

HANOVER TOWNSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SPECIAL EDUCATION PARENT ADVISORY GROUP PROGRAM
May 19, 2021

Presenters: Melissa Burrell, M.S., OT, ATP

Caitlin Junio, M.S., OT

Email: burrellm@chambersschool.org

junioc@chambersschool.org

*Email regarding general questions about information presented

PROMOTING EXECUTIVE FUNCTION SKILLS IN STUDENTS

Notes

Response Inhibition - Think before you act

Weaknesses look like:

- Talking without raising hand
- Talking back
- Making insensitive comments
- Difficulty waiting for a turn
- Physical contact with peers/siblings
- Can't wait while parent is on the phone

Support:

- Teach your child to count to 10 prior to acting
 - Play games that require waiting and turn taking
 - Teach taking breaks from a situation that is upsetting your child
 - Model: "I would like to watch TV, but I have to clean the basement first!"
 - Encourage activity during leisure times- Yoga, Breathing, and Meditation
-

Working Memory - Holding information in your memory while performing complex tasks

Weaknesses look like:

- Forgets (parts of) assignments, materials, homework
- Loses or misplaces belongings
- Forgets classroom procedures
- Forgets to do chores
- Forgets parts of or all verbal directions

Support:

- Practice "repeat after me"
- Play games: Uno, Concentration, Crazy Eights
- Teach visualization strategies
- "Teach it to learn it"-have your child teach information back to you
- Encourage activity during leisure times- Yoga, Breathing, and Meditation

Notes

Emotional Control - Manage emotions to achieve goals, complete tasks, or control & direct behavior

Weaknesses look like:

- Frequent temper tantrums
- Overreacts to small problems
- Frequent mood changes
- Becomes overly anxious
- Temper flares quickly
- Slow to recover from disappointment

Support:

- Model and identify emotions
 - Introduce empathy early on
 - Provide praise when your child makes a positive choice
 - Create a calming corner
 - Teach through reading books
-

Sustained Attention - Holding information in your memory while performing complex tasks

Weaknesses look like:

- Fails to complete work/chores on time
- Stops before work is finished
- Switches frequently between activities
- Has difficulty listening to stories read aloud
- Distracted by things happening around him/her when doing seatwork or HW

Support:

- Set a time for work sessions
 - Incorporate hands-on learning activities
 - Use visual reminders and supports
 - Reduce environmental distractions
-

Task Initiation - The ability to begin projects without procrastination, in an efficient & timely manner.

Weaknesses look like:

- Needs reminders to get started
- When one task is complete, slow to start on another one
- Waits for someone else to begin in group activities
- Needs cues to begin over-learned routines

Support:

- Create a schedule for chores and homework
- Practice movement prior to work
- Set a timer to countdown getting to work
- Incorporate incentives or rewards for completing a challenging task

Notes

Planning/Prioritization - Ability to create a roadmap to reach a goal or complete a task.

Weaknesses look like:

- Difficulty carrying out a long-term project
- Can't make and follow a timeline for project completion
- Can't organize a group game
- Can't complete tasks in the order of priority
- Can't take notes in lectures that focus on the most important information

Support:

- Work on planning something fun and familiar, i.e. how to build a snowman
 - Discuss the most important steps of the task
 - Make to-do lists to plan and prioritize and rank the tasks in order of importance
 - Make a list of assignments and due dates
-

Organization - Create and maintain systems to keep track of information and materials.

Weaknesses look like:

- Has a messy desk, notebook, backpack
- Can't find belongings when asked
- Can't produce an organized piece of writing

Support:

- Introduce checklists
 - Give chores that teach sorting and categorizing (putting away clothes, matching socks)
 - Create a kid-friendly calendar
 - Teach color coding (red folder and red binder for a specific subject)
-

Time Management - Estimate how much time one has, how to allocate it, and how to stay within time limits & deadlines.

Weaknesses look like:

- Difficulty completing tasks on time
- Misses deadlines for assignments
- Difficulty estimating how long it takes to do something
- Can't adjust schedule to fit in new tasks, special events
- Can't complete routines consistently on time

Support:

- Use a visual timer
- Ask how long they expect the task to last- follow-up with what was done in this time frame
- Break long-term projects down into smaller steps
- Prioritize between "want to's" and "have to's"

Notes

Goal-Directed Persist - Have a goal, follow through to completion, and not put off or be distracted by competing interests.

Weaknesses look like:

- Doesn't stick with challenging tasks
- Doesn't return to task if interrupted
- Can't sustain attention well to tasks that are not intrinsically interesting

Support:

- Earning "points" over time to exchange for a long term reward
 - Reading a novel
 - Creating a long term project
 - Completing a lengthy video game
 - Going back to a project after an interruption
-

Flexibility - Revise plans in the face of obstacles, setbacks, new information or mistakes.

Weaknesses look like:

- Easily upset by changes in plans, disruption in routine
- Struggles with open-ended tasks
- Doesn't try multiple approaches to solving problems
- Excessively "rule-bound"

Support:

- Teach your child flexibility in a "safe" environment through opportunities
 - Give your child a "heads up" before change
 - Model alternatives frequently "you could do it this way OR that way"
 - Participate in "Fun Days" (i.e. wear a funny hat, pajama day, backwards day)
-

Metacognition - Stand back and take a bird's eye view of oneself in a situation.

Weaknesses look like:

- Asks for help rather than trying to solve a problem on their own
- Doesn't notice how others react to his/her behavior
- Doesn't like tasks or games that involve problem solving

Support:

- Have your child identify their successes after completing something
 - Have your child self-correct their work using checklists
 - Have your child plan for a task
 - Support them through problem solving
-

TEN TIPS

1. **Teach** deficient skills, rather than expect acquisition through observation or osmosis
2. **Consider** the child's developmental level
3. **Move** from the external to internal
4. **Remember**, external includes changes you can make to the environment, task, or the way you interact
5. **Use**, rather than fight your child's innate drive for mastery and control
6. **Modify** tasks to match your child's capacity to exert effort
7. **Use** incentives to augment instruction
8. **Provide** just enough support for the child to be successful
9. **Keep** supports and supervision in place until the child achieves mastery/success
10. **Fade** supports, supervision, and incentives gradually