

A PEATC

Do You Know....



Factsheet for Virginia's Parents—Helping Your Student Plan, Organize, and Do

What are Executive Functioning Skills

Executive functioning skills are what we use every day to **manage our time, organize and plan our day, remember and do what we need to do, control our emotions and behavior, analyze and solve problems, and think before we act.** These are skills your student needs in order to be successful in school and in life. Your student's disability may mean that his executive functioning skills are not as strong as they could be, and students with **executive functioning skill challenges** can be wrongly thought of as unmotivated or lazy. Accommodations may be helpful for your student, and with practice, these important skills can be learned and will improve your student's success.

How can I get the Teacher's Help and Support?

If you think your student needs extra support, talk to his teachers early in the school year. They may not be familiar with executive functioning skills.

- **Explain your student has challenges with executive functioning and give examples.** (It takes Joe *longer to complete assignments* because he gets distracted; Suzette *forgets to bring home* her assignments; Mary needs a *visual schedule* to stay on task; Kaitlin can be *easily frustrated by change* and needs advance notice; Daniel *leaves things to the last minute* and then gets overwhelmed).
- **Explain that your student is not unmotivated or lazy,** but rather needs, and can be successful with, extra supports and tools.
- **Share strategies that you use at home.** Perhaps you developed a chore wheel or calendar for your student which has kept him motivated.
- **Include needed accommodations in your student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan** and revise as needed. Sometimes the school's occupational therapist may be able to offer recommendations.
- **Develop IEP goals** to address executive functioning skill development (See page 2 for examples).
- **Ask the teacher to let you know if your student is having issues** with time management, lateness, forgetfulness, impulse control, etc. so you can help develop solutions before he/she gets into trouble.

Resources on Executive Functioning Skills and Your Student

Study.Com

<https://study.com/academy/lesson/examples-of-executive-functioning-iep-goals.html>

Understood.org

<https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/partnering-with-childrens-school/instructional-strategies/at-a-glance-classroom-accommodations-for-executive-functioning-issues>

Leading IEP Champion: Strategies to Improve EF

<https://globalgenes.org/2015/04/21/leading-iep-champion-strategies-to-improve-executive-functioning-ef/>

Executive Function Disorder

https://www.tauntonschools.org/uploads/1/6/5/4/16543006/executive_function_disorder.pdf

Integrating Executive Skills into IEPs and 504 Plans

<https://www.sased.org/docs/default-source/spring-institute-2017/2018-spring-institute/peg-dawson/peg-dawson-slides.pdf?sfvrsn=2>



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Strategies that Help with Executive Functioning Challenges

There are a lot of strategies teachers can use to help with executive functioning. Many of the strategies listed below work for all students. **Those your student specifically needs should be included in his/her IEP or 504 Plan.** The Resources on this fact sheet provide more information and examples.

For the Teacher

- Post daily **classroom schedules and class rules**. Use posters and color coding.
- Provide **daily visual** (written, picture) schedules for the student.
- Try to have a **consistent daily routine** and **let the student know about changes** as far in advance as possible.
- **Make directions clear, simple, and concrete**. Repeat and have the student repeat back to you. Write down step by step directions if needed.
- Have a **set place for student to organize** their supplies and classwork. Use marked folders, baskets, cubbies, etc.
- Develop a system to **reward motivation and progress**.
- Remind students to **bring home important information** and assignments.
- Let the student know when you are **saying something important**, and if providing written material, **use highlighters** to focus on key areas.
- Make sure there is an **easy way for the student to ask for help or a break** in a way which does not embarrass him. Be sure there is a safe, comfortable space for taking breaks.
- **Model the organizational, time management, and emotional skills**, the student needs to learn and exhibit.

For the Student

- **Review your schedule** every day and ask about changes.
- **Develop checklists and to-do lists** and cross off completed items.
- Set **realistic short- and long-term goals** and **ask for help** if you need it.
- Use **calendars and other organizers** including, if helpful, technology, such as mobile apps for homework, notetaking, checklists, etc.
- **Be in control**. Think before you speak or act so you will stay calm.
- If you feel yourself getting frustrated or mad, **ask for a break**.

Sample IEP Objectives

These are general objectives. Measurement will be based on your student's unique needs.

- Rosie will initiate self-editing to correct spelling and other errors in writing assignments
- Johnny will demonstrate organizational skills by putting his supplies in a specified area every morning.
- Mary will bring books, papers and assignments home from school in her backpack every day.
- David will demonstrate sustained attention by completing classroom assignments in the allotted time.
- Dawn will control her emotions by using specified coping strategies when she is frustrated, angry, or upset.
- Andrew will plan his time effectively, using agreed upon tools, so that he can accomplish school, home, and recreational activities without feeling overwhelmed or frustrated.

PEATC's mission focuses on building positive futures for Virginia's children by working collaboratively with families, schools and communities to improve opportunities for excellence in education and success in school and community life.

For more information about us, please contact:

8003 Forbes Place, Suite 310 Springfield, VA 22151

800-869-6782 / 703-923-0010

www.peatc.org



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