RETURNING TO POST-COVID SCHOOL HELPING STUDENTS THRIVE WITH ORGANIZATIONAL AND STUDY SKILLS

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WHY ARE WE HERE?

1. To see where underdeveloped EF’s and study skills may be the root cause of common school challenges

2. To share strategies that are solutions-oriented.

3. To share ways to more effectively communicate with your student around homework to:
   - reduce struggles and
   - “grow the seeds” of desired behaviors.
Our Executive Function Tanks are Running Low

CHALLENGES WE SEE DUE TO LOW EXECUTIVE FUNCTION SKILLS:

- Getting started
- Staying focused
- Organizing (thoughts, too!)
- Tracking work
- "Chunking" work
- Asking for help
- Transitioning
- Setting goals
- Managing emotions
- Resisting distractions
WHAT EXACTLY ARE EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS?
What happens when?

CONTENT

PROCESS
What are Executive Functions?

- Executive functions are the “self-management system of the brain”
- Having strong EF skills helps you get what you want to get done.

EF-BRIEF’s clinical scales (Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Function)
What are Study Skills?

- Study skills are tactics and strategies that improve how students acquire, retain, recall, and apply information.

- **TIME MANAGEMENT**: Your ability to know and use the time you have.
- **NOTE TAKING**: The skill of synthesizing key ideas and details.
- **ACTIVE STUDYING**: Engaging with material for improved retention.
- **GROWTH MINDSET**: Belief that all abilities can be developed.
- **TEST TAKING**: Preparing for and taking tests with a plan.
- **SELF ADVOCACY**: Ability to know yourself and get what you need.
RECOGNIZING MISSING EF SKILLS MATTERS

• It’s tempting to think:
  – They are lazy
  – They just need to be able to chunk their work
  – They aren’t motivated
  – They are wasting time
  – They don’t care about the quality of their work
    ◦ They rush through work
    ◦ They make careless / repeated errors

In most cases the “why” is due to the need for a skill

It is only by identifying the underlying cause for a challenge can we apply the *right* approach
How Parents and Caregivers Can Help:

SOLUTIONS-ORIENTED APPROACHES

(a.k.a. suggesting strategies vs. problem-seeking)
THE “ANTI” SOLUTIONS ORIENTATION

What we typically say....

• “DO YOU HAVE HOMEWORK?”
• “HAVE YOU STARTED YOUR HOMEWORK?”
• “WHAT HOMEWORK DO YOU HAVE TONIGHT?”
• ARE YOU ALL CAUGHT UP WITH YOUR HOMEWORK?
SOLUTIONS TO IDENTIFY THE TIME TO WORK: WORK WINDOWS

**STUDENT SHOULD:**

1. Shade in all the times when they are at school, extracurricular activities, or traveling.

2. Look for the “White Space” or free time in their schedule that can be reserved for homework.
SOLUTIONS TO “CHUNK”

CHUNKS are the smaller steps of assignments that together will create a completed project. They are also the steps that go into nightly work to make it more manageable.

CHUNKING = TAKING MORE DIRECTED ACTION.

- **Check** the due date and put it in your planner. Save the DAY BEFORE for final review.
- **Highlight** the key information.
- **Use** the highlights to create your checklist.
- **Number** and group the checklists as separate CHUNKS.
- **Keep** your CHUNKS in your plan.
- **Inquire** about anything that is unclear.
- **Take** action (plan your very first step!).
CHUNKIT Example:

Finding the “To-Do’s” in an Assignment
SOLUTIONS TO STARTING:
COMMON BARRIERS TO STARTING

☐ I don’t know what I have to do.
☐ It’s not due for a few days / week.
☐ I think it will take a long time to finish.
☐ I don’t know how to do it.
☐ I don’t have the materials I need.
☐ I don’t feel like it / don’t feel motivation.
☐ It’s only worth a few points.
☐ It’s worth such a big part of my grade, it’s overwhelming.
☐ It seems harder than I feel like doing or think I can do.
THE SOLUTION:
1) MAKE A PLAN
2) BUILD “ON—RAMPS”
A LIST OF WORK IS *NOT* A PLAN

My List of Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal assessment on The Moon’s Orbit and Lunar Phases.</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Apr 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Giver Utopia Project</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Apr 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete integrals IXL</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Apr 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elections and Democracy Quiz</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Apr 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem set-Integrals pgs 14 and 15 #1-31 odd</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Apr 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take Home Quiz-Lunar phases</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Apr 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Giver Vocab Quiz</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Apr 17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SOLUTIONS TO STARTING:
Just knowing the DUE DATE doesn’t help you start...

KEYS TO PLANNING

1. IDENTIFYING THE SPECIFICS OF THE ASSIGNMENT (VS. “MATH HOMEWORK”)

2. PREVIEW THE ASSIGNMENT (REDUCES THE BARRIERS)

3. ALTERNATE EASY/HARD (“EASY” vs. STRESSFUL)

DOWNLOAD AT:
https://thestudypro.com/remote-coached-homework-center/
SOLUTIONS TO STARTING: Building On-Ramps

BUILD ON-RAMPS:

GET STARTED IN EVEN A SMALL WAY

ON-RAMP EXAMPLES

• English / History Assignment
  – Topic Exploration
  – Ideas Diagram
  – Rewording Questions for Clarity
  – Identify where to connect with the Q
    – Chunking into Steps

• Math / Science Assignment
  – Preview the assignment
  – Watch a video on the topic
  – Do only the odd questions
  – Draw a picture or create clues to define/connect
SOLUTIONS TO STARTING: START SMALL

- Change your location – sit in a different room.
- Put your phone in another room where you can hear and set the timer.
- Close tabs, except for the one you need open for your work.
- Call a friend to help you get started / work on the assignment.
- Set your intention to yourself or share with someone else.
- Make a plan that is specific (e.g., do problems 1 to 5 vs. “do math homework”).
- Set up motivators to give you rewards for completing task(s).
- Start with something easy.

- Read the directions.
- See if there are any materials you have to get (e.g., graph paper, poster board, etc.).
- Title the page for a paper.
- Do the first 5 problems or questions.
- Set a timer and work for 5 minutes and see how far you get (helps with time estimation to finish).
- Put 1 single keyword to answer each question to help get started.
- Use Google Voice to record a brain dump for a rough draft.
**SOLUTIONS TO FINISHING:**

**Build in Brain Breaks**

Brain breaks are planned learning activity shifts that mobilize different networks of the brain.

**Brain Breaks**
**RESTORE**
**STUDENT FOCUS!**

- Take a short walk
- Get a drink of water
- Jumping Jacks
- Use a hand fidget / stress ball
- Stretch
- Belly Breathing
- Get a small snack
- Neck Roll
- Massage (“Thinking Cap”)
SOLUTIONS TO POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS: Watering the seeds, not the weeds

“The seeds we plant, the seeds we water, the seeds we tend to, Are the ones that bloom.”

Lisa A. McCrohan
Avoid the “gotchas” or implication of the negative.

- Instead of “Do you have homework tonight?”

**Try saying** ....
“What is the first thing you could get started with tonight that would be easy to get off your plate?”
“Have you found Quizlet or notecards to be more effective for you?”

- Instead of “Did you study for your test yet?”

**Try saying**....
“Did you find anything interesting about the periodic table when you were studying?”
“I always wanted to how to read a periodic table...I’d love to see your hard work there!”
Praise for specific use of EF skills / strategies.

- Instead of “Wow, you got an A!“
  
  Try saying...
  "Wow, what worked there?"
  "How did you study?"

- Instead of “That’s awesome you finished that!”

  Try saying...
  “That must feel so great...what helped get over that hurdle?”

More examples:

“I love how you <set a timer>, <did your homework at the dining room table>, <got started so quickly after school>, <studied over time>, <chunked up that work>...”
COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING

SOLUTIONS-ORIENTATION MEANS “WATERING THE SEEDS NOT THE WEEDS”
Key Takeaways

• There is always a **missing skill** behind the behaviors we see.

• **Start by introducing one skill** (e.g. location of work, being specific, previewing, on-ramps, etc.) and work on that until it sticks.

• These are longer-term **goals that will take time**.

• Cheer on your student by watering the **EF and study skills that provide the foundation to learning**. This is what will help those skills grow.
Executive Function Coaching

Study Skills and Strategies Course
- 4th and 5th grades
- 6th – 8th grades
- 9th – 12th grades

Remote Homework Center

Writing Coaching

TheStudyPro.com
info@thestudypro.com
Executive Functioning

1. INHIBITION: The ability to ignore distractions and resist temptations.
2. INITIATION: The ability to take action and get started.
3. SHIFTING: Having the mental flexibility to easily switch from one task or thought process to another.
4. EMOTIONAL CONTROL: The ability to manage your feelings to achieve a goal.
5. WORKING MEMORY: The ability to hold on to information and use it effectively.
6. PLANNING & ORGANIZATION: The ability to set goals and use a strategic approach to achieve them.
7. MATERIALS ORGANIZATION: The ability to create and maintain systems to keep belongings and plans in order.
8. SELF-MONITORING: The ability to monitor and evaluate performance and keep track of actions that matter.