Smart but Scattered: Helping Children and Adolescents with Executive Dysfunction at Home and at School

smartbutscatteredkids.com

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The Cookie Problem

Problem to be solved: Who wore which color?

- Rachel, Linda and Eve were friends sitting in a circle on the grass. Rachel passed 3 chocolate chip cookies to the person in blue. *Who wore which color?*
- Eve passed 3 macaroons to the person who passed her cookies to the person wearing green.
- Each person passed 3 cookies to the friend on her left.
- Rachel, Linda, and Eve were dressed in red, blue, and green, but not necessarily in that order.
- The person who wore green did not get a macaroon.
- The person wearing red passed along 3 oatmeal cookies.
Who wore which color?

- Rachel Green
- Eve Blue
- Linda Red
- Chocolate chip Macaroons
- Oatmeal
The Cookie Problem

- What do I need to know? (*Which person wore which color?*)
- What do I know now? (*All the individual clues*)
- How can I organize this information to make sense of it? (*e.g., draw a diagram or create a chart*)
- What is my plan? (*e.g., Fill in the diagram bit by bit; start with an anchor clue; go on to each clue until the diagram is filled; check all the clues to make sure everything fits*)
Executive Skills: Definitions

• **Response Inhibition**: The capacity to think before you act – this ability to resist the urge to say or do something allows us the time to evaluate a situation and how our behavior might impact it.

• **Working Memory**: The ability to hold information in memory while performing complex tasks. It incorporates the ability to draw on past learning or experience to apply to the situation at hand or to project into the future.
What working memory looks like in a 15-year old
What working memory looks like in a 15-year old—and what impact does it have on parents?
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• **Emotional Control**: The ability to manage emotions in order to achieve goals, complete tasks, or control and direct behavior.
Toddlers' Language Skills Predict Less Anger by Preschool

Dec. 20, 2012 — Toddlers with more developed language skills are better able to manage frustration and less likely to express anger by the time they're in preschool. That's the conclusion of a new longitudinal study from researchers at the Pennsylvania State University that appears in the journal Child Development.

"This is the first longitudinal evidence of early language abilities predicting later aspects of anger regulation," according to Pamela M. Cole, liberal arts research professor of psychology and human development and family studies at Pennsylvania State University, who was the principal investigator of the study.

Angry outbursts like temper tantrums are common among toddlers, but by the time children enter school, they're expected to have more self-control. To help them acquire this skill, they're taught to use language skills like "using your words." This study sought to determine whether developing language skills relates to developing anger control. Does developing language ability reduce anger between ages 2 and 4?

Researchers looked at 120 predominantly White children from families above poverty but below middle income from the time they were 18 months to 48 months. Through home and lab visits, they measured children's language and their ability to cope with tasks that might elicit frustration.

In one lab-based task, children were asked to wait 8 minutes before opening a gift while their moms finished "work" (a series of questions about how the child usually coped with waiting). Children's anger and regulatory strategies were observed during the 8-minute wait. Among the strategies the children used were seeking support ("Mom, are you done yet?" or "I wonder what it is") and distracting themselves from the gift (making up a story or counting aloud).

Children who had better language skills as toddlers and whose language developed more quickly expressed less anger at age 4 than their peers whose toddler language skills weren't as good. Children whose language developed more quickly were more likely to calmly seek their mother's support while waiting when they were 3, which in turn predicted less anger at 4. Children whose language developed more quickly also were better able to occupy themselves when they were 4, which in turn helped them tolerate the wait.

Better language skills may help children verbalize rather than use emotions to convey needs and use their imaginations to occupy themselves while enduring a frustrating wait," according to Cole.
Executive Skills: Definitions

- **Flexibility**: The ability to revise plans in the face of obstacles, setbacks, new information or mistakes. It relates to an adaptability to changing conditions.

- **Sustained Attention**: The capacity to maintain attention to a situation or task in spite of distractibility, fatigue, or boredom.
ADHD KIDS

What teachers think we do.

What society th
Executive Skills: Definitions

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- **Task Initiation**: The ability to begin projects without undue procrastination, in an efficient or timely fashion.
- **Planning/Prioritization**: The ability to create a roadmap to reach a goal or to complete a task. It also involves being able to make decisions about what’s important to focus on and what’s not important.
Executive Skills: Definitions

- **Organization**: The ability to create and maintain systems to keep track of information or materials.
- **Time Management**: The capacity to estimate how much time one has, how to allocate it, and how to stay within time limits and deadlines. It also involves a sense that time is important.
- **Goal-directed persistence**: The capacity to have a goal, follow through to the completion of the goal and not be put off or distracted by competing interests.
- **Metacognition**: The ability to stand back and take a birds-eye view of oneself in a situation. It is an ability to observe how you problem solve. It also includes self-monitoring and self-evaluative skills (e.g., asking yourself, “How am I doing? or How did I do?”).
Why is it important to help kids develop executive skills?
Where in the brain are executive skills located?
In the frontal lobes (just behind the forehead)
DEFINITIONS/CONCEPTUALIZATIONS

- Frontal lobes decide what is worth attending to and what is worth doing. *Impairments manifest as distractibility, poor sustained attention and effort, perseveration, and confusion.*

- Frontal lobes provide continuity and coherence to behavior across time. *Impairments are manifested in the inability to plan and execute a sequence of behaviors needed to meet a goal.*

- Frontal lobes modulate affective and interpersonal behavior so that drives are satisfied within the constraints of the internal and external environments. *Impairments are manifested as emotional lability, flatness and indifference, irritability and belligerence, and childishness.*

- The frontal lobes monitor, evaluate, and adjust. *Impairments are manifested as rigidity, lack of insight, and an inability to profit from experience.*
BARKLEY’S THEORY OF ADHD

CONTINGENCY-SHAPED/CONTEXT DEPENDENT SUSTAINED ATTENTION VERSUS GOAL-DIRECTED PERSISTENCE
CONTENGENCY-SHAPED/CONTEXT-DEPENDENT SUSTAINED ATTENTION

A person’s sustained response depends on:
• Novelty
• Intrinsic Reinforcement (Interest) Value
• Extrinsically Provided Consequences

Therefore, if the task is:
• Fun
• Interesting
• Immediately Rewarding

on-task behavior can be sustained (e.g., TV, video games, hands-on activities).
Goal Directed Persistence

Requires the individual to—

• Generate and hold a mental representation of the goal in mind (*working memory*).

• Formulate a plan and set of rules to follow (*self-directed speech*).

• Inhibit and regulate negative affect (i.e., disappointment and frustration) associated with self-deprivation.

• Kindle self-motivated or positive drive states in support of the plan (*self-regulation of affect*).

• Experiment with multiple novel approaches toward goal achievement before selecting one to perform (*reconstitution*).
THE INDIVIDUAL WITH ADHD HAS DIMINISHED SELF-REGULATION

…therefore sustained attention is highly context and contingency dependent. Without rewards or interest in the immediate context, work is cut short.

THE INDIVIDUAL WITHOUT ADHD HAS ADEQUATE SELF-REGULATION

therefore s/he requires no source of reward or motivation in the immediate context for performance.
Classroom Strategies to Increase Attention

One way to do this:
Be the most exciting thing happening in the classroom
Biological underpinnings

A recent study published by the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) has found differences in dopamine processing in the reward pathways in the brains of subjects with ADHD compared to non-ADHD controls. The study focused on the nucleus accumbens (a brain structure involved with reinforcement and reward) and suggests that people with ADHD may release dopamine at a lower rate compared to normal controls or might have a net dopamine deficit.
Biological underpinnings

Because dopamine enhances the level of interest a person attaches to a stimulus, people who release dopamine at a lower rate might find it more difficult to work up the enthusiasm to act on stimuli they don’t find naturally appealing.

Implication: students with ADHD find it much more difficult to apply themselves to tasks that are not intrinsically interesting to them.
Brain Scans Show Children With ADHD Have Faulty Off-Switch for Mind-Wandering

ScienceDaily (Jan. 10, 2011) — Brain scans of children with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) have shown for the first time why people affected by the condition sometimes have such difficulty in concentrating. The study, funded by the Wellcome Trust, may explain why parents often say that their child can maintain concentration when they are doing something that interests them, but struggles with boring tasks.

Using a 'Whac-a-Mole' style game, researchers from the Motivation, Inhibition and Development in ADHD Study (MIDAS) group at the University of Nottingham found evidence that children with ADHD require either much greater incentives -- or their usual stimulant medication -- to focus on a task. When the incentive was low, the children with ADHD failed to "switch off" brain regions involved in mind-wandering. When the incentive was high, however, or they were taking their medication, their brain activity was indistinguishable from a typically-developing non-ADHD child.

ADHD is the most common mental health disorder in childhood, affecting around one in 50 children in the UK. Children with ADHD are excessively restless, impulsive and distractible, and experience difficulties at home and in school. Although no cure exists for the condition, symptoms can be reduced by medication and/or behavioural therapy. The drug methylphenidate (more often known by the brand name Ritalin) is commonly used to treat the condition.

Previous studies have shown that children with ADHD have difficulty in 'switching-off' the default mode network (DMN) in their brains. This network is usually active when we are doing nothing, giving rise to spontaneous thoughts or 'daydreams', but is suppressed when we are focused on the task before us. In children with ADHD, however, it is thought that the DMN may be insufficiently suppressed on 'boring' tasks that require focused attention.

The MIDAS group researchers compared brain scans of eighteen children with ADHD, aged between nine and fifteen years old, against scans of a similar group of children without the condition as both groups took part in a task designed to test how well they were able to control their behaviour. The children with ADHD were tested when they were taking their methylphenidate and when they were off their medication. The findings are published in the Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry.

Whilst lying in a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scanner, which can be used to measure activity in the brain, the children played a computer game in which green aliens were randomly interspersed with less frequent black aliens, each appearing for a short interval. Their task was to 'catch' as many green aliens as possible, while avoiding catching black aliens. For each slow or missed response, they would lose one point; they would gain one point for each timely response.
How do executive skills develop?

Through a process called *myelination*. Myelin acts as insulation, increasing the speed with which nerve impulses are transmitted. The faster the impulse, the better the skill.
All skills, including executive skills, improve with practice...

The more you practice, the better the skill. Practice also makes the task less effortful.
Frontal lobes take time to develop…


SO THEN WE HAVE AN EXCUSE FOR THIS.
Frontal Lobe
- Executive Function
- Planning
- Reasoning
- Impulse Control

Dorsolateral
Thinking ahead and inhibition of impulsive responses

Ventromedial
Regulation of emotions; learning from experience; weighing risks and rewards
Risk-taking in Adolescence

Figure 1
Age Differences in Risk Preference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Risk Preference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10-11</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-13</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-15</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-17</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-21</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-25</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The teenage brain is like a Ferrari: it’s sleek, shiny, sexy, and fast, and it corners really well. But it also has really crappy brakes.
And there may be gender differences...
Frontal lobes take time to develop…

- Cognitive flexibility
- Inhibitory control
- Working memory
- Goal-setting and problem solving
- Theory of mind
- Affective decision making
Cognitive Decline Begins In Late 20s, Study Suggests

ScienceDaily (Mar. 20, 2009) — A new study indicates that some aspects of peoples' cognitive skills — such as the ability to make rapid comparisons, remember unrelated information and detect relationships — peak at about the age of 22, and then begin a slow decline starting around age 27.

"This research suggests that some aspects of age-related cognitive decline begin in healthy, educated adults when they are in their 20s and 30s," said Timothy Salthouse, a University of Virginia professor of psychology and the study's lead investigator.

His findings appear in the current issue of the journal Neurobiology of Aging.

Salthouse and his team conducted the study during a seven-year period, working with 2,000 healthy participants between the ages of 18 and 60.

Participants were asked to solve various puzzles, remember words and details from stories, and identify patterns in an assortment of letters and symbols.

Many of the participants in Salthouse's study were tested several times during the course of years, allowing researchers to detect subtle declines in cognitive ability.

Top performances in some of the tests were accomplished at the age of 22. A notable decline in certain measures of abstract reasoning, brain speed and in puzzle-solving became apparent at 27.

Salthouse found that average memory declines can be detected by about age 37. However, accumulated knowledge skills, such as improvement of vocabulary and general knowledge, actually increase at least until the age of 60.
ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

- Parent and teacher interviews
- Behavior rating scales
- Formal assessment
- Behavior observations
- Informal assessment
ASSESSMENT OF EXECUTIVE SKILLS

Informal Measures

• Parent interview (look for specific examples of problems in areas likely to be affected by executive skill deficits, including problems with homework, chores, following directions, social interactions, organizational skills, etc.).

• Teacher interviews (again, look for specificity of examples in relevant areas, e.g., following complex directions, task initiation, handling long-term assignments, response to open-ended tasks, social interactions, responses to classroom/school rules, etc.).
STUDENT INTERVIEW—EXCERPT:

HOMEWORK: I’m going to ask you some questions about homework and the kinds of problems kids sometimes have with homework. Please tell me if you think these are problems for you. I may ask you to give me examples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Not a problem</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Getting started on homework (TI). Related questions: What makes it hard? When is the best time to do homework? Are some subjects harder to start than others?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sticking with it long enough to get it done (SA). Related questions: Is this worse with some subjects than others? What do you say to yourself that either leads you to give up or stick with it? Does the length of the assignment make a difference in your ability to stick with it?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item</td>
<td>Not a problem</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remembering assignments (WM). <em>Related questions:</em> Do you have trouble remembering to write down assignments, bring home necessary materials, or hand in assignments? Do you lose things necessary to complete the task?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becoming distracted while doing homework (SA). <em>Related questions:</em> What kinds of things distract you? Have you found places to study that minimize distractions? How do you handle distractions when they come up?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Behavior Rating Scales

- **Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Function (BRIEF).**
  Available from PAR (www.parinc.com).

- **Child Behavior Checklist/Teacher Report Form.**
  (www.ASEBA.org)

- **Brown ADD Scales.** (www.PsychCorp.com)
BRIEF T-Score Profile

Client Name: 1
Client Age: 17
Gender: Male
### Limitations of Formal Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Executive skill affected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Examiner cues child to begin</td>
<td>Task initiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasks are brief</td>
<td>Sustained attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examiner’s presence communicates that performance is being monitored</td>
<td>Task initiation, sustained attention, goal-directed persistence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most standardized tests involve closed-ended tasks (i.e., 1 correct answer)</td>
<td>Flexibility, metacognition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Limitations of Formal Assessment

The most complex cognitive task within any psychologist’s repertoire is less complex than real world demands on executive skills, and there is no way of determining with any certainty how well these tests map on to the real world.

Thus, in the parlance of neuropsychologists, *absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.*
16. Prompt B

Most students have an opinion one way or the other about a rule that uniforms should be worn to school. Write a letter to the editor of your school paper stating your position either for or against required school uniforms. Include at least 3 supporting arguments for your position. You can have as long as 15 minutes to write and can use the scratch paper for a rough draft if you wish. You will not be penalized for crossing out and rewriting, but using correct spelling and punctuation is important.

Dear School Paper,

I think we should not wear uniforms to school. People should be able to wear what they want. It wouldn't be right to tell people what they have to wear. Uniforms it wouldn't be fair because parents buy clothes for them it is so unfair that they have to wear uniforms. Don't make us wear uniforms.

Sincerely,

Mike
About My Portfolio

Complete the following statements for each contribution to your Portfolio.

This contribution was done as part of the following assignment:

Paper I did good on.

I chose to include this work in my Portfolio because:

I had no choice.

Doing this assignment has helped me:

It didn't help me at all.

My favorite part of this assignment was:

I didn't have a favorite part.

Other comments:
What’s the population we’re talking about?

Does this pupil have any illness or disability (either physical or mental)?  
☐ No  ☐ Yes— please describe.

What concerns you most about this pupil?

That he is lazy and not working to his potential.

Please describe the best things about this pupil:

He is sweet and has a good sense of humor.
I got your back!
What Do Executive Skill Weaknesses Look Like in Students?

- Acts without thinking
- Interrupts others
- Overreacts to small problems
- Upset by changes in plans
- Overwhelmed by large assignments
- Talks or plays too loudly
- Resists change of routine
- Doesn’t notice impact of behavior on others
- Doesn’t see their behavior as part of the issue

- Easily overstimulated and has trouble calming down
- Gets stuck on one topic or activity
- Gets overly upset about “little things”
- Out of control more than peers
- Can’t come up with more than one way to solve a problem
- Low tolerance for frustration
- Acts wild or out of control
What Do Executive Skill Weaknesses Look Like in Students?

- Doesn’t bother to write down assignment
- Forgets directions
- Forgets to bring materials home
- Keeps putting off homework
- Runs out of steam before finishing work
- Chooses “fun stuff” over homework or chores
- Passive study methods (or doesn’t study)
- Forgets homework/forgets to pass it in
- Leaves long-term assignments or chores until last minute
- Can’t break down long-term assignments
- Sloppy work
- Messy notebooks
- Loses or misplaces things (books, papers, notebooks, mittens, keys, cell phones, etc.)
- Can’t find things in backpack
What Do Executive Skill Weaknesses Look Like in Younger Students (K-2)?

- Forgets directions
- Forgets to bring materials back and forth between home and school
- Runs out of steam before finishing work
- Chooses “fun stuff” over homework or chores
- Leaves a trail of belongings wherever he/she goes

- Sloppy work
- Loses or misplaces things (books, papers, permission slips, mittens, lunch money, etc.)
- Messy desk/cubby areas/backpack
- Leaves a “paper trail” — scattered around the room
SMART but SCATTERED TEENS

The “Executive Skills” Program for Helping Teens Reach their Potential

Boost any Teen’s Ability to:
- Resolve conflict
- Assess risks
- Control emotions
- Work independently
- Pay attention
- Get organized
- Resist peer pressure
- Follow through
- Manage a schedule
- Plan ahead

Richard Guare, PhD, Peg Dawson, EdD, and Colin Guare
There are 3 primary ways adults can help kids with weak executive skills:

1. Change the environment to reduce the impact of weak executive skills.
2. Teach the youngster executive skills.
3. Use incentives to get youngsters to use skills that are hard for them.
Move from external to internal: critical dimensions
Move from external to internal: critical dimensions

EXTERNAL

CHANGE
ENVIRONMENT

EXTERNAL CUE

INTERNAL

CHANGE
CHILD

SELF-CUE
Begin by modifying the environment

What do we mean by “modify the environment?”

Environmental modifications are any changes we make that are external to the child.
Strategies for modifying the environment for individual children

1. Change the physical or social environment

2. Modify the tasks we expect the child to perform

3. Change the ways adults interact with the child
3 Key Strategies for Managing Executive Skill Weaknesses

• Intervene at the level of the environment

• Intervene at the level of the child by—
  1. Teach the child the weak skill
  2. Motivate the child to use the skill
## Environmental Modifications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task domain/Executive skills</th>
<th>Classroom support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change the physical environment</td>
<td>• Add barriers (e.g., to avoid runways)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Response inhibition</em></td>
<td>• Seating arrangements (e.g., place distractible kids near teacher, away from windows)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sustained attention</em></td>
<td>• Reduce distractions (e.g., music as white noise)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Task initiation</em></td>
<td>• Use organizing structures (e.g., clear plastic containers with labels; bins for homework; consistent space on blackboard for writing homework)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Organization</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>
Individual Work System Approach for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Fig. 1 A left-to-right work system. Tasks are placed on the student’s left and a “finished” container is placed to the student’s right.
## Environmental Modifications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Change the social environment</td>
<td>• Reduce social complexity (e.g., fewer kids, more adults; supervision on playground; structured play vs. free play)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Change the “social mix” (seating arrangements in class; special table in cafeteria)</td>
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*Response inhibition*

*Emotional control*
## Environmental Modifications

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Modify tasks</td>
<td>• Make tasks shorter or build in breaks along the way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sustained attention</em></td>
<td>• Make steps more explicit. (<a href="http://www.expandingexpression.com/index.html">www.expandingexpression.com/index.html</a> or Andrew Pudewa’s <em>Excellence in Writing</em> program)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Task initiation</em></td>
<td>• Help kids track time (<a href="http://www.timelymatters.com">www.timelymatters.com</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Working memory</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Flexibility</em></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Metacognition</em></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Make steps more explicit
Example: How to listen

- Face Speaker
- Pay Attention & Show Interest
- Keep Body Still
- Do not Interrupt
Environmental Modifications

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Modify tasks</td>
<td>• Create a schedule, either for a specific event or for a block of time (such as morning work time or the whole day)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustained attention</td>
<td>• Build in variety or choice either for the tasks to be done or the order in which they’re to be done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task initiation</td>
<td>• Make the task closed-ended.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacognition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Open-Ended Tasks
An open-ended task is one where:

- There are multiple possible correct answers;
- There are multiple possible ways to achieve the correct answer;
- The task has no obvious starting point; or
- The task provides no feedback about whether or when it is complete.
Impact of task modification on disruptive behavior

Figure 1. Results of the hypothesis-testing phase of the functional assessment process. Levels of disruptive behavior (left) and on-task responding (right) are shown for each of the four hypotheses.
Environmental Modifications

<table>
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<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change the way adults interact with the child</td>
<td>• Rehearse with the youngster what will happen and how the youngster will handle it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Response inhibition</strong></td>
<td>• Use verbal prompts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emotional control</strong></td>
<td>• Embed metacognitive questions into instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Flexibility</strong></td>
<td>• Remind youngster to use checklist or schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Working memory</strong></td>
<td>• Praise youngster for using executive skills—Rule of thumb: 3 POSITIVES for each corrective feedback.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Effective Praise:

1. is delivered immediately after the display of positive behavior;
2. specifies the particulars of the accomplishment (e.g., Thank you for cleaning off your desk right away after I asked you);
3. provides information to the child about the value of the accomplishment (e.g., When you get ready for the first activity quickly, it makes the morning go so smoothly!);
4. lets the child know that he worked hard to accomplish the task (e.g., I saw you really trying to control your temper!); and
5. orients the child to better appreciate their own task-related behavior and thinking about problem-solving (e.g., I like the way you thought about that and figured out a good solution to the problem).
TEACH deficient skills

Don’t expect the youngster to acquire executive skills through observation or osmosis.
Example 1:
Goal: A clean room

Directive from parent: *Clean your room*

Response from child with executive skill deficits:
Example 1:
Goal: A clean room

Directive from parent: *Clean your room*

Response from child with executive skill deficits: *Nothing*
Intervention Plan

Step 1: The parent has to become an external frontal lobe that speaks to the child. It performs the following functions:

• It provides a plan, an organizational scheme, and a specific set of directions.

• It monitors performance.

• It provides encouragement/motivation and feedback about the success of the approach.

• It problem solves when something doesn't work.

• It determines when the task is completed.
Intervention Plan

**Step 1**: Sample statements:

- Let’s start now.
- Put your trucks in this box.
- Put your dirty clothes in the laundry.
- Put your books on the bookshelf.
- There are two toys under the bed. It doesn’t look like all those toys will fit in that one box; we’ll need to get another box.
- When you finish, you can play with your friends.
- I know you hate doing this, but you’re almost done and then you’ll feel great!
- Isn’t it nice to have all your work for the day done?
Intervention Plan

Step 2: Provide the same information without being the direct agent: create a list, picture cues, audio tape, etc. to cue the child.

*Parent says to child: Look at your list.*

Step 3: Parent begins to transfer responsibility to child:

*Parent says to child: What do you need to do?*

Step 4: Transfer complete.

*Child now asks himself/herself. What do I need to do?*
Example 2: Teaching students how to pay attention

1. Explain that paying attention is an important skill for doing well in school because information cannot be understood or remembered if it isn’t heard in the first place.

2. Ask the class how teachers know when kids are paying attention (eyes on teacher or on the focus of the lesson, raising hands to answer questions, visibly engaged in seatwork, etc.).
Example 2: Teaching students how to pay attention

3. Talk about what might be acceptable behavior during classroom instruction (e.g., there’s some evidence to suggest that doodling or having something to do with one’s hands while listening makes it easier to retain information).

4. With the class, develop a brief description of what paying attention looks like.

5. Pick a time of day (or specific class activity) where the student will practice paying attention.
Example 2: Teaching students how to pay attention

6. Determine how the skill will be monitored during the practice sessions. Some options are:
   • Set kitchen timer at random intervals and when the bell rings, each student determines if he/she was attending.
   • Use electronic “beep tape” (available from ADD Warehouse or an iPhone app--IntervalMinder) for monitoring attention.
   • Give each student a checklist and asked him or her to periodically self-monitor and indicate on checklist whether he or she was attending.
### Paying attention checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Was I paying attention?</th>
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<tr>
<td>YES</td>
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<tr>
<td>NO</td>
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</table>
Example 2: Teaching students how to pay attention

7. Begin practice sessions. Remind the class before beginning the session that they will be practicing paying attention.

8. Debrief with the class afterwards to determine how it went.

9. If necessary, set a class goal and add a reinforcer to enhance motivation to practice the skill.
School-wide example: Teaching Organizational Skills

Salina Kansas Model

Curtis.Stevens@usd305.com
SALINA SOUTH MIDDLE SCHOOL
STUDENT ORGANIZATION SYSTEM
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>HONOR Code</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Honesty</strong></td>
<td>adherence to moral and ethical principles; soundness of moral character; integrity</td>
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<td><strong>Ownership</strong></td>
<td>trait of being answerable to someone for something; able to make rational decisions on one’s own</td>
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<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
<td>to express thoughts, feelings, or information easily and effectively</td>
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2 BASIC GOALS

• COMPLETE THE WORK

• TURN THE WORK IN
THE 5 BASIC RULES OF THE BINDER
1. DIVIDE SUBJECTS WITH TABS
2. TRASH ASSIGNMENTS NO LONGER NEEDED
3. PUT DUE DATES ON ALL ASSIGNMENTS
4. POCKET FOR INCOMPLETE HOMEWORK / COMPLETED HOMEWORK
5. KEEP IT WITH YOU ALL OF THE TIME
PROVIDE A VISUAL OF THE WORKLOAD
*KEEP NOTES IN THIS SECTION ON LOOSE LEAF PAPER.

*KEEP ALL ASSIGNMENTS THE TEACHER WANTS YOU TO HAVE YEAR LONG.
PENCIL BAG: PENCILS, ERASERS, PAPER CLIPS, PENS, AND CALCULATOR
STUDENT PLANNER/HANDBOOK

Planner needs to be filled out weekly on Mondays.
Write Due Dates at the top of each page.

DUE DATE:
4-1-09

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

INCOMPLETE HOMEWORK

COMPLETED HOMEWORK
Prioritize assignments by due dates.

DUE 3-12-10

DUE 2-12-10

DUE 1-1-10

INCOMPLETE HOMEWORK

COMPLETED HOMEWORK
STUDENT ALWAYS KNOWS WHERE COMPLETED WORK IS LOCATED.

DUE 1-1-10

INCOMPLETE HOMEWORK

DUE 2-12-10

READY TO TURN IN.

Completed Homework
TURNING THE ASSIGNMENT IN

DUE TODAY!
Students learn that grades are within his/her control.
7\textsuperscript{TH} AND 8\textsuperscript{TH} GRADE MONITORING SYSTEM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MONDAY</th>
<th>TUESDAY</th>
<th>WEDNESDAY</th>
<th>THURSDAY</th>
<th>FRIDAY</th>
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<td>1\textsuperscript{st} HOUR ALL 7\textsuperscript{TH} AND 8\textsuperscript{TH} GRADE TEACHERS</td>
<td>ALL 7\textsuperscript{TH} AND 8\textsuperscript{TH} GRADE TEACHERS DURING COUGAR TIME</td>
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<td>STUDENT</td>
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FAMILY

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<td>AT THE TOP OF ALL ASSIGNMENTS.</td>
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<td>NO STUFFING: THE STUDENT’S BINDER AND</td>
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<td>TEXTBOOK DO NOT CONTAIN LOOSE PAPERS,</td>
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<td>AND HE/SHE USES THE TAB DIVIDERS AND</td>
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<td>POCKETS APPROPRIATELY.</td>
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<td>MATERIALS: THE STUDENT HAS ALL NECESSARY</td>
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<td>MATERIALS FOR CLASS. (EX. PENCIL, PAPER,</td>
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<td>ETC.)</td>
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<td>PLANNER: THE PLANNER IS FILLED OUT.</td>
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<td>COMPLETE/INCOMPLETE SECTION: THE STUDENT</td>
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7 steps to teaching executive skills

1. Identify specific problem behaviors (messy room, not paying attention).
2. Set a goal (child cleans room independently, children pay attention during instruction).
3. Outline the steps that need to be followed in order for the child to achieve the goal.
4. Whenever possible, turn the steps into a list, checklist, or short list of rules to be followed.
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7 steps to teaching executive skills

5. Supervise the child following the steps.
   • Prompt the child to perform each step in the procedure (e.g., *Put dirty clothes in laundry, Put books on bookshelf; Look at teacher while he/she is talking*).
   • Observe the child while s/he performs each step, providing feedback to help improve performance (*You missed 2 toys under the bed*).
   • Praise the child when s/he successfully completes each step and when the procedure is completed as a whole (*Great job tidying your desk! I like the way you kept your eyes on me while I was explaining how to do the math homework*).
7 steps to teaching executive skills

6. Evaluate the program’s success and revise if necessary (e.g., change checklist to drop things that aren’t needed or to add new items)

7. Fade the supervision. (e.g., cue child to start task, look at their checklist, check in periodically rather than being with the child the entire time)
Case example: Managing Behavioral Excesses

Max is a 3rd grade student who, when given an assignment requiring some kind of production (math, writing) does one or more of the following more than 50% of the time:

- Complains loudly or refuses to do the task *(I don’t know how to do this! Or I’m not doing this stupid paper!)*
- Pushes paper off desk or crumple it
- Roams around room and doesn’t respond to teacher directions
Case example: Managing Behavioral Excesses

Behavior happens whether or not the task is within his independent ability. The more difficult the task, the more disruptive the behavior.

Interventions were designed after obtaining input from the student.
Managing Behavioral Excesses—Interventions

- A social story describing how he feels and what his options are for helping himself.

   In my classroom, our teacher, Mrs. Smith gives us math and writing papers to do. Sometimes when I get one of these papers I get upset. It is important for me to do my schoolwork so I can learn. When Mrs. Smith gives me a paper to do, if I start to get upset I can look at my hard times board. Picking one of the choices will help me to feel better and help me get my work done. If I forget to look at the board, Mrs. Smith will help me remember.

- A “hard times” visual board with his options listed.
HARD TIMES BOARD

Triggers: What Makes Me Mad--
1. When I get a math or writing paper to do

“Can’t Do’s”
1. Complain in a loud voice.
2. Crumple or tear up my paper.
3. Not listen to my teacher.

When I’m Having a Hard Time, I Can:
1. Ask for help.
2. Take a break for 2 minutes and look at a book or draw.
Managing Behavioral Excesses—Interventions

• Shorter tasks with check-in breaks at end of each section with teacher or paraprofessional.
• After work or directions are given, an adult checks with him immediately to ask if he understands or needs help.
• His agreement that if he begins to get upset and does not remember to use his hard-times board, he will accept a cue from an adult to make a choice from it.
Managing Behavioral Excesses—Interventions

- A rule that if his behavior disrupts class, he will take an out-of-class break for at least two minutes and whatever time after that until he is able to resume his in-class plan.
- His agreement that uncompleted work will be finished during free time or, if needed, at the end of school.
Managing Behavioral Excesses—Interventions

• An incentive system allowing him to earn points which he can use to buy computer time, a highly preferred activity, at the end of the morning and at the end of school. Points are awarded in descending value with 3 points awarded for independent work completion, 2 points given for some initial complaining but his initiation of using the hard-times board, 1 point for his needing an adult to initiate use of the board and 0 points for leaving class.
Managing Behavioral Excesses—Intervention Training

The components of this plan were rehearsed with him in the classroom with the paraprofessional and teacher role-playing 1st and then walking him through the procedure with cues until he could independently demonstrate how it would work. He and staff agreed on a starting time for the plan and at the beginning of the day and on returning from lunch, the plan was reviewed by his reading the social story.
Helping Children Learn to Manage Behavioral Excesses

1. Help the child identify the “triggers” for the problem behavior. It may be that the behavior of concern happens in a single situation or it may pop up in several different situations.

2. Determine if any of the triggers can be eliminated. Technically, this is an environmental modification, but it’s a good place to start in understanding the problem behavior and working to reduce it.

3. Make a list of possible things the child can do instead of the problem behavior (i.e., replacement behaviors). This will vary depending on the nature of the trigger and the problem behavior.
Helping Children Learn to Manage Behavioral Excesses

4. Practice the replacement behaviors, using role-playing or simulations. “Let’s pretend you…Which strategy do you want to use?”

5. Begin using the procedure in minor situations (i.e., not ones involving big upsets or major rule infractions).

6. Move on to situations where more intense behaviors occur.

7. Connect the use of the procedure to a reward. For best results, use two levels of reward: a “big reward” for never getting to the point where replacement behaviors need to be used and a “small reward” for successfully using one of the agreed-upon replacement behaviors.
Use incentives to augment instruction.

Incentives make both the effort of learning a skill and the effort of performing a task less aversive.

Furthermore, putting an incentive after a task teaches delayed gratification.
Two Kinds of Incentive Plans: Simple and Elaborate
Simple Incentives

• Give the child something to look forward to doing when the effortful task is done (we call that Grandma’s Law).
• Alternate between preferred and non-preferred activities (use simple language: First…then, e.g., *First work, then play*).
• Build in frequent, short breaks (depending on the child’s attention span, breaks could come every 10 minutes and last 5 minutes).
• Use specific praise to reinforce the use of executive skills.
Modify task demands to match the youngster’s capacity for effortful work

Some tasks are more effortful than others--this is as true for adults as it is for children.
COACHING

An intervention strategy in which a coach (either an adult or a peer) works with a student to set goals (long-term, short-term, or daily) designed to enhance executive skills and lead to improved self-regulation.
Key components of coaching

• Correspondence training
• Goal-setting
• Daily coaching sessions to make daily plans to achieve goals
• Teaching students self-management strategies
Correspondence training

Correspondence training is based on the notion (well-documented in research) that when individuals make a verbal commitment to engage in a behavior at some later point, this increases the likelihood that they will actually carry out the behavior.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What the research says</th>
<th>Guidelines for practice</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Say-Do” is more effective than “Do-Say”</td>
<td>Have the student state what he/she intends to do prior to performing the promised behavior (e.g., “I will raise my hand during circle time;” “I will spend 1 hour studying for my social studies test tonight.”)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reinforcing the youngster for performing the behavior they’ve promised to do works better than reinforcing them for making the promise.</td>
<td>Praise the student after he/she has performed the target behavior (“I saw you raised your hand 4 times during circle time—you did what you said you would do!”)</td>
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## Correspondence training

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<td>For youngsters who lack verbal skills, verbalization of intent can be replaced by rehearsal or demonstration of the desired behavior.</td>
<td>This approach could be used with students with autism—for example, having them point to a picture of sitting with another student in the cafeteria to show that they will initiate social contact.</td>
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<td>Correspondence training may be particularly effective when the youngster is allowed to choose the behavior to engage in.</td>
<td>Whenever possible, involve the youngster in selecting the target behavior, either using free choice or providing options to choose from.</td>
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Goal-setting

Extensive empirical research has documented the value of goal-setting in promoting high levels of performance—in both adults and children.
Goals serve 4 primary purposes

• They *direct behavior* (toward task-relevant and away from task-irrelevant behavior)
• They *energize*
• They encourage *persistence*
• They *motivate* people to discover and use task-relevant knowledge and skills
In the first stage of coaching, we ask students to set goals

- Goals may be academic, social, or behavioral depending on individual students’ needs.
- We may ask students to set long-term goals, or we may focus on more short-term goals (marking period goals, weekly goals, daily goals).
- Throughout the coaching process, we remind students of the goals they have set—and we help them track their progress toward achieving their goals.
In the second stage, coaches meet with students to make daily plans linked to their goals.

Basic Format: R.E.A.P.

• **Review**: go over the plans made at the previous coaching session to determine if the plans were carried out as intended.

• **Evaluate**: how well did it go? Did the student do what he said he would do? If not, why not?

• **Anticipate**: Talk about what tasks the student plans to accomplish today--be sure to review upcoming tests, long-term assignments.

• **Plan**: Have the student identify when he plans to do each task, and, when appropriate, *how* he plans to do each task.
Who Can Be a Coach?

- A school psychologist
- A special education teacher
- A favorite teacher
- A guidance counselor
- An intern
- A paraprofessional (classroom or personal aide)
- A volunteer who’s been trained
Characteristics of Good Coaches

• They like kids and relate to them in a natural way
• They are empathic and good listeners
• They’re reliable, organized, and have good planning skills
• They teach more through questions than lectures
• They have training in coaching
Coaching Ground Rules

• Must be voluntary with teenagers (exceptions apply to younger students)

• Coaching sessions can be brief but must occur daily in the beginning

• Provide lots of support up front; fade gradually with success

• Build in ways to verify student reports
Coaching Alternatives

- Group coaching—use during homeroom period or in advisor groups

- Peer coaching—train honor students to coach at-risk students

- Reciprocal coaching—have students work in pairs to coach each other

- Train older students to coach younger students
Daily Coaching Sessions

Build in mini-lessons where appropriate:

• How to study for tests

• How to organize a writing assignment

• How to break down a long-term assignments

• How to organize notebooks

• How to manage time (resist temptations)
Long-Term Goals Planning Sheet

Student's Name: #3
Date: 11/3/95

What are your long term goals? (e.g., high school graduation, college degree, a job in a particular field, or the capacity to earn a specified amount of money)
1. Graduate high school
2. Go to college
3. Become Marine Biologist

What do you need to do in order to meet your goals?
1. Good grades B, C possibly A.
2. Work hard
3. Make honor roll
4. Join recycling group
5. Extracurricular activities (movie club, tennis)

Are there barriers you need to overcome in order to meet your goals? (e.g., skipping classes, failing to complete homework, falling tests, frequent school absences, frequent suspensions)
1. Nothing he knows to stop him from goals.

Specific Long-Range Academic Goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wanted Grades</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Present, all present

1. Study every night.
2. Make good grades.
3. Ask more questions.
4. Take more notes.
5. Work hard (extra effort)

Specific Long-Range Behavioral Goals

1. Stop talking in class.
2. After dinner study.
3. Follow daily planner schedule.

What environmental supports or modifications are necessary in order to help you meet these goals? (e.g., test modifications, weekly homework checks, assistance with time- or task-management, a homework incentive system, etc.)
2. He needs extra time in his assignment book.
3. We check assignment book.
4. Check daily schedule.
DATE: 11/7

LONG TERM GOAL: Academic

SHORT TERM GOAL TO REACH LONG TERM: Do HW & Study

KEVIN'S GLOBAL PERFORMANCE RATING:

5 EXCELLENT
4 GOOD
3 FAIR
2 NEEDS SOME IMPROVEMENT
1 NEEDS A LOT OF IMPROVEMENT

GENERAL COMMENTS: Things are great

SPECIFIC COMMENTS: Need to get a job
DATE: 11/8

LONG TERM GOAL: Honors at end of quarter

SHORT TERM GOAL TO REACH LONG TERM: get him done

KEVIN'S GLOBAL PERFORMANCE RATING:

5 EXCELLENT
4 GOOD
3 FAIR
2 NEEDS SOME IMPROVEMENT
1 NEEDS A LOT OF IMPROVEMENT

GENERAL COMMENTS: Oh

SPECIFIC COMMENTS: Mr B is on his nerves.
DATE: 12/5/95

LONG TERM GOAL: Honors

SHORT TERM GOAL TO REACH LONG TERM:

MAKE SURE ALL HOMEWORK IS IN

KEVIN'S GLOBAL PERFORMANCE RATING:

5 EXCELLENT
4 GOOD (CIRCLED)
3 FAIR
2 NEEDS SOME IMPROVEMENT
1 NEEDS A LOT OF IMPROVEMENT

GENERAL COMMENTS:

All is OK.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS:

Mr. B is a ___________
### Effects of Coaching on Report Card Grades

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% Grades Earned</th>
<th>B or better</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before coaching</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During coaching</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
March 8, 2001

To whom it may concern:

I am a 15 year old used-to-be slacker!!

In my first run around with ninth grade I had no desire to pass because since the beginning of 7th grade I had been working my butt off to keep the grades up and the teachers didn’t realize that I had a problem understanding. The teachers would constantly ridicule me about my handwriting, which hurt my desire to work hard, so I began to not even care about my work.

In September of 2000 I decided that I did not want to take so many regular classes and that I did not want to be at school all day, so I decided that it would be best for me to go to a vocational school for half of a school day. It did not help. Then in November I met Mrs. Hutchins (big help!) In the beginning I set very small goals because I knew that I could reach them easily! As time progressed I began setting higher goals, and even reaching the. I even began paying attention to my teachers, passing my classes, and enjoying it. It felt great to finally be succeeding. I also enjoy not being ridiculed about my writing (It’s really improved.). One of my long term goals is to pass ninth grade (finally).

I really appreciate having Mrs. Hutchins to help me out.
References


References


References


