Upcoming Events

TSD Science Fair
January 11
Set up 8:00 am
Judging 9:00 am - Noon
Awards - 1:00 - 2:00 pm
Loveland High School

GT Meetup
"Encourage, Enhance and Expand Executive Functions in your Child"
Virtual Presenter: Susanne Keeley
January 17 - 11:50-12:50 pm
Cottonwood Plains Elementary

TSD Spelling Bee
January 25 - 7:30 am - 5:30 pm
Walt Clark Middle School

TSD Mathcounts Tournament
February 1 - 8:30 am - 1:00 pm
Conrad Ball Middle School

TSD Chess Qualifier Tournament
February 1 - 8:00 am - 12:30 pm
Lucile Erwin Middle School

Beyond Giftedness Conference XXI
Parent Institute
February 21 - 9:45 am - 2:00 pm
Arvada Center for the Arts

Stay Connected
Facebook
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Teachable Moments
How can 2 cookies predict your child's SAT score?

Sound familiar? If yes, then this month is for you!

"If you’d just get organized!"

“How can you find anything in here?”

“The report is due tomorrow and you haven’t started?”

“How could you forget to turn in your homework? I helped you with it!”

This month we will be focusing on information, strategies and tips to help our children develop strong Executive Function skills.

GT Meetup
"Encourage, Enhance and Expand Executive Functions in your Child"

Does your child:
- struggle with time management,
- leave assignments until the last minute,
- forget to bring work home,
- have trouble completing long-term assignments?

Presenter Susanne Phillips Keeley will discuss via virtual presentation how chronic issues with organizing schoolwork, anticipating deadlines, or generally not working to potential can indicate problems with Executive Functions, the set of neurological capabilities that enable individuals to plan for, and then achieve, their goals.

Executive Function development begins in infancy and continues into adulthood. Often times, however, normal development does not coincide with academic and social requirements creating frustration for all involved. Participants will understand specific behaviors and techniques that will foster Executive Functions skills in their children.

Parents will leave with:
- an understanding of Executive Function,
- the recognition Executive Function related behaviors,
- tips and strategies to foster Executive Function skills in their children.
"Time Blindness"

People with Executive Function issues are not tuned into the passage of time or pace of work.

But What Exactly IS Executive Function?

Executive function is a set of mental processes that helps connect past experience with present action. People use it to perform activities such as planning, organizing, strategizing, paying attention to and remembering details, and managing time and space. Executive functions skills, simply put, are:

**Working Memory**

The ability to hold information in mind and use it to complete a task.

Alana is a third grader who has trouble with working memory. She plays in a youth soccer league, and at a recent game, the ball was passed to her. She was very excited, but couldn’t quickly recall what she was supposed to do next. She just knew she was supposed to kick the ball into the net—unfortunately, she kicked it into her own team’s net. The other girls on the team were mad that Alana inadvertently scored a point for the opposing team. “What’s wrong with you?” one girl yelled as Alana sadly walked off the field. After the game, Alana’s dad overheard a girl whispering that Alana is “weird” and “stupid.”

**Impulse Control**

The ability to stop and think before acting.

Adam is 16 and has great difficulty controlling his impulses to call out at inappropriate times during class. He wants to make other kids laugh, but lately, they have been avoiding him. Some of his friends have noticed that they tend to get in trouble when they sit with Adam in class. Other kids think that Adam is very immature—the screaming and roughhousing might have been funny when they were younger, but now it just seems silly.

**Planning and Setting Priorities**

The ability to create steps to reach a goal and to make decisions about what to focus on.

“When I have to write a paper, I try to write but I can’t figure how to get my mind unstuck. I get so frustrated when I have written only a few sentences after an hour so I give up.” (John, 7th grade)

**Emotional Control**

The ability to manage feelings by thinking about goals.

A nine-year-old just can’t seem to deal with frustration. When he struggles with a homework assignment or doesn’t get his preferred cuisine for dinner, he breaks down into a tantrum. And he sure does get into a lot of arguments with his little sister. Is he just being a nine-year-old, or is this something to be concerned about?
**Strategies**

**Time Management**

To help children develop a sense of time increments, you can try the following:

1. Invest in an analog clock; ask children to predict how long a task or assignment might take. This is called the minute gauge rule.

2. Use time markers such as magnets or sketch pies of time on the clock (glass face works best with dry erase markers) to visually show the passage of time.

3. It is also helpful to mark a halfway point to check that the task is being attended to.

4. Help identify "time robbers" such as being hungry, scattered papers, notebooks, and too much phone/screen time.

**Back Pack Readiness**

1. Take a side view photo of your child fully dressed with all their school supplies (backpack, coat, lunchbox, etc.) and tell them to match the picture when they are getting ready.

2. To make sure they have everything in their backpack, lie out the contents (homework folder, snack) and take a picture.

3. To preserve the photo, laminate it or shrink the picture and put it in a luggage tag and attach the tag to their backpack.

(Use visuals whenever possible to communicate with your child.)

**Homework Hassles**

**Get Ready** | **Do!** | **Done!**
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1. Students visualize in their mind (thinking bubble), "What will this look like when I'm done?" Students draw this image in the Done! Box making it

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**Organization**

The ability to create and maintain systems to keep track of information and/or materials.

"Emily is a scattered child. She loses things all the time and is always late in the morning because she cannot find her books or her gym shoes. Last week, she missed a field trip because she forgot to hand in the permission slip and could not even find it in her locker or backpack. I wish I knew how to help her to become more organized."

(Parent of a 7th grader)

**Flexibility**

The ability to change strategies or revise plans when conditions change.

"I try to help Jan with her homework, but she gets frustrated when I show her an approach that may not be the same as the way she was taught in school. She gets stuck doing things over and over so that homework drags on for hours."

(Parent of a 6th grader)

**Task Initiation**

The ability to recognize when it's time to get started on something and begin without procrastination.

"Mike's performance has been unpredictable all year! He is so bright and creative and his teachers report that he participates in classes. However, homework is a daily battle that I dread. Mike's teachers recently told me that he is often late with papers and projects and that he is lazy."

(Parent of a 5th grader)

**Self-Monitoring**

The ability to monitor and evaluate your own performance.

"Zach never proofreads. I have to remind him to check his homework every night and I feel like a broken record! No matter what I say, his work is still filled with careless mistakes. When he has a math test, he seems to understand the concepts perfectly, but he gets so many answers wrong because of calculation errors. He puts a lot of time and effort into his writing but his punctuation and spelling are awful. No matter how hard he works, his grades are still so low."

(Parent of a 10th grader)

Source: National Center for Learning Disabilities

**Executive Function Problem or Just a Lazy Kid?**

Jared, 14, was a bright and likeable 9th grader. Difficulties at school and at home were heightened this year. Fights at home centered around how often Jared was online and playing video games instead of doing homework.

Though Jared's parents knew he had executive function deficits, they believed that Jared lacked ambition, was lazy, and maybe defiant. They were convinced that he didn't care enough about his future. They commented that Jared seemed selectively disabled when it came to hard work...

**Good Reads**

- *Smart but Scattered: The Revolutionary "Executive Skills" Approach to Helping Kids Reach Their Potential* by Peg Dawson
- *50 Tips to Help Students Succeed* by Marydee Sklar
- *That Crumpled Paper Was Due Last Week* by Ana Homayoun
2. Students think about what steps they need to take to get to the Done! picture. When they draw the action in the middle they must include themselves (smiling) in the drawing.

3. Lastly, students list what they will need for materials to accomplish the goal.

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