



Cougar Connections and Conversations

2/20/26



This Morning's Agenda

**Community Builder - Strategy Swap:
What's Working at Home**

Executive Functioning Skills

Updates from Admin





Strategy Swap: What's Working at Home

Strategy Swap: What's Working at Home

Directions:

1. Take a moment to think about **one strategy** you've tried at home to support your child
(examples: visual schedules, checklists, calm-down routines, timers, predictable routines).
2. At your table, **share what the strategy was** and **what it helped with**
(organization, focus, emotional regulation, transitions, homework, etc.).
3. Listen for ideas you might want to try at home — there's **no one "right" strategy**.
4. Choose **one new idea** you'd like to explore with your child.



Goal:

Build a shared toolkit of practical strategies that support children's executive functioning at home and school.



Executive Functioning at Home and at School

EXECUTIVE FUNCTION AT HOME AND SCHOOL

Sarah D'Elia, School Psychologist
Ami Patel, School Psychology Intern



The Crucial Role of Executive Function

Appropriate executive function abilities are as essential to success in education and life as is raw intelligence



Executive Function at Home and School

What is executive function and why is it important?

What are essential executive functions?

What issues do individuals demonstrate when executive functioning is challenged?

How can we support the development of executive function?

Executive Function

Purposeful management of thinking, emotion, and behavior to achieve a desired outcome:

Impulse control/Inhibition

Emotional control

Flexibility/Adaptability

Initiation and persistence

Working memory

Organizing and planning



Executive Function at School

Students with executive function difficulties may struggle to:



- initiate and complete tasks
- sustain attention
- shift focus
- think before acting
- organize materials
- plan assignments

Executive skills are essential for higher level conceptual thinking and problem solving.

Essential Executive Functions



Impulse Control/Inhibition

- The ability to think before acting
- The ability to resist initial desire

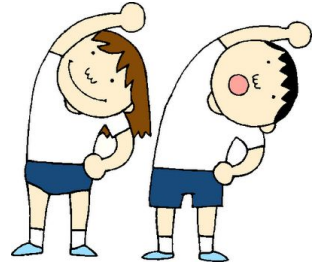
Emotional Control

- The ability to demonstrate reactions appropriate to the situation
- The ability to remain calm in the face of frustration or disappointment

Essential Executive Functions

Flexibility/Adaptability

- the ability to transition between activities and accept changes in routine
- the ability to alter strategies when the original plan does not lead to the solution
- the ability to collaborate and not be tied to one way of completing the task



Essential Executive Functions



Task Initiation and Persistence

- the ability to initiate and sustain tasks in a timely manner
- the ability to initiate and sustain routines independently



•Working Memory

- the ability to mentally manipulate information

Essential Executive Functions

Planning



- the ability to craft a strategy to reach a goal
- the ability to create internal instructions to complete a task

- Organizing

- The ability to keep track of materials and ideas



Essential Executive Functions

Self-Monitoring



- the ability to examine one's own behavior and evaluate its appropriateness to the situation
- the ability to examine one's progress on a task and make necessary adjustments

Executive Function

Purposeful management of thinking, emotion, and behavior to achieve a desired outcome:

Impulse control/Inhibition

Emotional control

Flexibility/Adaptability

Initiation and persistence

Working memory

Organizing and planning

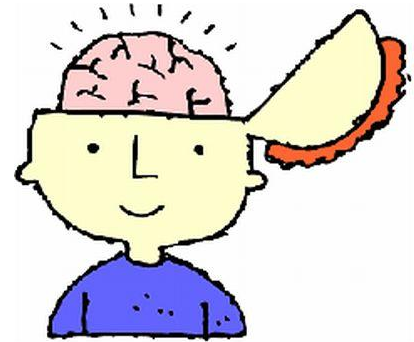
Self-monitoring



Supporting the Development of Executive Function

Children are not born with these skills.

How can we help children grow the executive function skills so essential for success at school and home?



Three Key Instructional Strategies

- **Make executive processes explicit**

- State expectations clearly
- Directly teach executive skills
- Demonstrate skills
- Give specific positive feedback
- Think aloud to demonstrate cognitive processes



Three Key Instructional Strategies

- **Provide a scaffold to support learning executive skills**
 - Develop routines
 - Provide external supports
 - Backward chaining
 - Do tasks with the child
 - Plan for practice
- **Reinforce it when you see it**



Supporting Impulse Control/Inhibition

Create calm and predictable environments

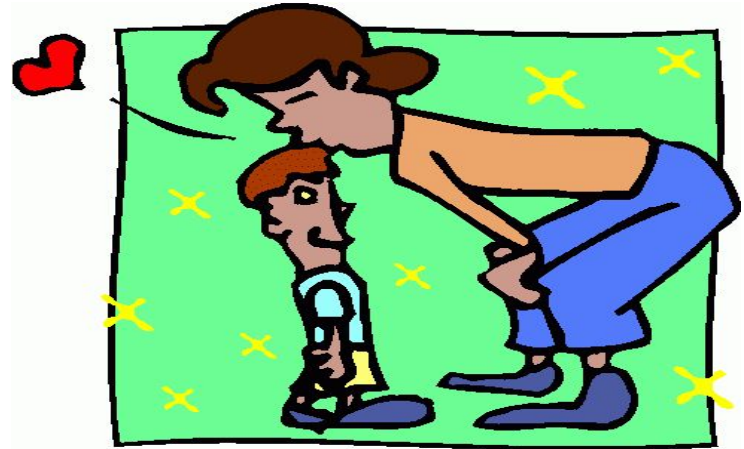
Build trust

Stay positive

Be a role model

Get moving

Monitor media access



Supporting Flexibility/Adaptability



- Vary routines
- Challenge inflexible thought patterns
- Support perspective taking
- Focus on goals
- Discuss alternate methods to achieve goals
- Have fun with flexible thinking

Supporting Initiation and Persistence

- Problems with initiation rarely stand alone
- Identify and address barriers to getting started
- Identify and address barriers to sustaining on task performance



Supporting Working Memory

- Attention first
- Reduce load
- Increase meaning
- Recognition versus recall
- Teach self-advocacy skills




Supporting Planning and Organization

- External supports for organizing thoughts and physical environment
- Time management instruction
- Strategy instruction




ORGANIZATION



Write down assignments in a Student Planner.


Keep school materials in order to find them easily.

TIME MANAGEMENT



Use time wisely by estimating and scheduling work.

PLANNING



Plan ahead for long-term projects by breaking tasks into steps.

Supporting Self Monitoring



- Set goals
- Provide feedback
- Collect data on own behavior
- Evaluate own behavior
- Evaluate own work

Resources

Smart but Scattered: The Revolutionary “Executive Skills” Approach to Helping Kids Reach Their Potential
by Peg Dawson and Richard Guare

Executive Skills in Children and Adolescents, Second Edition: A Practice Guide to assessment and Intervention
by Peg Dawson and Richard Guare

Questions





Updates from Admin

Raptor Safe App and Check In System

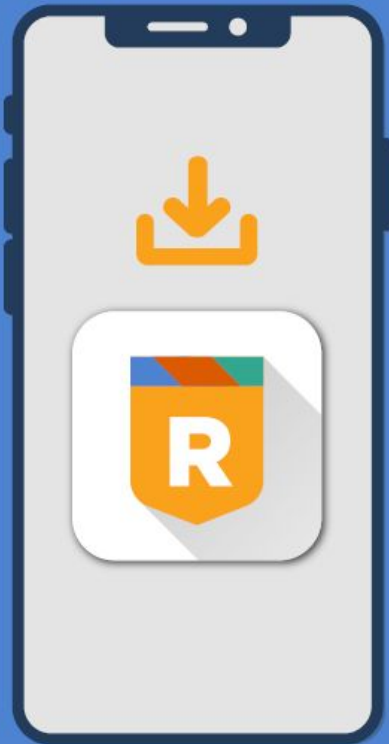
Download the Raptor Safe App

Create a profile, scan your driver's license, take a selfie

A QR code is created that you can use to check into any FCPS school



VISITORS



LEARN HOW
TO SAVE
TIME WHEN
YOU SIGN
IN AT OUR
SCHOOL



ATTENTION ALL MCLEAN AREA SCHOOLS!

SCREENAGERS ELEMENTARY EDITION



MONDAY, MARCH 9 @ 7:00 PM

Join other McLean-area parents for a special (parents only) movie screening and discussion exploring how screen time impacts children's learning, behavior, sleep, and emotional well-being, and what families can realistically do to set healthy boundaries.



SCAN TO RSVP

Thinking about phones and kids? You're not alone.
Learn why many families are choosing to Wait Until 8th.
www.waituntil8th.org



thank you

al warren