

Executive Function Checklist for Remote Learning

Now more than ever, teachers need executive function strategies as they learn to navigate and adjust to the rapidly changing pace of remote and home-based learning. Learn from Dr. Lynn Meltzer and ResearchILD's Executive Function experts everything you need to know about supporting the executive function needs of your students from elementary school through college as they learn at home (Meltzer, 2018, 2010). ResearchILD's mission is to empower all students to find their unique pathways to academic success and ResearchILD's SMARTS Executive Function Curriculum for grades 3-12 is designed to help teachers to teach these life-changing strategies systematically(www.researchchild.org, www.smarts-ef.org).

Best Practices when teaching Executive Function Strategies

- TEACH EXECUTIVE FUNCTION STRATEGIES EXPLICITLY:** Make sure you are taking time to model the strategies your students need! Use the checklist below to think about how to address your students' executive function needs at this time.
- PROMOTE SELF-REFLECTION:** Give students a chance to think about their strengths and challenges and their learning profiles as they shift to working remotely. This will promote engagement and self-understanding in students so that they are able to apply strategies independently in novel situations.
- PROMOTE GOAL-SETTING & TIME MANAGEMENT:** One of the biggest challenges for students working at home is that they cannot ask you for help in real time! For any assignment or class, help students to plan and persevere if they get stuck.

Use the following checklist to integrate SMARTS executive function strategies into your teaching, ensuring that all students are able to keep up during these challenging times.

Weekly planning

- BREAK IT DOWN:** Give students time to break down assignments into meaningful parts either during class or as part of their assignments.
- WRITE A PLAN:** Make sure that students are writing down their work plans, whether on paper, using electronic calendars, or with to-do lists. All the assignments are online, but if students do not write out their own individual work plans, they will not reflect on the work they have done and what they still have to complete.
- PROMOTE CANDO GOALS** (www.smarts-ef.org): Consider engaging students in goal- setting, whether for academic goals, social goals, exercise goals etc. Teach students to make sure goals are personalized and achievable goals by following the CANDO acronym. CANDO goals are Clear, Appropriate, Numerical, Doable, and with Obstacles considered (CANDO) (SMARTS Executive Function curriculum Unit 2 Lesson 1).

Daily planning

- ASSIGN PRODUCTION TIME:** Help your students set a specific chunk of time each day during which all distractions are removed and work is the priority i.e. their “production time”. Check out our free SMARTS lesson 4A.5 *Weekly Planning* for more on production time.
- WRITE IT DOWN:** Help students create a daily plan with tasks clearly labeled as “have to’s” (obligations) and “want to’s” (aspirations). How can they ensure they get all their “have to’s” done?
- ESTIMATE AND REFLECT:** As students are expected to work independently, accurate time estimation is essential. Include time estimates with your assignments and have students reflect on how accurate these estimates are. How does this influence the amount of “production time” they need daily?

Procrastination and Motivation

- STAYING ON TASK:** Provide your students with strategies they can use to help them self-monitor their productivity (e.g., productivity apps, etc.) Ask them to reflect on what helps them to be productive and identify top distractors that get in their way.
- CREATE SPACE:** Help students analyze their workspaces. Are there too many distractors? Is there enough light? Each week, ask them how they change their workspace to help them focus. See the *Manage Your Focus* lesson in the SMARTS Elementary Executive Function curriculum for more.
- WE ALL PROCRASTINATE:** Normalize procrastination by discussing how procrastination has affected you in the past. Brainstorm strategies and solutions to overcome procrastination together.

Below are some academic tasks with high executive function demands. Use the checklist to make sure you are supporting students in these areas.

Reading/Writing

- GET TO THE POINT:** When asking students to read independently, make sure they understand the purpose of the assignment. This will help them highlight, annotate, or take notes more purposefully.
- MODEL ACTIVE READING:** Pre-reading strategies, such as the SMARTS *Skim and Scoop strategy*, help students distinguish main ideas from details. Make sure you model how to use these strategies explicitly.
- ORGANIZE INFORMATION:** Students are often unaware that reading and writing require a great deal of organization! Make teach strategies that help students organize ideas and information when taking notes, outlining papers, or summarizing. One such strategy for sorting and categorizing is the SMARTS BOTEC strategy (**B**rainstorm, **O**rganize, **T**opic Sentence, **C**onclusion)

- “Triple-Note-Tote” - SMARTS three column note-taking strategy
- Summarizing stories to help you understand the “who, what, where, when, why, and how” of a text.

Math

- CHECKLISTS ARE KEY: Students are often overwhelmed by directions. Teach strategies that help students understand the directions, whether on a test or a word problem, by turning them into checklists that they can follow.
- PREDICT ERRORS: Help students analyze their own work by asking them to identify their “Top 3 Hits” (i.e., the 3 most common errors they make). They can use this knowledge to study for tests and quizzes and to check work.
- THINK FLEXIBLY: Many students struggle to approach math problems flexibly. Model strategies for thinking flexibly about math.

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Institutes of Learning and Development

Resources

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For additional information, visit www.researchchild.org, and www.smarts-ef.org, or www.ildlex.org, or Lynn Meltzer at lmeltzer@ildlex.org