 • Rough Draft: Feb. 14 completed <input type="radio"/>



Questions?

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WE ARE HERE TO HELP

Illuminos Academic Coaching & Tutoring

360° Support

- academic coaching
- subject tutoring
- accountability monitoring
- supplemental enrichment for filling in learning gaps



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