Two-Day Intensive
Executive Function Seminar with Sarah Ward

Day 1: Presentation Handout

Thursday, May 12, 2022

Simon Fraser University - Harbour Centre

Presented by

Sarah Ward M.S., CCC/SLP

Co-Director, Cognitive Connections LLP, Boston

Event Schedule

All times are Pacific Daylight Time (PDT)

8:15am — 9:00am	Registration
9:00am — 10:15am	Session 1
10:15am — 10:30am	Morning Break
10:30am — 11:30am	Session 2
11:30am — 12:30pm	Lunch
12:30pm — 1:45pm	Session 3
1:45 pm — 2:00pm	Afternoon break
2:00 pm — 3:00pm	Session 4

Acknowledgements

ACT – Autism Community Training is pleased to bring Sarah Ward back to Vancouver to present Executive Function training to our online audience, and our first in-person audience since 2020. We thank to Sarah Ward and everyone at Cognitive Connections for agreeing to facilitate this seminar to provide practical resources and techniques that enable parents and teachers to tackle the challenges of executive function for those with autism and other neuro-developmental challenges.

Over the years, those who have attended ACT events know that we depend on community collaboration and support to sustain our work as we are a small not-for-profit. We deeply appreciate the many parents and professionals across British Columbia who volunteer their time, donate funds, and help spread the word - especially during these challenging times.

Support evidence-based resources – [Donate to ACT](#)!

Free Resources from ACT

Autism Videos @ ACT (AVA) – Nearly 80 quality online videos available free – without a log-in, thanks to our sponsors. www.actcommunity.ca/videos

ACT's Autism and Intellectual Disability (AID) Search – Like Google for Autism but better! Keyword search nearly 1,400 records containing evidence-based, practical, information resources in 36 languages, and 1,100 community resources in British Columbia useful to families and community professionals. aid.actcommunity.ca

ACT in Chinese – www.actcommunity.ca/information/act-in-chinese

ACT's Autism Manual for B.C - 13 chapters! www.actcommunity.ca/autism-manual-for-bc

ACT's Monthly News Round-Up & Event Alerts - Sign-up to keep in touch with developments affecting the special needs community. www.actcommunity.ca/updates

ACT's Facebook - ACT carefully sources interesting, insightful stories to inform our nearly 9,000 followers. www.facebook.com/autismcommunitytraining

ACT's Resources for Ukraine - A collaborative project between ACT and Carol Gray, originator of Social Stories, to support families during the crisis in Ukraine. www.actcommunity.ca/resources-for-ukraine

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Executive Function Concepts

Learn It Today – Use It Tomorrow!
Fostering Independent
Executive Function Skills

Sarah Ward, M.S., CCC/SLP
Speech and Language Pathologist

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747 Main Street, Suite 307
Concord, MA 01742
978-369-5200 | www.efpractice.com

Participate with Me Today!
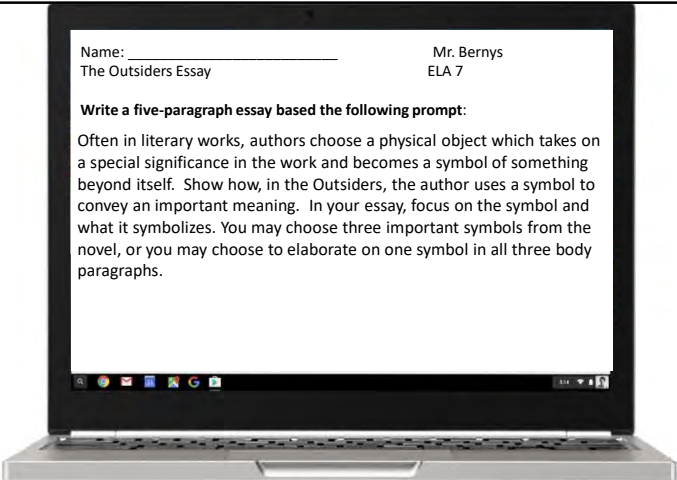Connect to **www.wooclap.com/ACTMAY22**

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What one word comes to mind when you
think of Executive Function Skills?

Name: _____   Mr. Bernys
The Outsiders Essay   ELA 7

Write a five-paragraph essay based the following prompt:

Often in literary works, authors choose a physical object which takes on a special significance in the work and becomes a symbol of something beyond itself. Show how, in the Outsiders, the author uses a symbol to convey an important meaning. In your essay, focus on the symbol and what it symbolizes. You may choose three important symbols from the novel, or you may choose to elaborate on one symbol in all three body paragraphs.

Nonverbal Working Memory and Self Regulation

Working Memory: Holding information in your mind while mentally working with it or updating it
- Critical for anything that unfolds over time

Inhibitory/Self Control: Resisting the strong inclination to do one thing and instead do what is most appropriate

- Attention – resist distractions
- Emotion - resist giving up
- Behavior – resist impulse to do an action that is inappropriate

Planning: Use of cause and effect & means to an end reasoning needed: "if…..then….." thinking.

Situational Awareness/Intelligence:
STOP and Read the Room

Space	Time	Objects	People
Navigate the Room	Get on the Timeline	Organization/Objects	Read the Person: ROLE

Space — Navigate the Room
- ❑ Kind of space?
- ❑ What's going on?
- ❑ Is it Expected or Unexpected?
- ❑ Pathways used to Navigate to different areas within the space?
- ❑ Is there a shift between wide angle lens of the space(Whole), the zones (parts) and the details?

Time — Get on the Timeline
- ❑ Time of day
- ❑ Kind of time?
- ❑ **What is happening at this Moment** in Time
- ❑ Sequence of actions
- ❑ Pace
- ❑ What is coming up?
- ➢ Predictable?

Objects — Organization/Objects
- ❑ Organization of The Space: Whole-Parts
- ❑ How is that part organized?
- ❑ Location of objects: In sight? Out of sight?
- ❑ Purpose/Priority of objects?
- ❑ Necessity & Relevancy

People — Read the Person: ROLE
- ❑ Mood
- ❑ Pace
- ❑ Body Language
- ❑ Appearance

STOP

The Thinking Process that Allows students to Stop and direct themselves in a given situation

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Library
Librarian Zone
Easy Reader Books
Librarian
Fact Books
Earth Lesson Globe
Students Seated on the Rug
Student Zone

Transition: STOP and Read the Room

Space
Time
Objects
People

Situational Awareness/Intelligence:
STOP and Read the Room

Space	**Time**	**Objects**	**People**
Navigate the Room	**Get on the Timeline**	**Organization/Objects**	**Read the Person: ROLE**

Space

- ❑ Kind of space?
- ❑ What's going on?
- ❑ Is it Expected or Unexpected?
- ❑ Pathways used to Navigate to different areas within the space?
- ❑ Is there a shift between wide angle lens of the space(Whole), the zones (parts) and the details?

Time

- ❑ Time of day
- ❑ Kind of time?
- ❑ **What is happening at this Moment in Time**
- ❑ Sequence of actions
- ❑ Pace
- ❑ What is coming up?
- ➤ Predictable?

Objects

- ❑ Organization of The Space: Whole-Parts
- ❑ How is that part organized?
- ❑ **Location of objects:** In sight? Out of sight?
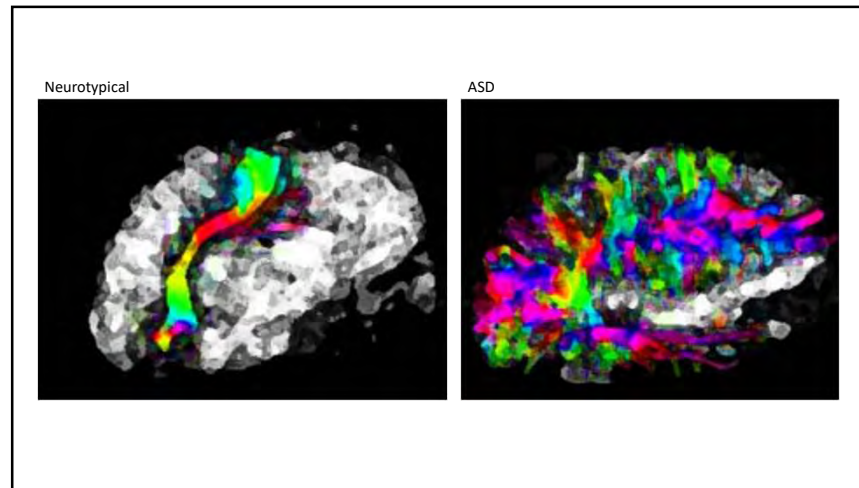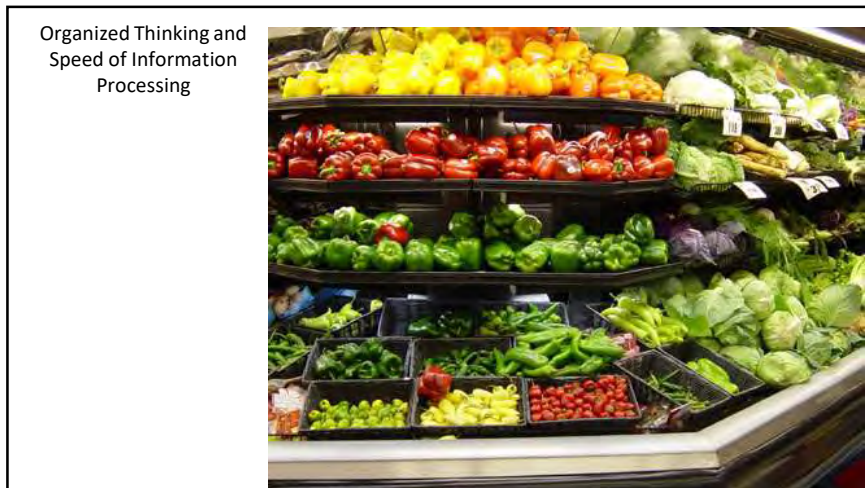- ❑ Purpose/Priority of objects?
- ❑ Necessity & Relevancy

People

- ❑ Face
- ❑ Body
- ❑ Appearance
- ❑ Mood
- ❑ Pace
- ❑ Saying-Tone

Any action that allows students to **STOP** and direct themselves

🕐 Over Time

Organized Thinking and Speed of Information Processing

Neurotypical   ASD

Space
Navigate the Room

☐ Pathways used to Navigate to different areas within the space?
☐ Is there a shift between wide angle lens of the space(Whole), the zones (parts) and the details?

Objects
Organization

People
Role

Time
Get on the Timeline

☐ Kind of time?
☐ **What is happening at this Moment in Time**
☐ Sequence of actions
☐ Pace

Executive Function Situational Awareness Observation Tool

1- Present; 0 – Not Present;   NA – Not Observed|Applicable

Space	**T**ime	**O**bjects	**P**eople
❑ **Observes:** ❑ Observes the function and organization of the space for the situation ❑ Observes from a 'wide' to a 'narrow' angle	❑ **Observes:** Observes/Aware of the kind of time available	❑ **Observes:** ❑ Observes/aware of required materials ❑ Observes organization of materials within the space	❑ **Observes:** Observes/aware of role for the given situation ❑ Own ❑ Other's Roles
❑ **Orients | Decides** ❑ Reads the Room – Knows what is going on	❑ **Orients | Decides** ❑ Knows the Time ❑ Uses if-then thinking to envision future time, ❑ Understands expected activity in specific time ❑ Creates time markers	❑ **Orients | Decides** ❑ Uses if-then thinking to infer objects needed	❑ **Orients | Decides** ❑ Recognizes the key purpose of action and communication exchanges
❑ **Acts** ❑ Navigates the space efficiently ❑ Is where they need to be	❑ **Acts** ❑ Has a sequence of actions ❑ Initiates Independently ❑ Appropriate Pace ❑ Attends to and responds to time markers	❑ **Acts** ❑ Gathers all the expected materials/ objects (both in sight and out of sight)for the given situations	❑ **Acts** Regulates actions based on awareness of role ❑ To verbal prompts ❑ To nonverbal prompts
❑ **Flexibility** ❑ Can shift and transition between spaces	❑ **Flexibility:** ❑ Can shift actions in response to time markers ❑ Can Shift Pace when required ❑ Anticipates what is coming up	❑ **Flexibility** ❑ If objects are unavailable problem solves a 'same but different' substitution ❑ Can shift and transition between spaces with required objects	❑ **Flexibility** ❑ Makes inferences about communication and responds accordingly based on communication from others
Comments:	**Comments:**	**Comments:**	**Comments:**

9:55	His snack is out. He is chatting with peers but not eating. Instead he is rolling his water bottle on the table. Other kids are eating. He has not opened his yogurt
9:58	Peer asks Andrew "Do you put gel in your hair?" Andrew: "No my hair is normally like that. My hair is always like this." Peer: "I don't need to use gel. Did you see that Axe commercial with the guy on the boat?" The other kids have moved on to a new topic of conversation and Andrew is still talking about his hair. His bag of chips is out but he had not opened it and he has not started to eat his snack
10:00	Opens his yogurt. Most kids are more than ¾ done with snack. Teacher: "we are going to move on" Andrew calls out: "But I just got back!" (He had been out of the classroom prior to the snack period) Teacher: "As you finish your snack I will pass out your quiz. Some could still use improvements." Andrew call out again "But I just started!" Poor motor coordination to pour granola on the yogurt, it spills all over the table. He does not clean it up. The teacher begins to instruct the class the order which she wants the students to staple the papers she is returning. The whole class is attending but Andrew is delayed to turn around and watch her and see what the expectations are. Teacher: "You will get these papers back, staple them and then get it signed tonight and put in your homework folder. When you are done with snack please pick your trash up"
10:02	Andrew is just starting to eat his yogurt. Only 5 of 27 other peers have a snack left out. The teacher passes out the test and papers. As she does she asks "How do convection currents impact the weather? If you answered 'wind' I took off points because you needed to answer HOW it affected weather" The teacher then asks the class "What do clouds carry?" Students are answering out. Andrew is not attending. He is slowly eating his yogurt and staring out the windowt. The teacher reminds the class: "Look your quiz over and put it in your homework folder and get it signed tonight." As he receives his quiz, Andrew stuffs it into his desk. All the other students have put the quiz in their homework folders. He still has his whole snack out
10:06	Teacher: "Finish putting lunch boxes back and get your text books" His snack is still out and he is eating yogurt Teacher: "We are on page 46". He does not have a text book on his desk. He takes out his chips and opens the bag. He then gets up to throw away the trash and gets a napkin to wipe yogurt of his shoe. Teacher: "Who can tell me what a jet stream is?" Kids excitedly raise their hands. Andrew does not raise his hand. His snack bag is still on his table. All the other students have a text book on the table
10:15	He is not attending to the teacher and his back is to her. He finally finishes his drink and puts it in his lunch box and closes it and stands and puts his box back on counter in the back of the room then sits down. He still has no text book.

David, 10th Grade. Observed in Academic Support Block

11:20am	David enters the Classroom and finds a seat at the table.
11:25am	The academic support teacher walks around the room and talks with each student to determine their plan. Students show the teacher what they are working on for that block. David sat with his books closed while texting on his phone. He laughs quietly to himself.
11:30 am	When the teacher approaches David he opens his book and gestures to it. When the teacher walked away he returned to texting.
11:50am	Five minutes before transition, David pulled his book closer to him and opened his notebook. He wrote down 2 vocabulary words in his notebook The teacher announced that it was time to transition. David complains, "Oh man! I didn't have enough time to finish my homework that's due next block!"

Science Class 1 Teacher and 25 Students

1:05pm	Many students have an agenda book on their desk, a spiral notebook and a black composition book. David has just put his materials in the metal basket under his chair. The teacher announces that at the end of the week there will be a double quiz and that this is in preparation for the major text next week. As he says this the teacher gestures to the whiteboard where the assignment to "Study for upcoming quiz and test" is written. Most students write the homework down in the agenda book or in their spiral notebook. A few write 'study' on their hands and at least 6 students use their phone to take a picture of the whiteboard. David despite looking attentive to the teacher just sits at his desk.
1:15pm	The teacher reviews the features of Charles's Law about volume and temperature of gases. He writes the formula on the board. Most students are copying down the formula. David takes his lab notebook out. Not his spiral notebook for notetaking and while he listens attentively he does not take notes. The teacher demonstrates what happens to gases when the temperature increases. David turns to socialize with the peer seated next to him. This student smiles but is visibly uncomfortable, recognizing that he might get in trouble for talking and not listening. The students are instructed to gather a hot plate, a beaker of water and a can of Pepsi. David is the last student to stand up from his desk. He goes to the back of the class and gets a hot plate. He returns to a lab table area and stands there and waits. His peers bring over the rest of the materials and look frustrated that David does not have his lab notebook out and that they have to wait for him to get it.

1:30pm	The lab complete, the students begin to return materials to where they belong and place the dirty materials in the sink. David just takes his lab notebook and returns to his desk and texts underneath the desk. His lab partners have returned all of the lab materials for him. As students sit at their desks they are given 15 minutes to write down in their lab reports the list of materials they used and a bullet list of their observations. Most students finish writing in their lab notebooks under 10 minutes. David just sits and looks at his phone. (Of note, when he got home that night he complained to his parents that he "hated science class" because they never had enough time to finish their work and the teacher expected them to do hours of homework)

1:45pm	At the end of the class the teacher writes on the board:
	        Quiz Review:
	        Do 9.1 and 9.2
	        Read and take notes: answer Q # 9.1, 9.2, 9.3, 9.4 and 9.5
	
	David writes on the front of a folder: 9.1 and 9.2

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Comments:	**Comments:**	**Comments:**	**Comments:**

360 Thinking: Questionnaire for Executive Function Skills

For each of the situational awareness skills below, rate how true the experience feels for you on the scales provided. Do you notice if there are more 'true' items in one or more skill area? If so, it might be helpful to create a goal to improve that area. Try using this planner to record steps in working towards that goal.

Space	Time	Objects	People
I have difficulties finding anything I need in my back pack, desk or locker. Not True ———————— Very True	I have a hard time getting started on assignments and projects. Not True ———————— Very True	I leave materials I need at home or school and need to go back to get them. Not True ———————— Very True	I like to do group projects on my own or let other students lead the project. Not True ———————— Very True
Keeping my locker neat is not a priority or something I have time for. Not True ———————— Very True	I hand in assignments after the due date. Not True ———————— Very True	I don't remember the materials or things I need to for classes or activities. Not True ———————— Very True	I can get frustrated or angry with school or home work and its hard to focus and get it done. Not True ———————— Very True
I feel like I have to go "all over" the house to get things I need before leaving for school or activities/sports. Not True ———————— Very True	I realize once I get started on an assignment that it's going to take more time than I thought. Not True ———————— Very True	I have difficulties organizing and finding papers I need for studying. Not True ———————— Very True	I can have difficulties "over focusing" on a preferred task and shifting my attention to another priority. Sometimes I do not notice that my peers/teacher/parent have moved on to something else. Not True ———————— Very True
I am overwhelmed or unmotivated to clean my room. Its hard to know where to start. Not True ———————— Very True	My parents or teachers have to give me lots of reminders to get things done on time. Not True ———————— Very True	I have a hard time tracking my stuff and I lose my things like sweatshirts, jackets, lunch containers, notebooks, etc. Not True ———————— Very True	I don't think I have to be organized or more organized, but my parents and teachers think I do. Not True ———————— Very True
When I clean up, I just take piles of stuff and put them in random places. Not True ———————— Very True	I don't realize how much time has passed when I'm focused on a task like reading or playing video games. Not True ———————— Very True	It is hard to organize my materials and keep things neat. Not True ———————— Very True	I avoid talking to my teachers if I am having difficulties with an assignment. Not True ———————— Very True
Sometimes when I am looking for something it is "in front of my face" but I do not easily see it. Not True ———————— Very True	I am late or almost late for the bus, my ride or school . Not True ———————— Very True	I lose points for careless mistakes or sloppy work on my school work. Not True ———————— Very True	I am easily distracted by friends or social media when doing work. Not True ———————— Very True
I don't like putting things away because it can be harder to find what I need later. Not True ———————— Very True	I often run out of time when I am trying to finish a long term project. Not True ———————— Very True	I get distracted by other items around me when I'm trying to get tasks or assignments done. Not True ———————— Very True	I can feel surprised by grades I receive or I'm not sure what the teacher wanted. Not True ———————— Very True

Situational Intelligence

- An early aspect of executive function skills is situational intelligence (reading the room) –
- This is recognizing zones in the room – space, time, objects, people – in a self directed way.
- It is self-directed, because the student is answering
  - What do I need to do?
  - What is expected of me in this setting?
- It involves self-directed observation
  - What's happening now?
  - What matters now?
- It is "IF … then" thinking.
  - **if** this is what it looks like, **then** what do I need to do?

The Situational Intelligence Shifts
from Now to Next = Self Regulation

Specific Type of Regulation called:
Locomotion Regulatory Mode – Locomotors
- Movement from state to state without distraction
- is a significant predictor of academic success
- Lower in individuals who are easily 'bored'

PETER VERMEULEN, PHD

AUTISM AS
CONTEXT
BLINDNESS

FOREWORD BY BRENDA SMITH MYLES, PHD

Contextual Processing

What is a nice birthday present for a good friend?

What do you do when the bell rings?

What do you put in your suitcase when you go traveling?

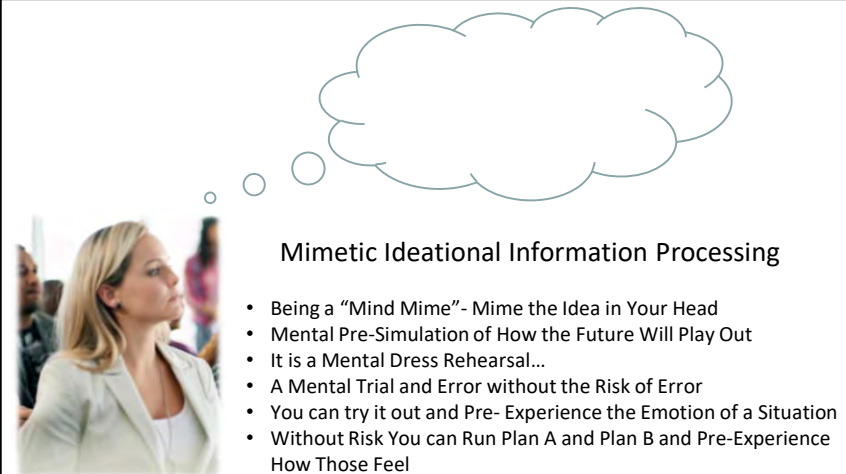
Situational Awareness + Nonverbal Working Memory

Mimetic-Ideational Information Processing
(mental trial and error simulation)

"I will get started on this 5 paragraph essay on The Outsiders now because i have music lessons and won't have enough time later tonight to do the whole thing.. I can probably get through the intro and thesis. Let's see.. sunsets are important...If I can find 3 quotes before I go, then it will be easier to get started on writing when I get back."

If.....Then

Mimetic Ideational Information Processing

- Being a "Mind Mime"- Mime the Idea in Your Head
- Mental Pre-Simulation of How the Future Will Play Out
- It is a Mental Dress Rehearsal...
- A Mental Trial and Error without the Risk of Error
- You can try it out and Pre- Experience the Emotion of a Situation
- Without Risk You can Run Plan A and Plan B and Pre-Experience How Those Feel

Be a Future Thinker: "Mind **MIME iT**"

M   Future Scene Thinking: **M**ake an Image: **STOP** What will it look like?

I   Episodic Future Thinking: What do **I** Look like? Self Projection into the Future

M   Mental Time Travel (Temporal - Spatial): How am I **M**oving to achieve this?

E   The Future **E**motion/**E**nergy: How will I f**EE**l? Emotional Physiological State

i   **I**f .....then   **I**mplementation **I**ntention

T   Self **T**alk   *It is 'experiencing the self in time' and talking yourself through that experience so you are efficient and successful*

90% of the Time
Task Planning Happens in a
Different Space from
Where you Execute the Plan

Science Zone

Science Journal

Worksheet

**Develop the Extended Time and Space Horizon
How Far Into the Future Can You See?
Both Time and Space**

Temporal – Spatial
Capacity/Window

**Development of the Time Horizon
How Far into the Future can they Anticipate?**
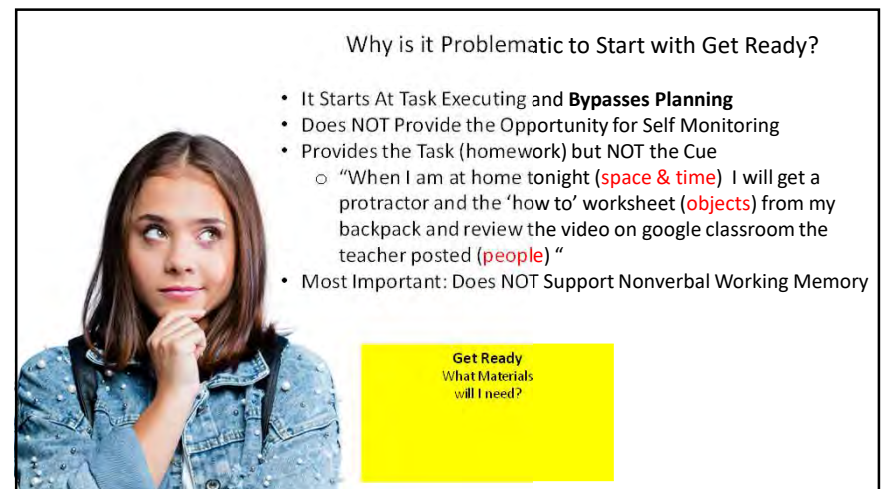
2 Years Old: *NOW*
3-5 Years Old: 5-20 Min
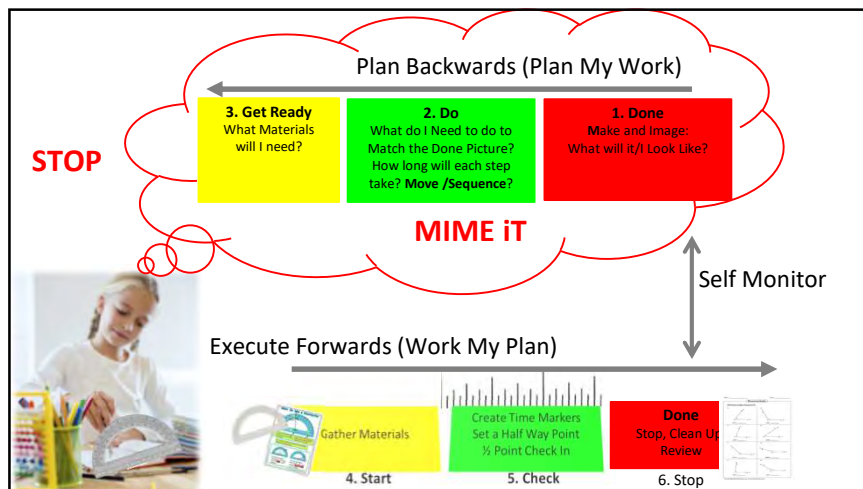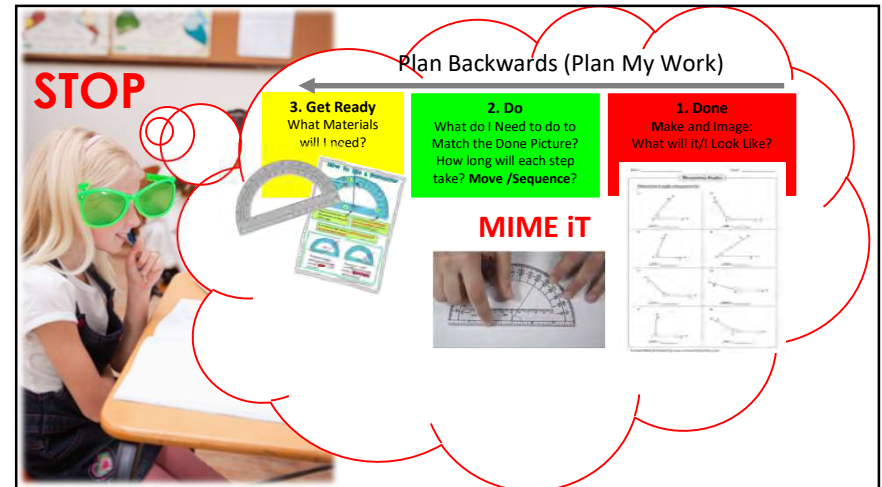K- 2nd Grade: Several Hours
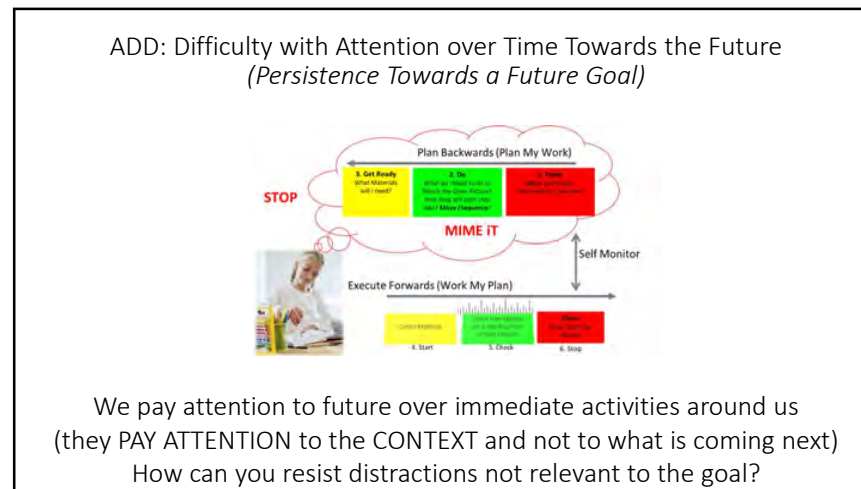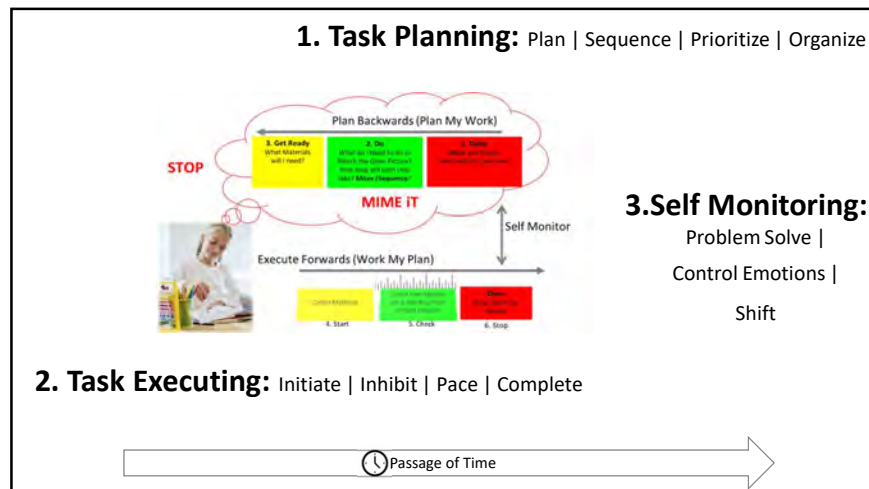3rd -6th Grade: 8-12 Hours
6th-12th Grade Years : 2-3 Days
17-23 Years Old : 2-3 Weeks
23-35 Years Old: 3-5 Weeks

Temporal – Spatial
Capacity/Window
(Event Horizon)

ADHD→EFDD: Executive Function Developmental Delay
- Typically of the Spatial Temporal Window
Average of a 3 to 3.5 year delay

1. Task Planning: Plan | Sequence | Prioritize | Organize

3.Self Monitoring:
Problem Solve |
Control Emotions |
Shift

2. Task Executing: Initiate | Inhibit | Pace | Complete

Passage of Time

ADD: Difficulty with Attention over Time Towards the Future
(Persistence Towards a Future Goal)

We pay attention to future over immediate activities around us
(they PAY ATTENTION to the CONTEXT and not to what is coming next)
How can you resist distractions not relevant to the goal?

Goal Reengagement is a Function of Working Memory
Remembering what we are doing is markedly inefficient in ADD

ADD Impulsivity and Self Regulation
Dr Russell Barkley

Motor Inhibition: restless

Verbal Inhibition: excessive talking, interrupting

Cognitive impulsivity: mind wandering, cannot suppress task irrelevant thoughts, rapid decision making (no thought to consequence)

Motivational Impulsivity: prefer immediate small rewards in the moment rather than defer gratification. Want immediate small rewards over longer term goals

Emotional impulsivity: Reactions to events around them are immediate and quick. Quick reaction to events around them and is an emotion (not a mood) of short duration, situation specific and provoked

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Executive Function Skills Across the Day

- Being Ready for Class
- Morning/Departing Routines
- Transitions within and between classes
- Managing Papers and Materials
- Completing work within time frames
- Homework
  - Accurately Record
  - Know what to do
  - Have the Required Materials
  - Turn it In
- Study for Exams
- Complete multi-day/long term projects

Anxiety

Working Memory

Must Read Articles!

20 Tips to Help De-escalate Interactions With Anxious or Defiant Students by Katrina Schwartz   KQED News, Mindshift Article
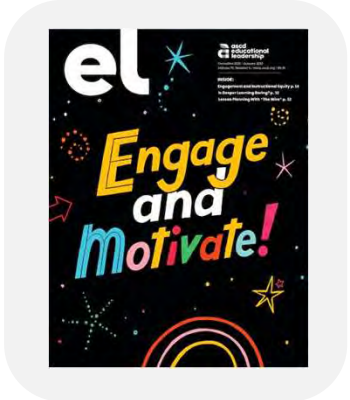
Helping Anxious Students Move Forward By Jessica Minahan www.ascd.org

What Can Teachers Do to
Engage Anxious Students?

https://bit.ly/3mRRTaa

The Behavior Code by Jessica Minnahan and Nancy Rappaport, MD

All Behavior is a Form of Communication

- Attention

- Escape/Avoid

- Gain a Tangible Object

- Gain Sensory Satisfaction

Key Features of Executive Function

1.**Working memory and recall** (holding facts in mind while manipulating information; accessing facts stored in long-term memory; includes an impaired sense of time.)
2.**Activation, arousal, and effort** (getting started; paying attention; finishing work)
3.**Controlling emotions** (ability to tolerate frustration; thinking before acting or speaking)
4.**Internalizing language** (using "self-talk implementation intentions" to control one's behavior and direct future actions)
5.**Taking an issue apart, analyzing the pieces, reconstituting and organizing it into new ideas** (complex problem solving).
6.**Shifting, inhibiting** (changing activities, stopping existing activity, stopping and thinking before acting or speaking)
7.**Organizing/planning ahead** (organizing time, projects, materials, and possessions)
8.**Monitoring** (self-monitoring and prompting)

Developing Strong EF Skills

Repeatedly practice:
Self-monitoring, self-**STOP**ping, **see**ing the future, **say**ing the future, **feel**ing the future, and **play**ing with the future so as to effectively "plan and go" toward that future. (Barkley 2012)

Barkley, Russell A. Executive Functions: What They Are, How They Work, and Why They Evolved. New York: Guilford, 2012.

Executive Function Skills Checklist

Cleaning

Tidy a space (reading corner, playroom) (5-7years old)

    Clean a Room (8-11years old)

        Develop and maintain a system of organization/cleaning (12-14years old)

            Manage Laundry, Keep Dorm/Apartment clean, deep clean at reasonable intervals   EF Age: ☐

Errands

Simple: get your shoes from the bathroom (3-4 years)

    2-3 step direction put the placement on the table and then get the napkins (5-7 years)

        With a time delay – to and from school w/out reminders (8-11years)

            Follow complex school schedule & multiple transitions with teachers and classrooms (12-14 years)

                Independently plan and follow school/work and leisure activities, drive own car   EF Age: ☐

Self-regulation

Inhibit unsafe or inappropriate behaviors (3-4 years)

    Inhibit behaviors; follow safety rules, use appropriate language (e.g. not swearing or using bathroom language when not appropriate), raise hand before speaking in class, and keep hands to self (5-7 years)

    Inhibit/self-regulate behaviors; maintain composure when teacher is out of the classroom; inhibit temper tantrums and bad manners(8-11 years)

    Inhibit rule breaking in the absence of visible authority (12-14 years)

    Avoid reckless or risky behaviors (e.g. use of illegal substances, sexual acting out, shoplifting, or vandalism) (high school on)   EF Age: ☐

Executive Function Skills Checklist

Time

Understand sequence, past/present/future tense, causality (3-7 years)

Independently remember changes in daily schedule including different after school activities (8-11 years)

Follow complex school schedule involving multiple transitions with teachers and classrooms (12-14 years)

Plan time effectively, including after school activities, homework, family responsibilities (12-14 years)

Establish and refine a long-term goal and make plans for meeting that goal; collegiate or other vocational goals. Independently organize leisure time activities, including obtaining employment or pursuing recreational activities during the summer (high school)

EF Age:

Projects/Exams

Plan simple projects: e.g. book report: select book, read book, write report (8-11 years)

Plan and carry out long-term projects, including tasks to be accomplished and a reasonable timeline to follow (12-14 years)

Create, plan and follow timelines for long-term projects, tests, after school activities, family responsibilities

Study for tests, create and maintain learned material for midterms/finals (high school)

EF Age:

Papers

Bring papers to and from school (5-7 years)

Bring papers, books and assignments to and from school (8-11 years)

Track belongings when away from home

Appropriately use a system for organizing schoolwork (12-14 years and beyond)

EF Age:

*Adapted From: Dawson, P. and Guar, R. Executive Skills in Children and Adolescents. New York: The Guilford, 2004

Executive Function Skills Checklist

Homework

Complete -20 min max (5-7 years)

Complete – 1 hour max without assistance (8-11 years)

Manage schoolwork effectively on a day-to-day basis, including completing and handing in assignments on time – 2 hours (middle through high school)

Establish and refine a long-term goal and make plans for meeting that goal; collegiate or other vocational goals (high school)

EF Age: ☐

Work

Simple chore – self care-brush teeth (3-4 years)

Simple chore/self help – make bed, make a bowl of cereal (5-7 years)

Chores 10-30 min in duration; set the table, vacuuming (8-11 years)

Help out with chores around the home, including both daily responsibilities and occasional tasks that may take 60-90 minutes to complete; emptying dishwasher, raking leaves, shoveling snow etc. (12-14 years)

Safely babysit younger siblings (12-14 years)

Part time work: house sit, dog walk, mow lawns Independently obtain employment and or work during the summer (late middle and high school)

EF Age: ☐

Money

How to spend (5-7 years)

Save money for desired objects and plan how to earn money (8-11 years)

EF Age: ☐
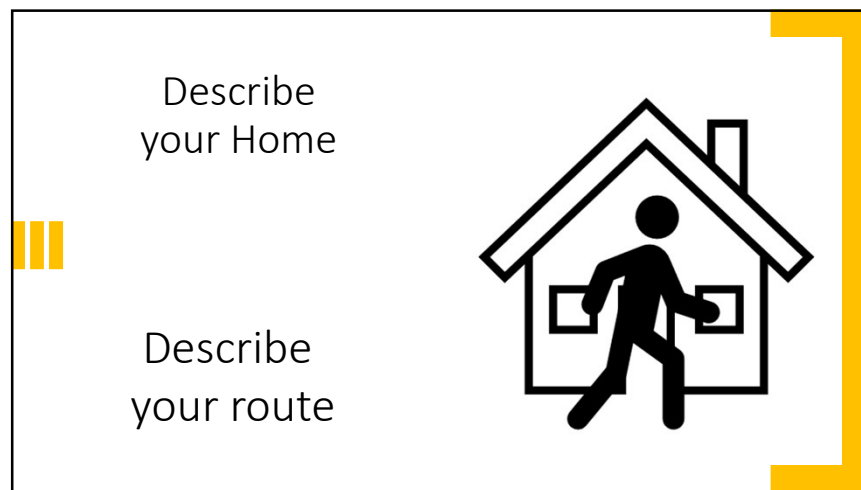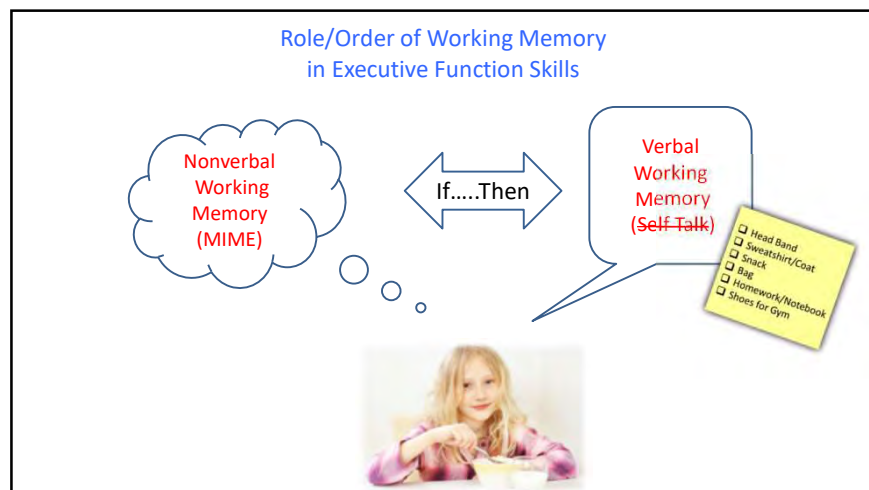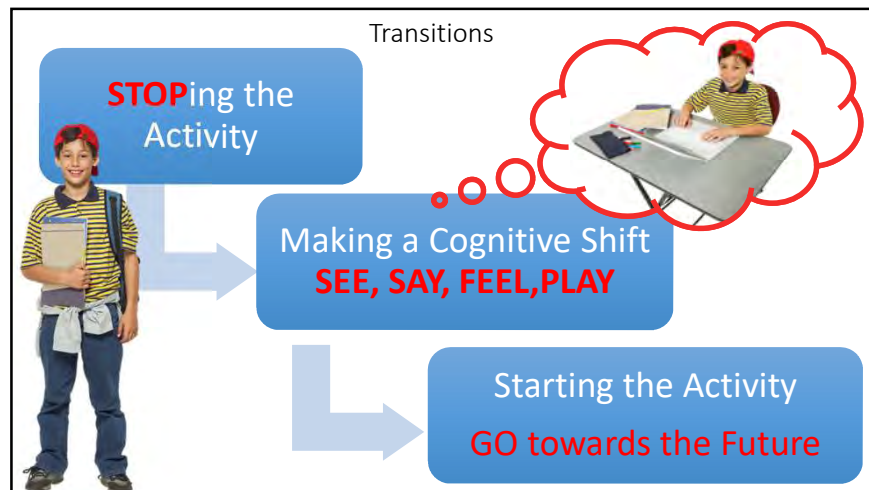
Save money to meet a financial obligation (college savings/spending money, car payment/insurance, etc.) (middle and high school)
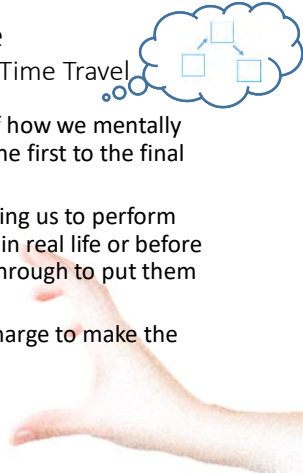
Chronological Age ☐   Average EF Age: ☐

*Adapted From: Dawson, P. and Guar, R. Executive Skills in Children and Adolescents. New York: The Guilford, 2004

22

Representational Co-thought Gesture
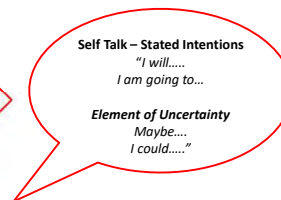### We Gesture to Pre- Experience Mental Spatial Time Travel

- Co thought gestures are really just an outgrowth of how we mentally simulate planning (performing actions to go from the first to the final step)
- Gestures give life to our mental scratch pads, allowing us to perform actions with our hands before we have to do them in real life or before we have even thought these activities all the way through to put them into words
- Gesture helps infuse planning with an emotional charge to make the memory for it more enduring

Be a Future Thinker: "Mind **MIME iT**"

MIME

feel

If....then

Self Talk – Stated Intentions
"I will.....
I am going to...

Element of Uncertainty
Maybe....
I could....."

Gesture enables us to FEEL or 'pre-experience' the mental spatial time travel and actions of the future so we can 'experience the self in time' and then talk ourself through that experience to be efficient and successful

The Development of
Executive Function Skills?

The Development of
Executive Function Skills

"Play with electronic toys is associated with decreased quality of language input compared with play with books and traditional toys"
Carol Westby

- Children vocalize less
- Fewer conversational turns
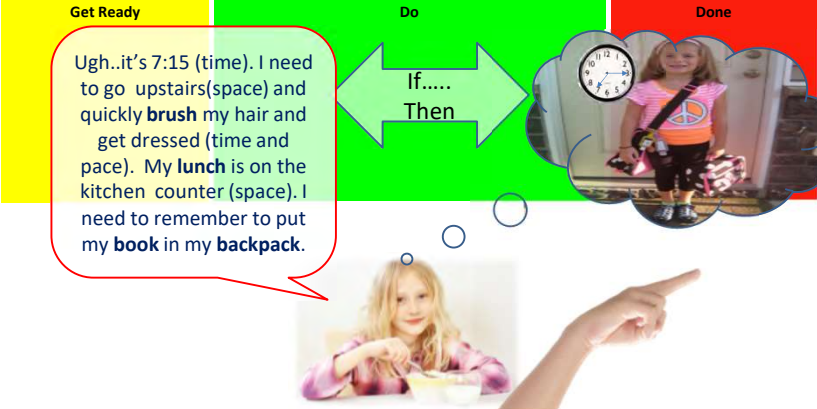- Fewer production of content specific words

Interactive vs Character Toys

- Play was Purely Functional
  - Push the buttons
  - Switch on and Off
  - No attention to accessories
  - Shoved the food down the bird's throat: no pretend feeding
- No sense the duck was hungry and "I am feeding it"
- Never took the role of the duck
  - No statement on behalf of the duck
    - Only talked about the toy's actions (It's off)
- No sign of imagination, imaginary situations
- No Play storylines unless facilitated by an adult

Smimova, E. O. (2011). Character toys as psychological tools. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 19, 35-43.

Role/Order of Working Memory in Executive Function Skills

Get Ready	Do	Done

Ugh..it's 7:15 (time). I need to go upstairs(space) and quickly **brush** my hair and get dressed (time and pace). My **lunch** is on the kitchen counter (space). I need to remember to put my **book** in my **backpack**.

If.....
Then

"Get Ready for School!
Show and Tell Me Your Plan!"

Creating Future Mind MIME skill
vs Rote Reading of the Required Objects

"Head to Toe!"

☐ Head Band
☐ Sweatshirt/ Coat
☐ Snack
☐ Bag
☐ Homework / Notebook
☐ Shoes for Gym

Use Photographs to Develop NonVerbal Working Memory for Goal Directed Future Thinking

Start with the Done to:
- Teach "Thinking in Pictures" to Increase Working Memory
- Develop Whole to Part to Details Thinking Teach Flexible Thinking
- Develops Gesture for Mental Spatial Time Travel
- Develops Stated Intentions: I will, I am going to, Maybe, I could
- Sensitivity to delay: decreases impulsiveness

"Get Ready for School! Show & Tell Me Your Plan!"

To Improve Organization Use Feature Blocking: Add "Block and Box" to "What will it Look Like"

Be a Feature Teacher!

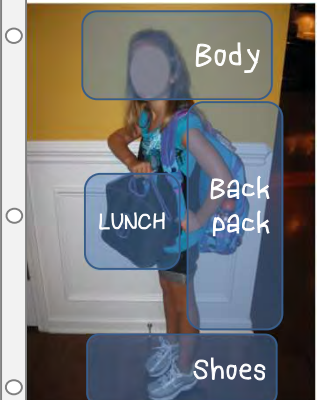Whole → Parts (features) → Details

---

Make an Image - What will I look Like?
"Tell me your Plan to Match the Picture!"

Block and Box to Increase Processing Speed
Laminate or Put in a Plastic Sleeve Protector
to Keep it Dynamic!

Same but Different!
Develops Cognitive Flexibility

Teach "Same but Different" to Develop Cognitive Flexibility & Generalize the Routine
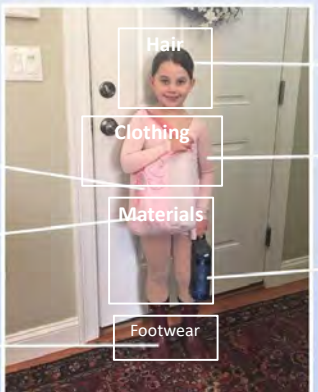
"We have to go!
Are you ready for _____?"

Body

LUNCH

Back pack

Shoes

Same but Different

• Cold Day

• Recess

• Bedtime

• Basketball

Hair/Body

Clothing Outerwear

Pants/Clothing

Ready for Dance... Match the Picture

Hair

Clothing

Materials

Footwear

Dance bag

Ballet shoes

Shoes
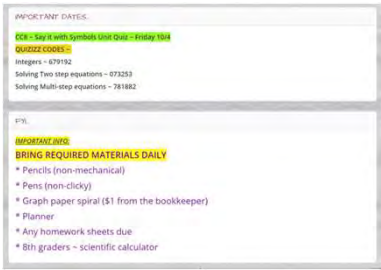
Hair pulled back

leotard

Water bottle
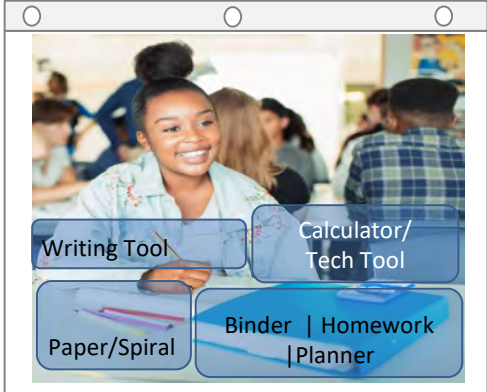
A Special thank you to Jessica Padula, M.S., CCC/SLP
Speech and Language Specialties Shrewsbury

Use Feature blocking to Develop Flexible Thinking: *Show and Tell* Me Your Plan

IMPORTANT DATES.
CCR – Say it with Symbols Unit Quiz – Friday 10/4
QUIZIZZ CODES –
Integers – 679192
Solving Two step equations – 073253
Solving Multi-step equations – 781882

IMPORTANT INFO:
BRING REQUIRED MATERIALS DAILY
* Pencils (non-mechanical)
* Pens (non-clicky)
* Graph paper spiral ($1 from the bookkeeper)
* Planner
* Any homework sheets due
* 8th graders ~ scientific calculator

Writing Tool

Calculator/Tech Tool

Paper/Spiral

Binder | Homework |Book
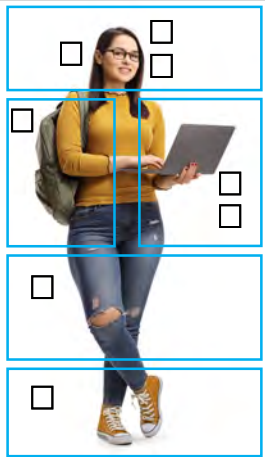
Use Feature Blocking to Develop "Same but Different"
Cognitive Flexibility and Novel Thinking

- Science
- English
- Math
- Music

Writing Tool

Calculator/
Tech Tool

Paper/Spiral

Binder | Homework
|Planner

Today:

Morning Routines

Executive Function Skills Across the Day
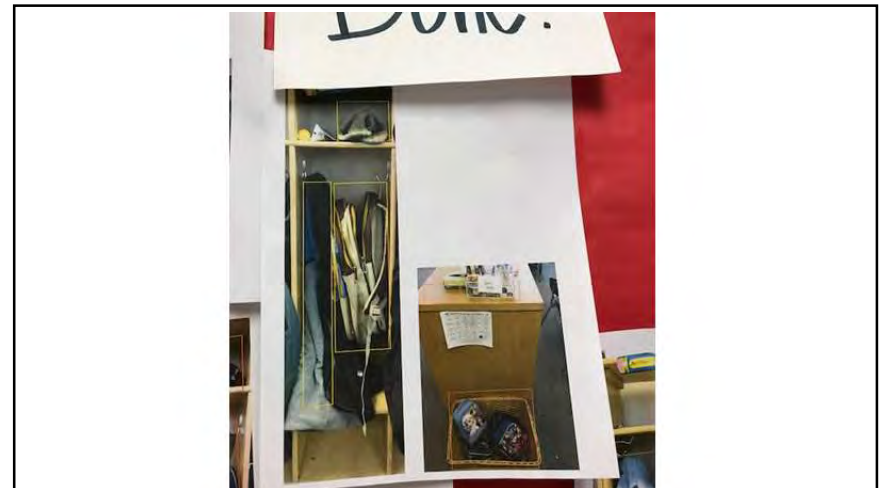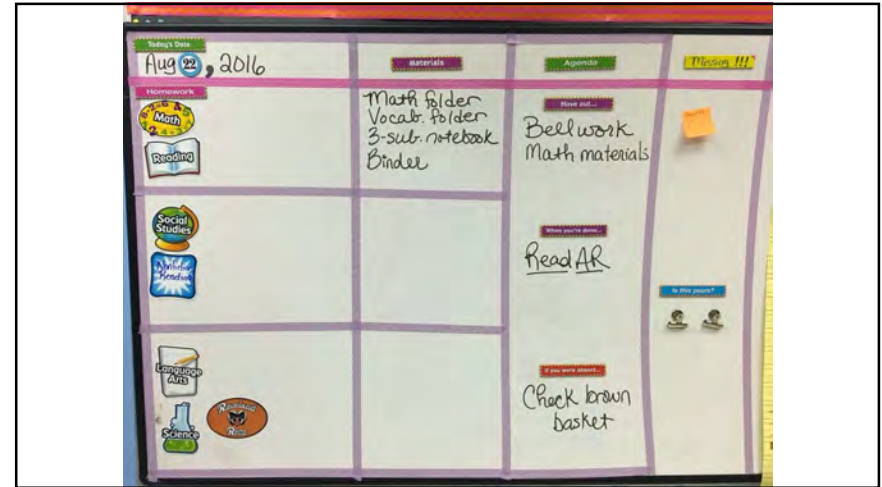
Use Feature blocking to Develop Flexible Thinking: *Show and Tell* Me Your Plan

September 17

Writing Tools

Paper/Spiral

Work Folder

Use Feature blocking to Develop Flexible Thinking: *Show and Tell* Me Your Plan

September 17

Writing Tool

Paper/Spiral

Work Folder

Safety Procedures

End of the Day
Executive Function Skills Across the Day

Make an Image - What will I look Like?
"Tell me your Plan to Match the Picture!"

Block and Box to Increase Processing Speed
Laminate or Put in a Plastic Sleeve Protector
to Keep it Dynamic!

Same but Different!
Develops Cognitive Flexibility

This is my desk.

pencil box
agenda
printing
duotangs
Religion book
pencil, eraser
unfinished folder
binders

Counters Wiped Clean
Store Materials
Towels Hung Up Sink Wiped Clean
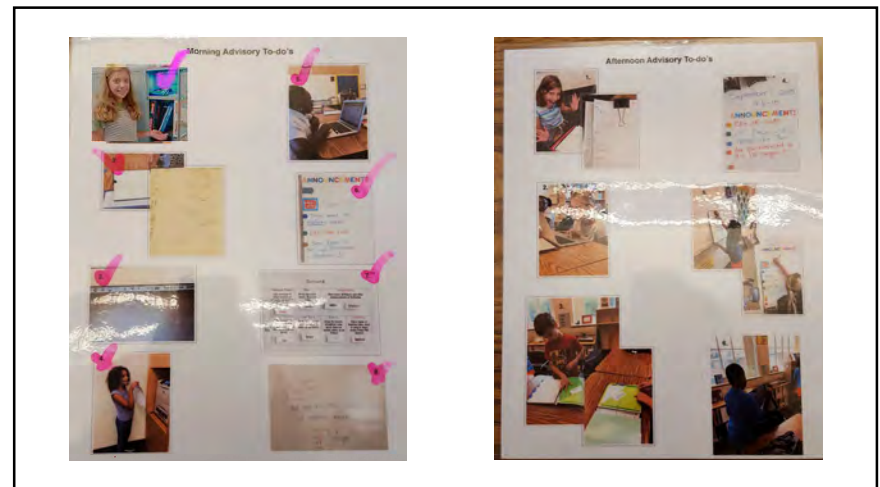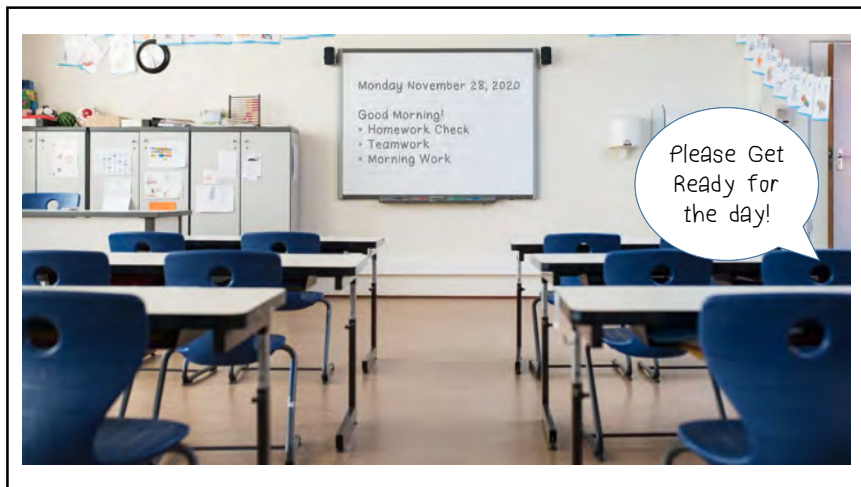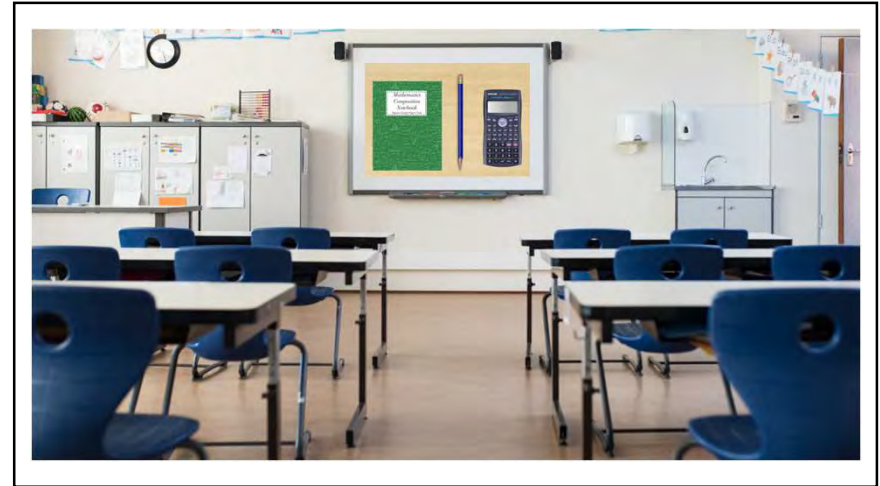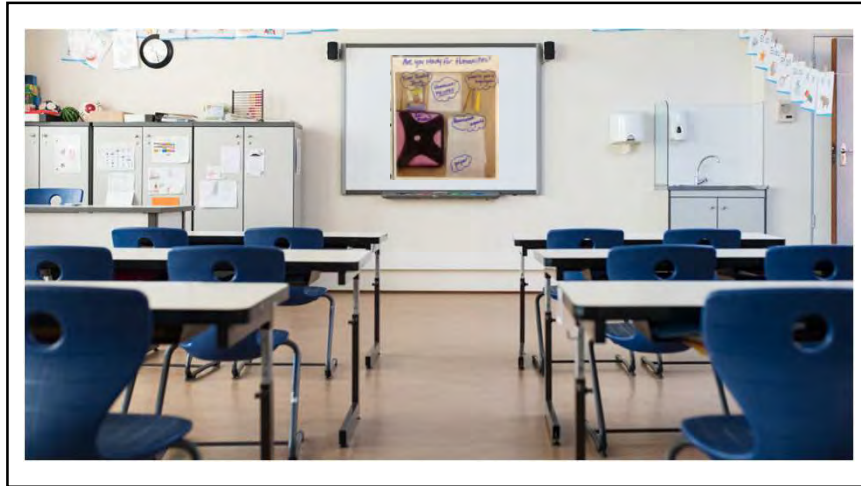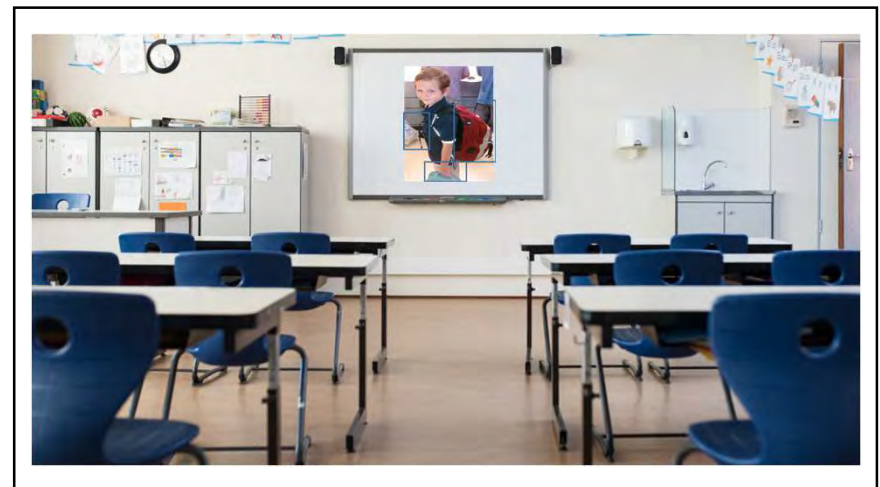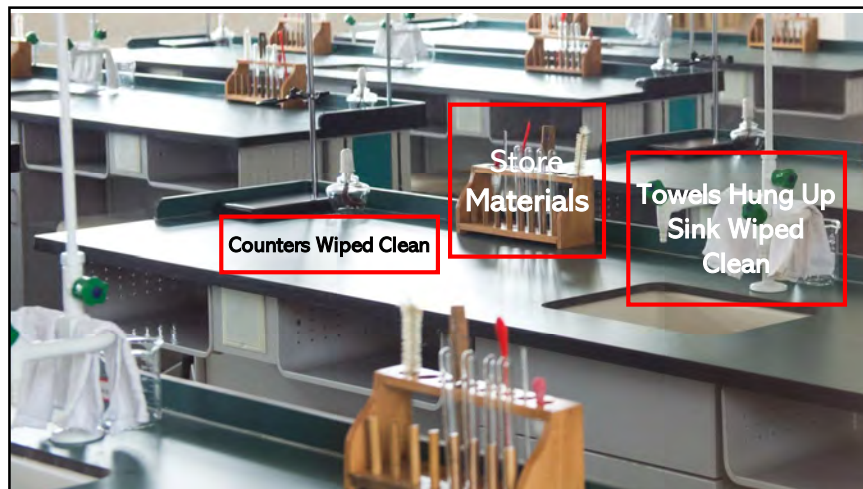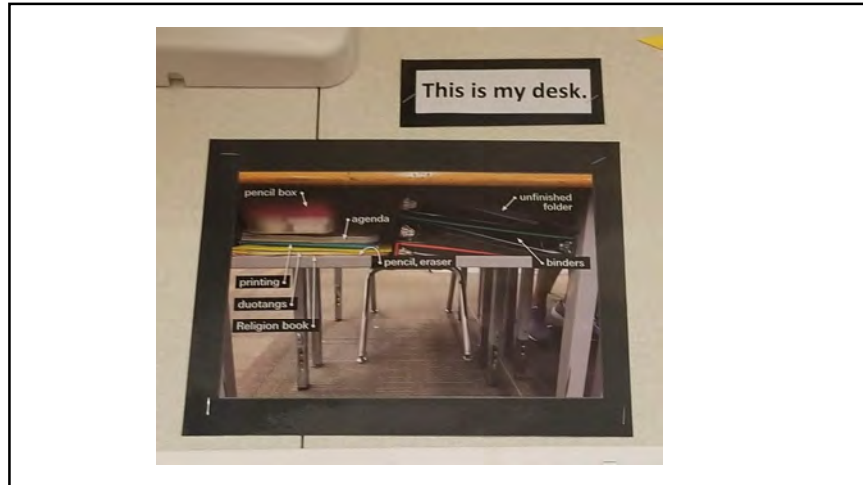
MANAGING MATERIALS:
START WITH THE END IN MIND WHAT WILL IT LOOK LIKE?

- Ask students to take the essential items of their back pack out and lay them on the floor
- Then have the student group like items together
- Have families take a photo of the items and print/email you the picture
- Laminate and create 'backpack' tags for students so they can 'match the picture' when it is time to go home!

Create Backpack Tags for Students

Pencil Bag   Agenda
Book   Binder

Managing Materials: Have Students Use Devices to Create an Album of Materials
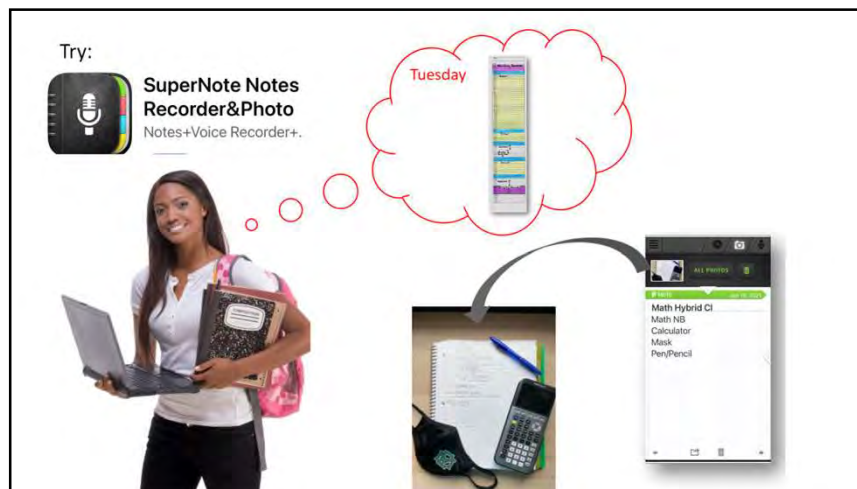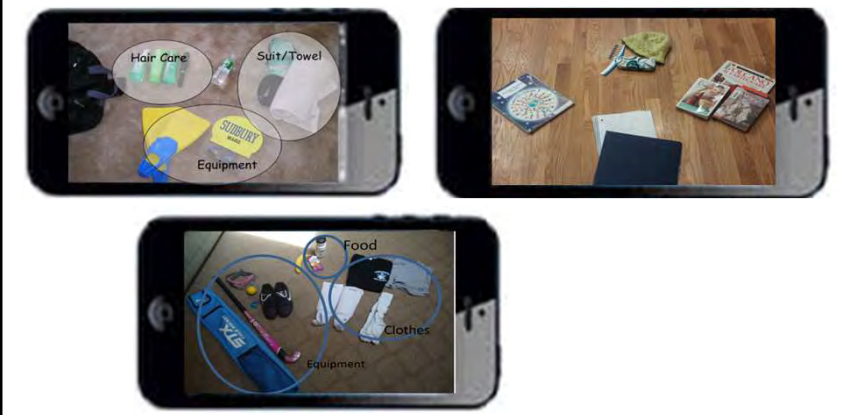
MANAGING MATERIALS:
START WITH THE END IN MIND WHAT WILL IT LOOK LIKE?

Teach the Process of
How to Make a Checklist
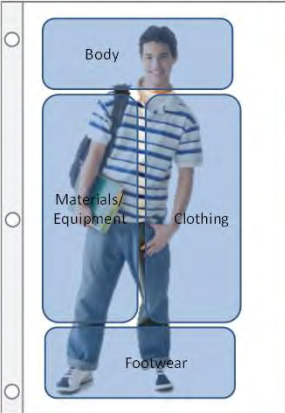
Stage 1: Include the MIME-Action Verb

- Science Class
- Baseball practice
- AP History Class
- Baseball Game
- Drivers Ed Class

Teach the Process of
How to Make a Checklist

Stage 2: Write the 'To-Do'

- Science Class
- Baseball practice
- AP History Class
- Baseball Game
- Drivers Ed Class

Recycler

Use your Language to Coach
the Student to Independently MIME
Job Talk!

Turn the Verb/Action word
into a Noun label (add –er)

By Turning the action into a "job" and give student a "job title":

- Develops Nonverbal Working Memory (What will I look like?)
- Creates Immediate Structure for the Child
- Accesses Procedural Memory   (How am I moving?)
- Limits Emotional Reactions
- Provides a sense of time boundaries with a visualized 'Done' for open ended tasks (Read versus "summarizer")

Give the Student Future Glasses!

Be an Executive Coach: Use declarative language and
be sure to include a visual word:
Look Like, See, Imagine, Picture, Visualize, Envision

DECLARATIVE LANGUAGE HANDBOOK

Using a Thoughtful Language Style to Help
Kids with Social Learning Challenges Feel
Competent, Connected, and Understood

Linda K. Murphy MS, CCC-SLP

Check out www.declarativelanguage.com

Job Talk:

Politicians wanted to increase voter turnout and turned to psychological research for help. It worked! Researchers framed voting as either a personal identity label (e.g. "be a voter") or as a simple behavior (e.g. "voting"). This change in phrasing to a personal identity label significantly increased interest in action and a substantially larger percentage of individuals voted! Research has shown that people want to feel like they are a part of something and take ownership of something rather than being told what to do.

Children are no different! Motivation to complete a task is increased by invoking one's sense of self. Subtly manipulating the *verb form* of a behavior ("Brush your teeth please") to feature a *noun label* (Annie is a toothbrusher!) creates an essential part of one's identity. In other words it creates confidence and a positive sense of self that this is "What I can do!" This subtle change in language can change an occasional behavior of helping around the house ("Please set the table.") into a child who has confidence in their permanent trait or skill (I am a tablesetter!). When packing for a ski trip, being asked to be a 'packer' is a positive thing and requires the child to imagine in their mind "what does a *packer* do? What tools will a *packer* need?". On the other hand just asking a child to "Please pack the car with your warm clothing, boots and poles." Just asks the child to do something, does not invoke their reasoning of what is required and likely does not fire them into action except perhaps to make excuses for why they can't! Using the declarative noun form (*clothes gatherer*) creates psychological essentialism and develops in children a positive attitude, a strong and stable sense of self and generalizes to how they perceive themselves and their essential role over time.

Sarah Ward, M.S., CCC/SLP and Kristen Jacobsen M.S.,CCC/SLP have translated this research into a simple trick to help our children to take ownership of and participate in various tasks. They advise to turn the child's task into a "job" and add "er" to the action that you are asking the child to do which gives them the "job title" such as "Washer", "Wiper", "Tooth brusher", "Listener", etc. Give it a try, it's amazing!

Declarative Job Talk (Noun Form)	Imperative Verb Form
Please be a handwasher!	Wash your hands.
Be a counter wiper!	Wipe the counter off.
Time to be a toothbrusher!	It is now time to go upstairs and brush your teeth.
You are getting ready to be a mathematician!	Please take out your homework and start your math.

Resources:

Bryan, C. J., G. M. Walton, T. Rogers, and C. S. Dweck. "Motivating Voter Turnout by Invoking the Self." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 108.31 (2011): 12653-2656.

Gelman, S. A., & Heyman, G. D. (1999). Carrot-eaters and creature-believers: The effects of lexicalization on children's inferences about social categories. Psychological Science, 10, 489-493

Heyman, G. "Talking about Success: Implications for Achievement Motivation." Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology 29.5 (2008): 361-70.

Verbal Mediators:
The Language of Executive Function
Edited by: Kristen Jacobsen & Sarah Ward, MS CCC-SLP

Declarative Language
Authored by: Linda Murphy

Why is Declarative Language so important in fostering Executive Function Skills?

1. **Inner Voice**: Self-narratives help students develop an inner voice. After the initial language spark is ignited, most of us then go on to develop our own voice that we use to share our thoughts, recap experiences, talk about what we are doing, and talk about what we are thinking. Most of us also then go on to create our own inner voice. This is an important by-product of our language learning. We use our inner voice to problem solve and plan. We remember what we have learned or noticed in the past, and apply it to the here and now. For example, imagine you are getting ready to go to work and you can't find your keys. Your inner voice may say something like, 'Hmmm…. Now when did I last see my keys? Where do I usually put them down? What jacket did I have on yesterday?... Maybe they're in the pocket." Your inner voice helps you think through the problem so you can get started on a plan of action to solve it. Children with Executive Functioning difficulties do not usually develop this inner voice to regulate their thoughts and actions on their own. Just as modeling was important when your child was learning to talk, thoughtful modeling now, in this regard, is equally important. So – talk out loud, think out loud, work through a problem, make predictions, ponder opportunities, consider possibilities, and reflect on past experiences when you are with your child. They will learn from your models, internalize the ideas, and begin to form their own inner voice.

2. **Perspective Taking:** Provide a window into another person's perspective. Some children with executive function challenges have difficulty taking perspective. Using declarative language to share your thoughts and feelings provides a student with a regular window into these communication exchanges in an inviting, nonthreatening way. We are providing them information that is critical in a social interaction that we know they may not pick up on their own. When we present declarative language in this way, we are not asking them to provide an answer that may be right or wrong. Rather, we are clueing them into social information and then allowing them to decide what to do with the information. By regularly using declarative language, we are also slowly building episodic memories and awareness that different people have different thoughts, opinions, perspectives and emotions. For example, you say something to your child but he is facing the other way, appearing not to listen. Rather than say to him "turn around!" or "look at me" (both imperatives) share your feelings and perspective with declarative language: "I notice you looking out the window", "What would help me know you are listening to me" or "I feel like you are not listening to me."

3. **Big Picture Thinking:** Students can better see the big picture in order to create multiple solutions to a problem. Declarative language can also help students create a visual image of the gestalt and how they would like to see the outcome of a situation in their "mind's eye". Often times when we focus on having students carry out specific detailed directions, we can all lose sight of the big picture. Because some children with executive

function challenges are strong when it comes to details, but weak when it comes to seeing the big picture, it is important to think about the big picture when we present information. Giving very specific directions or questions that have one right answer promotes that focus on details. For example, if we tell a child to "put the book in the book-box" or "line up at the door for music" we are zooming into the details and creating a situation where there's one and only one right answer. However, if we use language instead to comment on what we see in the big picture: "I see a book on the floor" or "what do you look like if you are ready to go to music?" - we are instead encouraging our children to take a step back, notice the context and situation around them, and subsequently form a plan of action that makes sense to them. We are also leaving open the possibility that there may in fact be more than one solution –i.e., maybe the toy could go on a shelf or in the toy box, maybe the students could put away their work, line up by the door, or collect their music instruments and line up by the door.

4. **Problem Solving Skills**: Declaratives support students ability to develop problem solving skills rather than merely than just following direction skills. When we direct students as to what to do, ask them to follow directions, or ask them to answer questions with a definitive right/wrong answer, we are honing their receptive language skills. This is not a bad thing, but it may not be what the student with an executive function challenge needs most. In contrast, if we use declarative language to present information about the environment or situation at hand, we are instead inviting her to notice this information and develop a plan of action. We are inviting him or her to have an "aha!" moment where he or she figures out what to do with given information. We are giving students an opportunity to think more independently! Problem solving moments are critical for all students as they learn to see themselves as more independently functioning human beings in the world.

5. **Read the Room:** Help your child read what's going on in his environment. We know that it can be difficult for some kids to tune into the social information that is going on around them. Rather than telling them exactly what to do and when to do it, use declarative language to help them notice what is important! For example, if it is time for a transition, instead of telling your child "go to the table for snack" or "put on your coat," direct his attention toward the changes in the environment: "I notice all the kids are at the table" or "I notice all the kids are putting on their coats." This will help internalize the importance of periodically checking in on one's environment; there are visual clues available all the time, and they are important to pay attention to! We want our kids to learn that information is not always going to come to them - they have to become active information gatherers. In contrast, if we are using imperatives all the time with our kids, information is coming to them on a regular basis, and they don't have the same need to look around or read the behaviors of others.

What is a transition student/s will need to make this year that you can take a photo of to help them visualize and MIME the future state they are transitioning to?

What task do they struggle with?

If they were executing that task/transition successfully what would they/it look like?

How could you take a photo of that 'Done' state?

Where would you put the photo for the student/s to access?
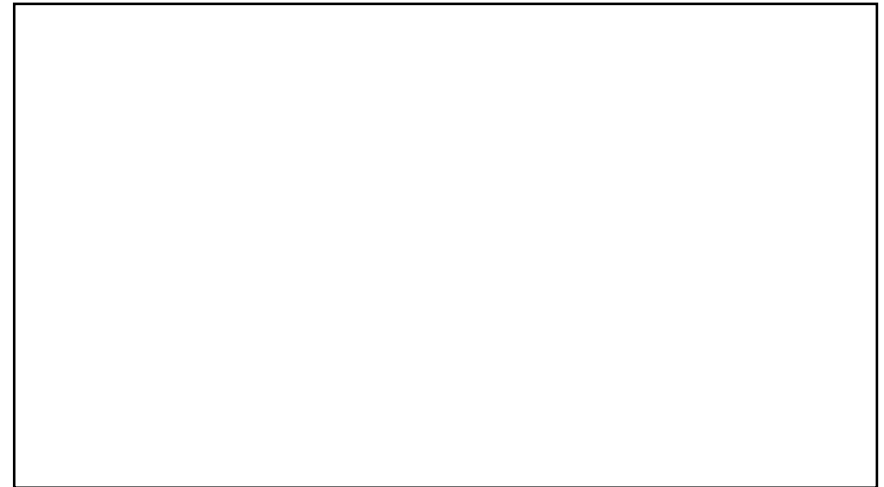
First ➡ Next ➡ Then

If a student is given a script of steps for task execution and merely reauditorizes the steps, they may have learned temporal sequencing but still fail to execute the plan.

Being a Mind MIME is how we go from Intention to Action

Plan: Study for the Test

Script: You look at the Study Guide, Make Flashcards, Mom quizzes you

Self Projection (Episodic Foresight): **MIME iT**

The language the student uses is an indicator of whether they are projecting themselves into that event or not.

How will you prepare for the test on Friday?

"Get the study guide. Make Flash Cards. Look over my old homework. Then have mom quiz me."

"I am going to study with Becca. We will meet at Panera. Maybe I will use Quizlet to make flashcards. **I should probably** take a practice test using the website from the Text Book."

Be a Future Thinker: "Mind MIME iT"

A Stated Intention Helps a student Move from a Scripted Plan to Self Projection

Future Self Talk

Plan A: As I See it
- I Will
- I am Going to
- When
- I can

Plan B: But.....
- Might/ Maybe
- Could
- Should
- Probably
- In case
- If...then

Element of Uncertainty
Plan for the 'Ifs' and the 'Maybes'

See the work of Christina Atance

Try It!

Make a Plan for dinner tonight

Future Self Talk

Plan A: As I See it
- I Will
- I am Going to
- When
- I can

Plan B: But.....
- Might/ Maybe
- Could
- Should
- Probably
- In case
- If...then

Cognitive Shift

Future Self Talk

Plan A: As I See it
- I Will
- I am Going to
- When
- I can

Plan B: But.....
- Might/ Maybe
- Could
- Should
- Probably
- In case
- If...then

If.......Then

Future Self Talk

Plan A: As I See it	Plan B: But.....
I Will	Might/ Maybe
I am Going to	Could
When	Should
I can	Probably
	In case
	If...then

Transitions
Executive Function Skills Across the Day

Situational
Awareness

Situational Awareness STOP and READ the ROOM			
Space	**Time**	**Objects**	**People**
Where?	What is happening in this Moment in time?	Objects/Organization	Who
Zoom In	ASK yourself:	Tools	Role – Job (self and others)
Zoom Out	A: Actual Time of Day /Analog Clock Time	Whole -> Part	Action
Zones			Emotion
	S: See Sequence (Before, After, During) Season/Situation		Thoughts
	K: Know is Next? Pace		
Expected/Unexpected			

Increasing the Spatial Temporal Window
And Developing Independent Future Imagery for Space, Time and Task

Mental MIME

| Features of STOP and When to Read the Room | STOP & Read the Room and Point out Your Plan | See a Future Space: Use Photos to Point Our Your Plan | Maps: Tap Out Your Plan | Outside the Space: MIME Your Plan | Gesture: Mind MIME |

Situational Awareness
STOP and READ the ROOM

Space	Time	Objects	People
Where? Zoom In Zoom Out Zones Expected/Unexpected	What is happening in this **Moment** in time? ASK yourself: A: Actual Time of Day /Analog Clock Time S: See Sequence (Before, After, During) Season/Situation K: Know is Next? Pace	Objects/Organization Tools Whole -> Part	Who Role – Job (self and others) Action Emotion

STOP and Read the Room

STOP and Read the Room: Google Slides

Developing Situational Awareness: Observation and Orientation

- Identify Natural Barriers in Space

At the Door: Create STOP Dots

STOP
Space
Time
Objects
People

Learn to STOP and Look: **S**pace | **T**ime | **O**bjects | **P**eople
If…….then…….

Learn to STOP and Look: **S**pace | **T**ime | **O**bjects | **P**eople
If…….then…….

Learn to STOP and Look: **S**pace | **T**ime | **O**bjects | **P**eople
If…….then…….

Learn to STOP and Look: **S**pace | **T**ime | **O**bjects | **P**eople
If…….then…….

A Special thank you to Jessica Padula, M.S., CCC/SLP
Speech and Language Specialties Shrewsbury

"Time for Math! Let's get ready! You will need last night's homework, your math journal and the fraction manipulatives!"

HW in Cubby

Math Manipulatives

Math Journal

Improving Transitions and Task Initiation: Being a Beat Ahead

HW in Cubby

Math Manipulatives

Math Journal

Remember – 90% of the time Task Planning Happens in a Different Space from where you Execute the Plan!

In the Room: Point out your Plan

To Decrease Impulsivity and Improve Transitions:
Facilitate Distance & Point out your Plan to Self Project and Develop Mental Time Travel

Freeze, Point and Share Your Plan

Creating Zones in the Classroom is Important
Students can Pre-Imagine What Space they are Going to Next

Math Zone   Home-work Zone   Teaching Zone   'Science Zone'

Model Representational Co-Thought Gesture

Creating Zones in the Classroom is Important
Students can Pre-Imagine What Space they are Going to Next

Math Zone
Science Zone
Writing Zone
Materials Zone

Feature Block into Zones

HW Zone
Locker Zone
Teaching Zone
Materials Zone
Help Zone

Visual Rest

The Zooming In Technique

Grocery Store
Produce
Fruit
Citrus
Orange

Objects

Objects/**Organization**

Tools

Whole -> Part

Detail: Brand
Feature: Fresheners
Gestalt
Feature: Glass Cleaner
Feature: Carpet Cleaner
Detail: Organic Ingredients

What *Exactly* do "**Zones**" Look Like?
Spaces are organized into Zones everywhere we go in life!

Study Zone
Sleep Zone
Dressing Zone
Drop Zone

A Smart Girl's Guide: Getting It Together: How to Organize Your Space, Your Stuff, Your Time--and Your Life (Smart Girl's Guides)

Study Zone
Desk
Reading Zone
Bean Bag
Chair
Drop Zone/ Entertainment
Sleep Zone
Dressing Zone
Dresser
Closet
Bed

Zoom In! _____ Gesture

Frozen Food Aisle at the Grocery Store

Clothing at Target Store

Classroom: Materials Cabinet

Shoes at Dick's Sporting Goods

School

Park

Ice Cream
  Brand
    Ben & Jerry's
      Ice cream vs Yogurt
        Chocolate Chip Cookie Dough

Spot the Difference Rooms

Identify the zones
Zoom in on Targets
Spot the Difference

- Apps
- Books
- Youtube
- At Home/Clinic

Try Using EPIC Pen with the Videos/Apps!

MIME iT

Increase the Spatial Temporal Window for the Future Homework Space
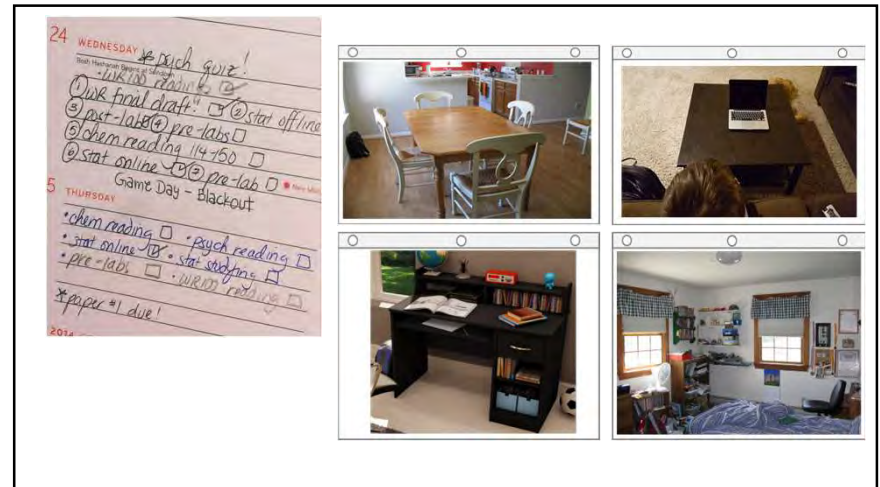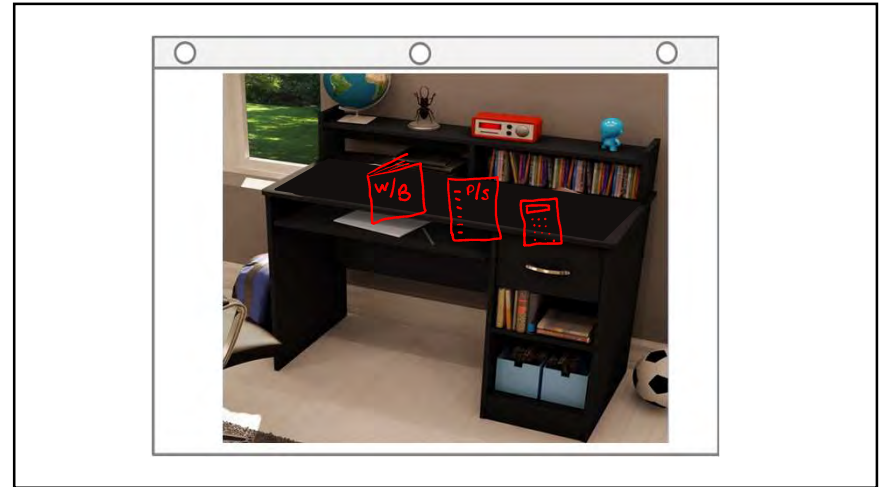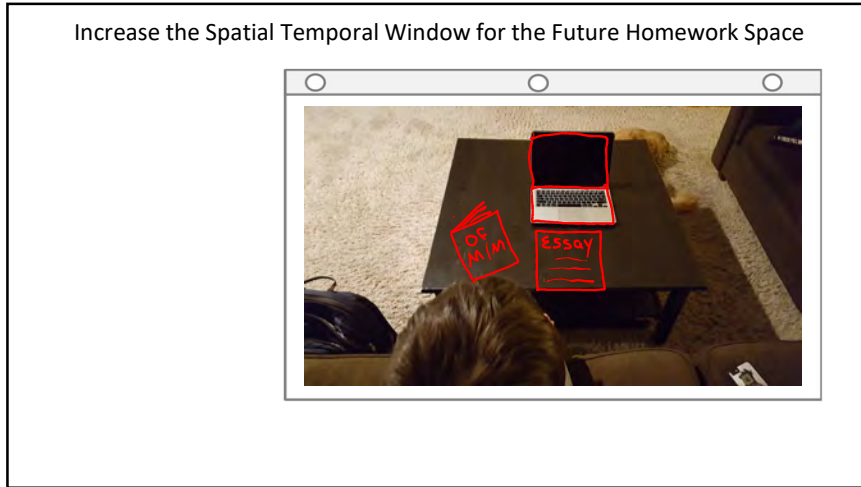
Try the Panorama Mode on Your Phone

Feature Block into Zones

HW Zone | Locker Zone | Teaching Zone | Materials Zone | Help Zone

Also try DMD Panorama APP:

DMD Panorama
360 Panoramic Camera
Demander

See Yourself in a Future Space

STOP and Read the Room
Developing Situational Intelligence and the Spatial Temporal Window

MIME : Downstairs - Task Planning Happens in a Different Space than Where you Execute the Plan

MIME: Right in Front of Me : Cubbie

MIME: At the Door

MIME:
Down the Hall

Point out
your plan:
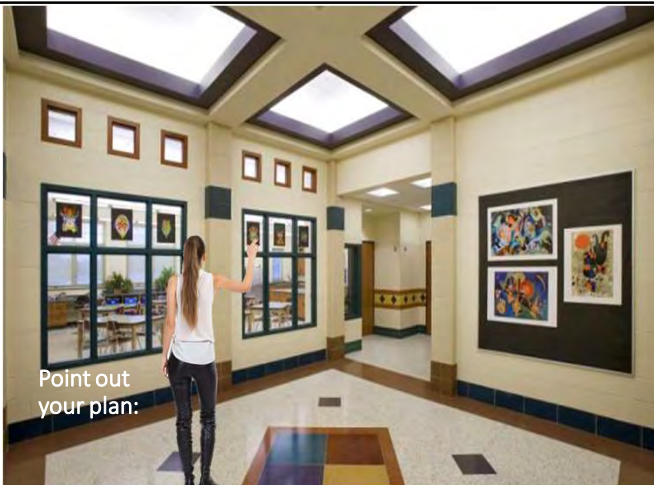
Reading:
Hatchet, Chap 2
Take Active Notes*
*Use Active Reading Questions Worksheet

Have a
Model Desk

Develop Flexible If...Then...Thinking and Forethought

Dice Roller App
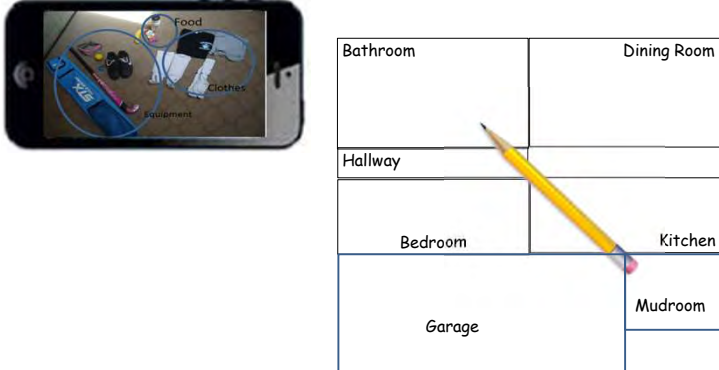
Create a Map of the Space

Tap It Out

Materials
Blocks
Pictures from magazines
or Catalogs
Small Objects that can
Represent Parts of the
Room
Room Cutouts
Small People/figurines

Sleeping Zone
Study Zone
Play Zone
Dressing Zone
Book Zone

**Have Students Draw a Map of the Space
Pre-Imagine Your Plan and Tap It Out**

Classroom Cutouts

**Attach the Map to a
Clipboard and Use to
Increase Future
Mental Imagery for
Task Planning,
Initiation and Impulse
Control**

Try it! Map out a room, classroom or office Space.

Tap Out: A Morning Routine, Preparing for Task _____, and an End of Day Routine
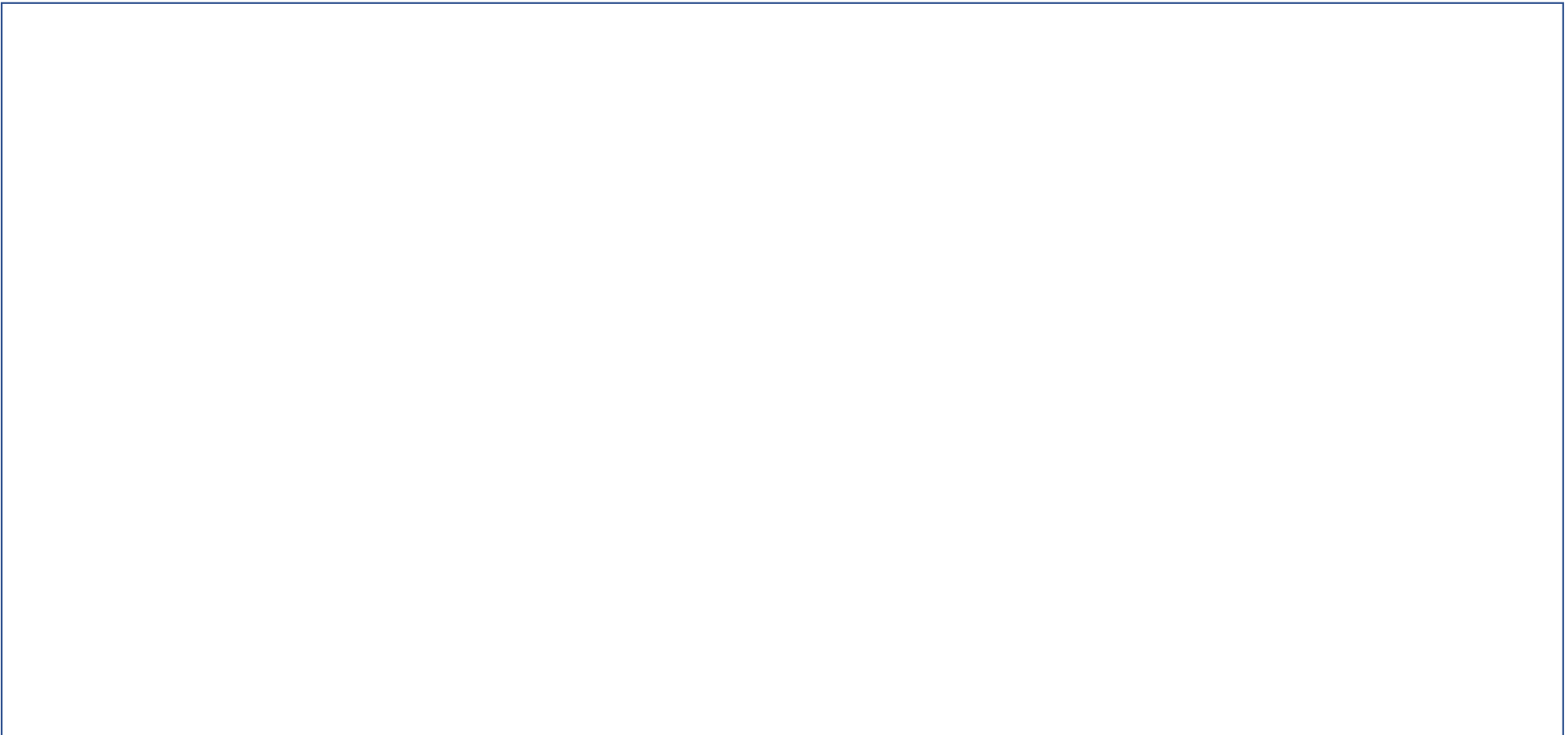
MIME : Downstairs - Task Planning Happens in a Different Space than Where you Execute the Plan

MIME : Downstairs - Task Planning Happens in a Different Space than Where you Execute the Plan

Mental MIME

Now imagine you walk from your locker into your classroom and you are going to turn in your homework and then sit at your desk and record tonight's homework. When will that be? (Time) What do you see you are holding? (Objects)

Point out your pathway when you are walking from your locker into the classroom. You stop to get a drink from the drinking fountain on the way. (Space)

What does the entrance look like when you first enter through the class door?

What are the zones of the classroom?

What is the pathway you take through the classroom to turn in the homework?

What is the pathway to your desk?

Imagine the steps you would take to record your homework. You are a homework recorder (People/Role)

Demonstrate with gestures where you would sit, place your backpack and how and what materials would you take out to record homework. Where do you see recording the assignment?

MIME: Task Planning Happens
in a Different Space from where you Execute the Plan
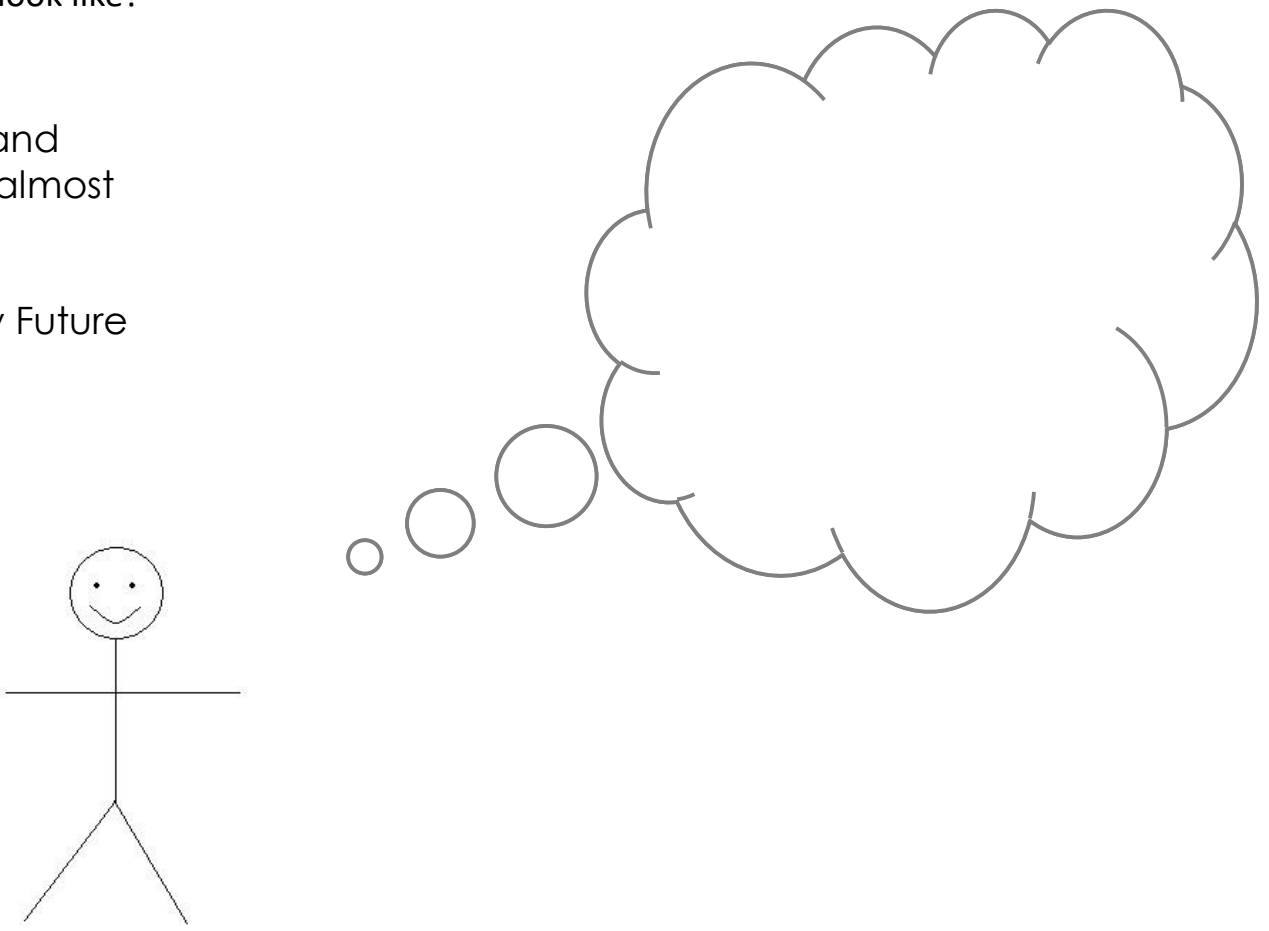
- In your room: Ready for Bed
- Bathroom: Morning Routine
- Kitchen: make a snack or a favorite Dish
- Garage: wash the car/prepare to Garden/mow the lawn, etc.
- Classroom: turning in homework, preparing for a task or routine (snack, recess, library, etc.)

What will I look like?

Now: Present Self
I am on the couch and realize my phone is almost out of charge.

Next: What does my Future Self Look Like?

Now: Present Self Getting Dressed in the morning. I am thinking ahead about the day – What do I look like today?
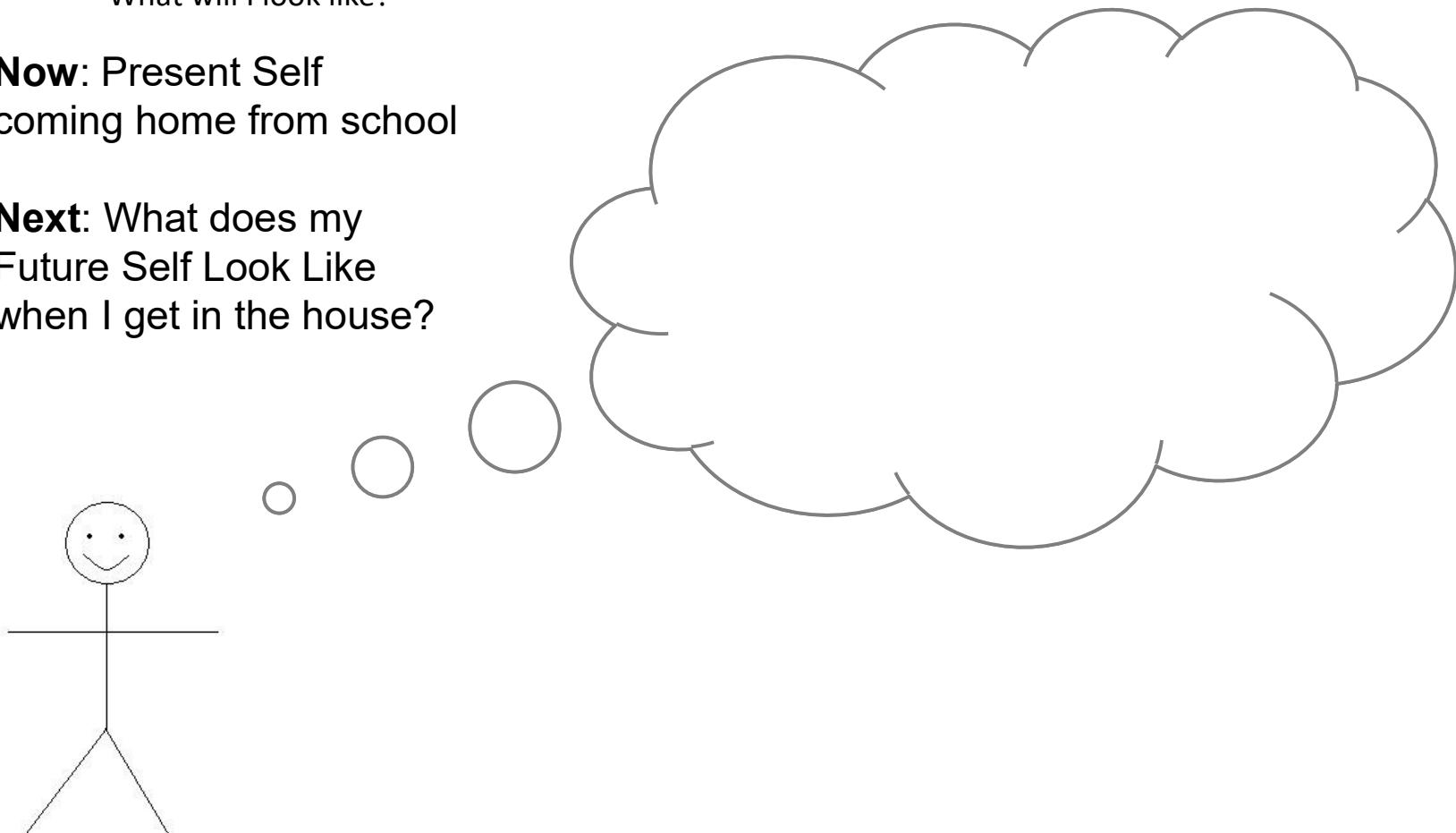
Next: What does my Future Self Look Like at these specific times?

At 9:00am	At 12:15pm	At 3:00 pm
At: 4:15pm	At 6:35pm	At 8:30pm

What will I look like?

Now: Present Self
coming home from school
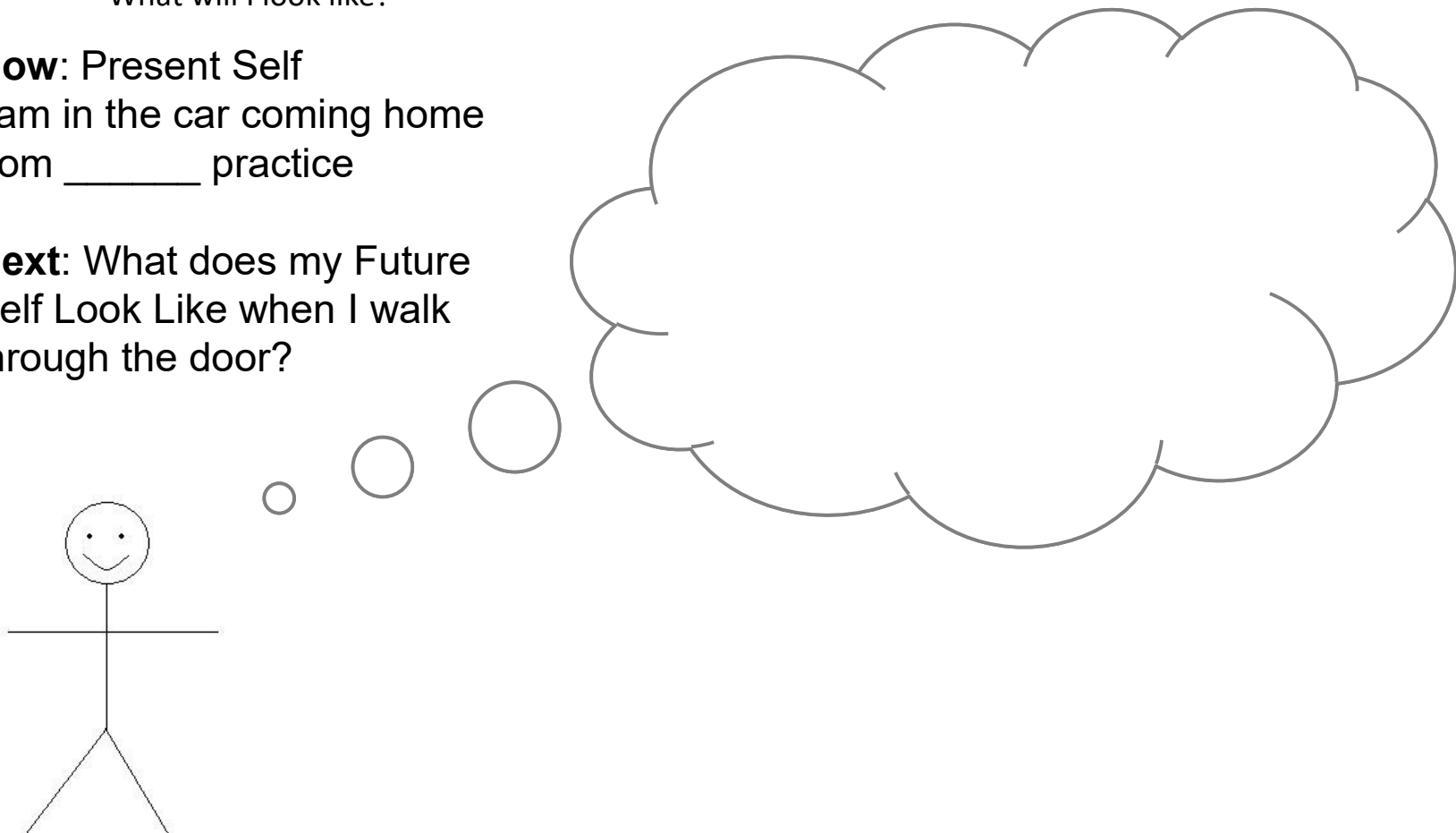
Next: What does my
Future Self Look Like
when I get in the house?

What will I look like?

Now: Present Self
I am in the car coming home
from _____ practice
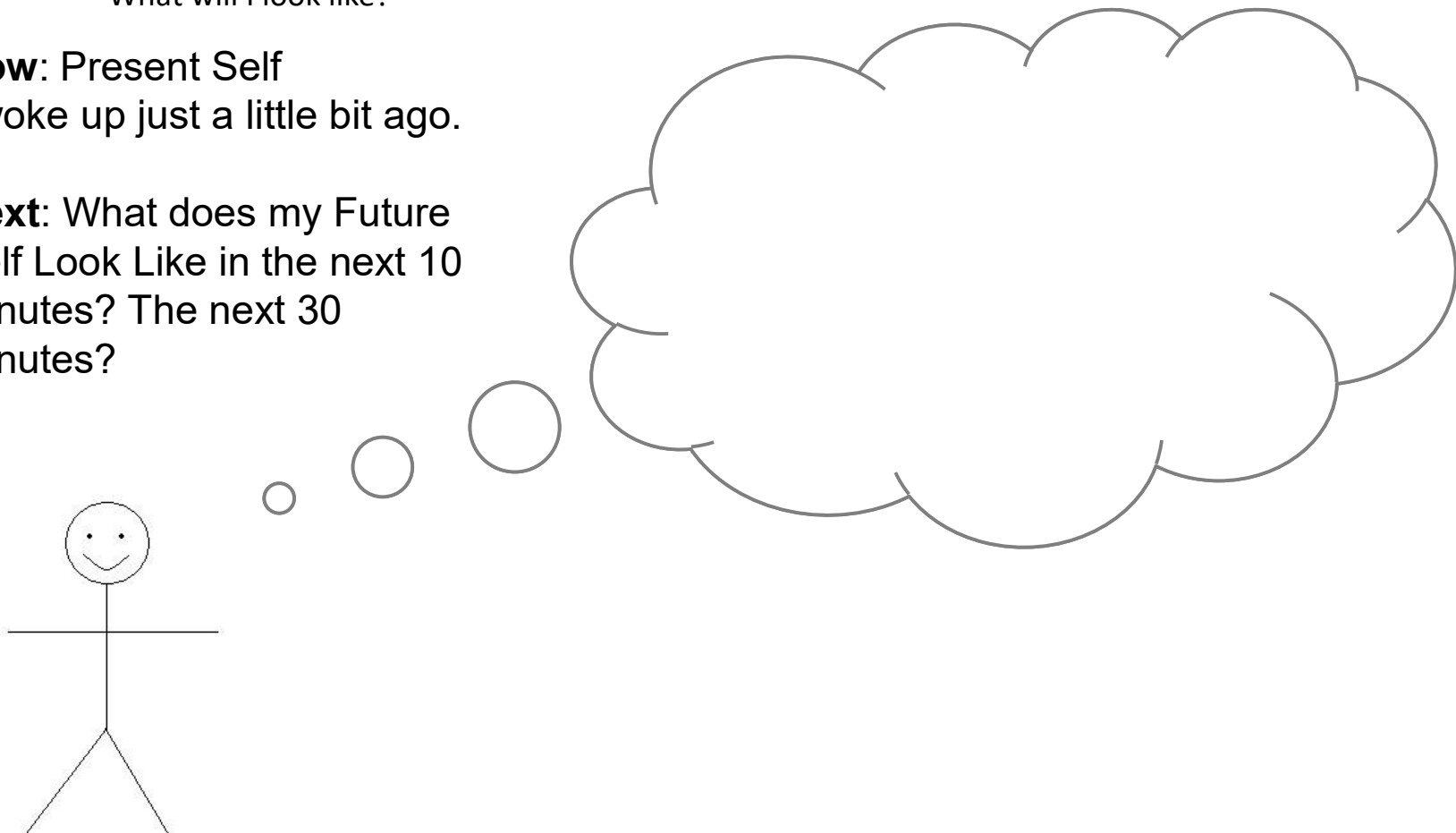
Next: What does my Future
Self Look Like when I walk
through the door?

What will I look like?

Now: Present Self
I woke up just a little bit ago.
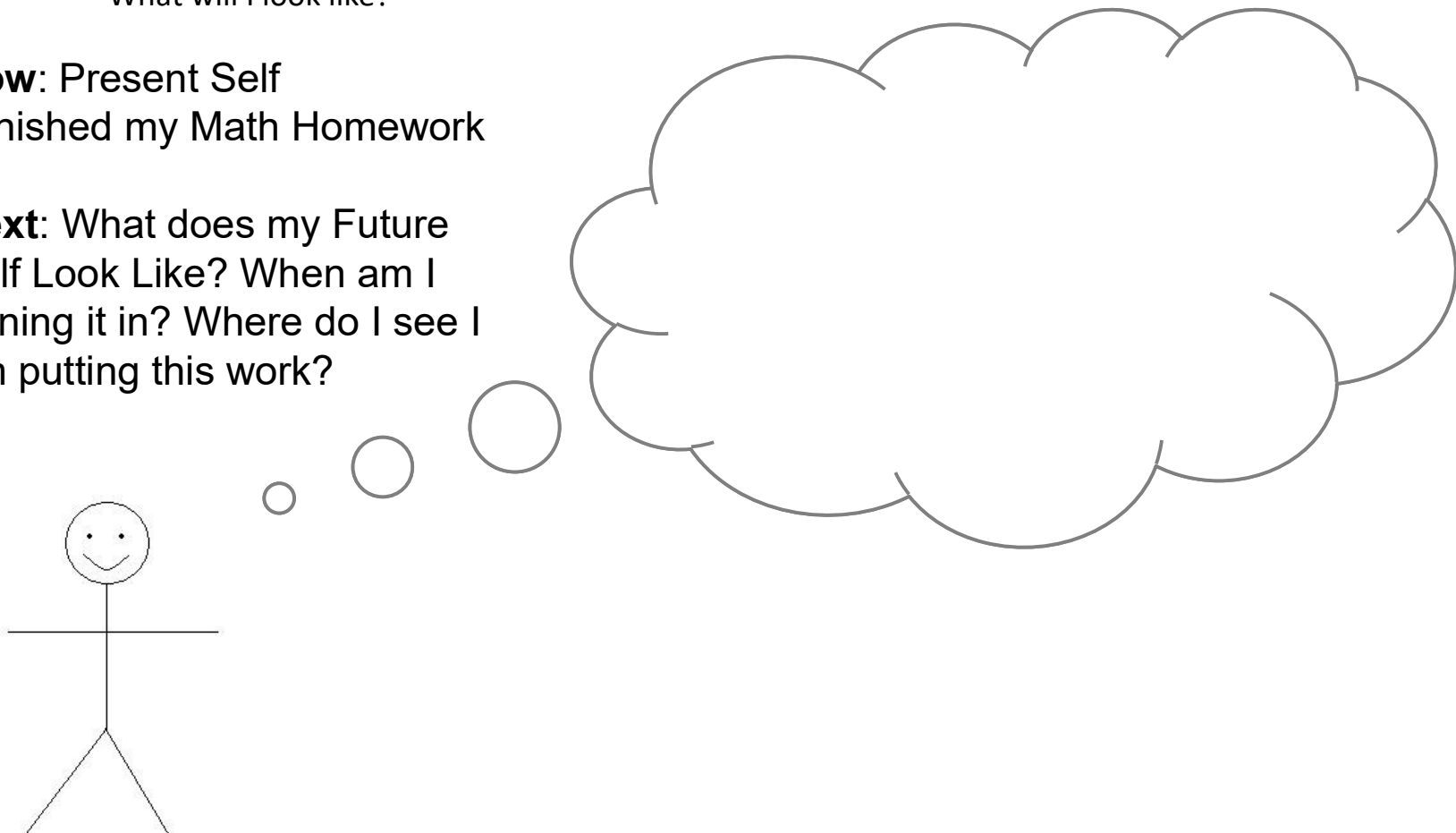
Next: What does my Future
Self Look Like in the next 10
minutes? The next 30
minutes?

What will I look like?

Now: Present Self
I finished my Math Homework

Next: What does my Future
Self Look Like? When am I
turning it in? Where do I see I
am putting this work?

What will I look like?

Now: Present Self

Next: What does my
Future Self Look Like?

Put on my Future
Glasses!
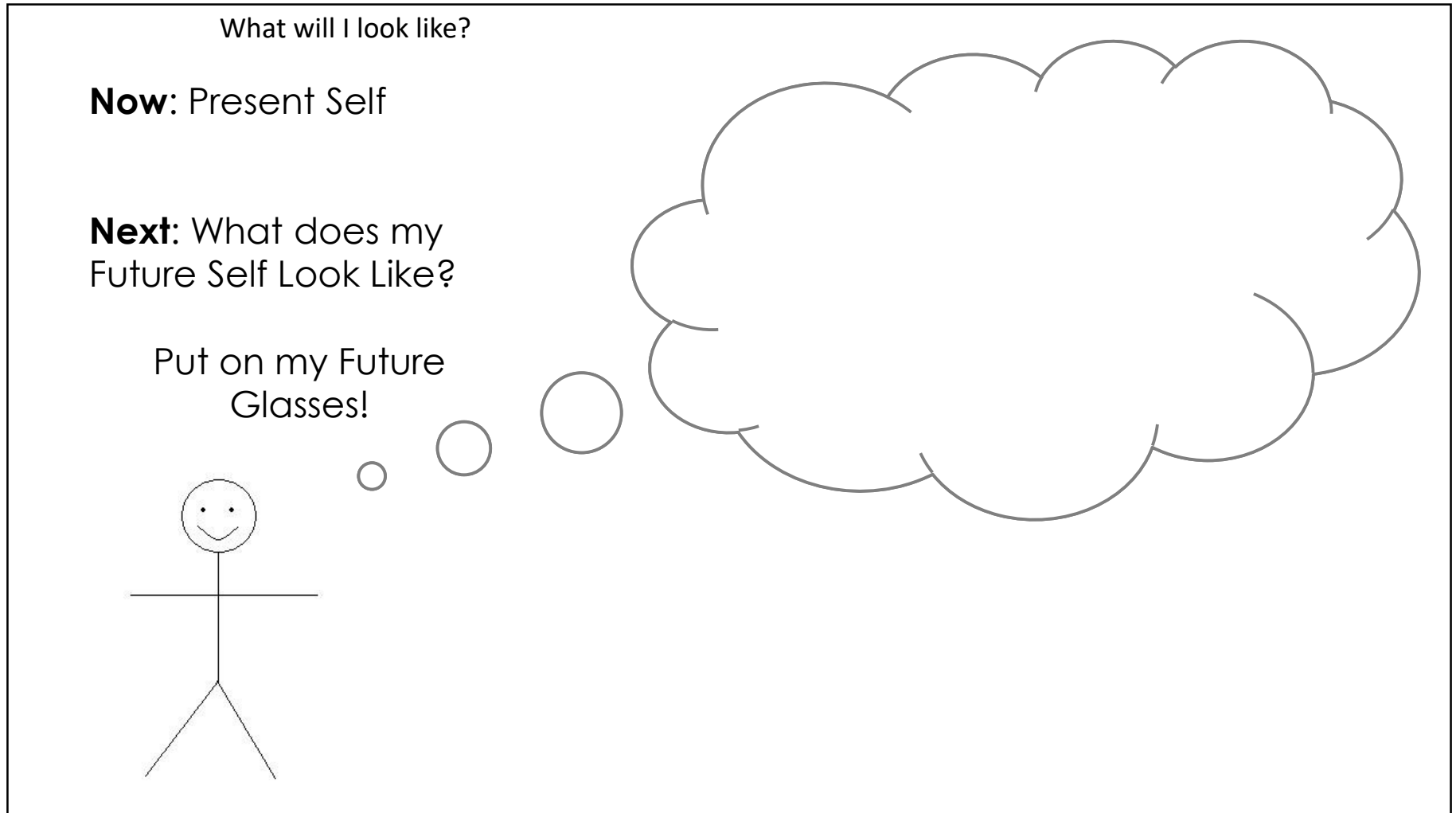
Gradual Release to Independent Mind MIME

Driving and Executive Function Skills
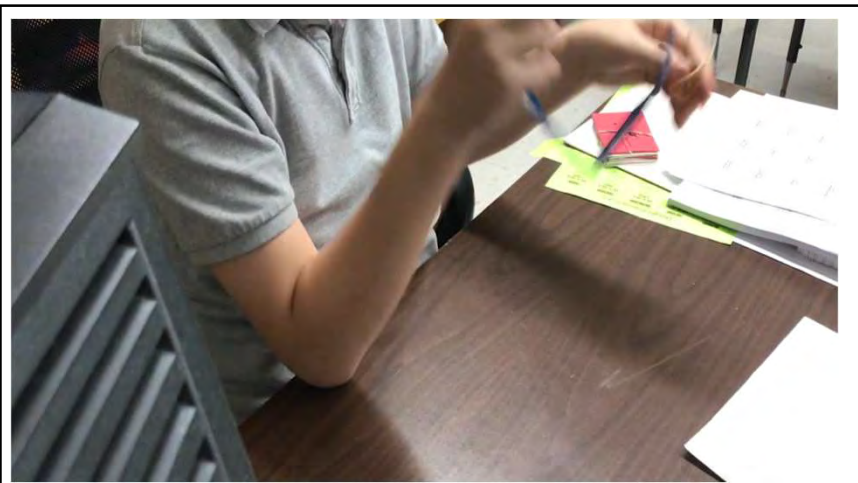
Try Random Tasks: Gesture Mental Spatial Time Travel at Home

Find Poster Board

Sneakers for Gym Class

Make Cereal

Get a Beach Towel

Wrapping Paper

Find Tape

Try Random Tasks: Gesture Mental Spatial Time Travel

Get Markers
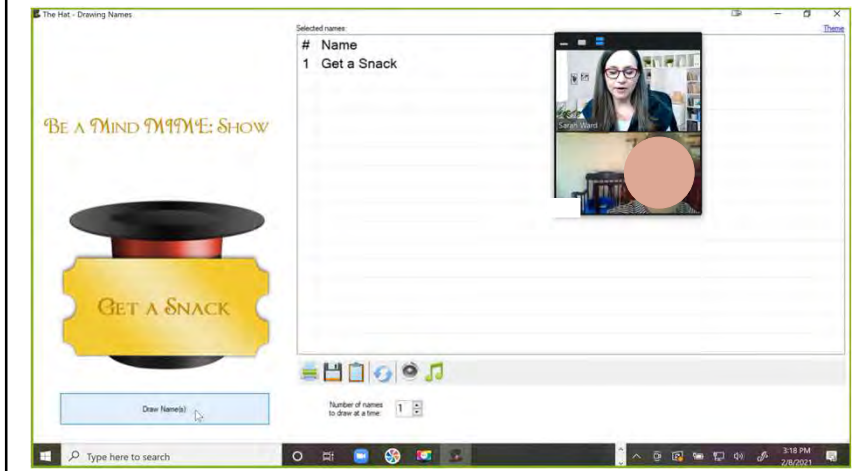
Sneakers for Gym Class

Get a Snack

Choose a reading book

Dry Erase Board

Paper to Write On

The Hat - Drawing Names

Selected names:
Name
1 Get a Snack

BE A MIND MIME: SHOW

GET A SNACK

Draw Name(s)

Number of names to draw at a time: 1

Type here to search

3:18 PM
2/8/2021

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And Developing Independent Future Imagery for Space, Time and Task

Mental MIME

Features of STOP and When to Read the Room	STOP & Read the Room and Point out Your Plan	See a Future Space: Use Photos to Point Our Your Plan	Maps: Tap Out Your Plan	Outside the Space: MIME Your Plan	Gesture: Mind MIME

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If you share our ideas please make attribution to Sarah Ward and Kristen Jacobsen.
Please reach out to us! We love to hear from you!

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by Sarah Ward,
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Kristen Jacobsen,
MS, CCC-SLP

AFTER RECESS, as part of the daily routine, the class reconvenes on the rug. Jackson runs from the back of the room where he has been playing with the class hamster to his cubby and slips off his jacket. It drops to the floor. He kicks off one boot. The teacher calls stragglers to join the others on the rug, so he hops to the circle wearing one boot and plops down. The teacher shares the agenda for the afternoon, which includes reviewing the science homework. Looking alarmed, Jackson pops up, and races back to his cubby while kicking off his other boot.

He pulls out his backpack, removes a homework folder, and grabs his assignment. Leaving the backpack open and boots scattered, he races to the homework bin. Realizing his name is not on the assignment, he zooms back to his desk to grab a pencil and sits back down on the rug with the rest of the class.

As the teacher gives instructions for the next activity, Jackson slips his homework underneath him and sits on it. The class is dismissed to their desks, and Jackson, talking excitedly to the boy next to him, stands up and follows the boy to his desk. His nameless homework is left on the floor. When he gets to his desk, his morning work folder and silent reading book are on the floor with assorted bits of paper. As the class starts the next activity, Jackson does not have the materials he needs. Again, he needs to walk about the class to get ready.

Anne has a music lesson Saturday morning at 9:00. Her mom wakes her at 7:30; Anne rolls over and groans, "Ten more minutes." Mom returns ten minutes later and tries again to wake Anne. After two more rounds of "Ten more minutes," Anne finally gets out of bed and heads for the shower. She showers for twenty minutes. Mom knocks on the door to announce the time. She encourages Anne to hustle so they can leave the house in thirty minutes. Anne gets out of the shower, puts on a robe, plops herself on the living room couch, flips open her laptop, and checks her social

media sites. Mom reminds her to get ready for music. Ten minutes later, Anne saunters into her room and stares at a land mine of clothes trying to decide what to wear. She sits on her bed and starts to remove her nail polish. Mom hollers a reminder, "Get dressed!" Finally, ten minutes later, Mom exclaims anxiously, "We have to go…!" Anne responds to this seemingly sudden pressure and shouts, "I'm coming!" She heads into

the bathroom in her bathrobe to blow dry her hair. Patience waning, Mom asks about her instrument and sheet music; Anne directs her to the basement. Finally finished with her hair, Anne heads to the kitchen for something to eat.

Exasperated, Mom, who is standing at the door holding Anne's instrument, music sheet, and breakfast bar, exclaims, "We need to go now. We are late!" Anne yells back in frustration, "I told you to wake me up earlier!"

As adults, we joke about "senior moments." That moment when you have imagined an item you are going to retrieve and then when you finally that room to get it you draw a blank. "What did I come in here for?" Ack. A senior moment.

What do a student zigzagging about the classroom, a slow-paced teen, and a senior moment all have in common? Challenging executive function skills.

Weak executive function skills
Individuals with strong executive function skills stay a beat ahead. In contrast, teachers and parents describe individuals with weak

executive function skills as being "a beat" or—as Jackson's teacher sighs—"twenty-two beats behind." How do executive skills enable us to stay a beat ahead? Strong executive function skills enable us to imagine and plan a "dry run" of the task in our mind before we begin to carry out the plan. If a task is planned in a different space than where the task will be carried out, then we create an image of the future space in our minds. For example, when a child hears the direction, "Get ready for lacrosse," he might be downstairs in the family room and imagine walking upstairs into the bedroom, heading over to the dresser, opening the third drawer, and retrieving their uniform. Then he might envision a transition from the bedroom to the mudroom and then the garage, where cleats and gear bags are stored.

The imagery is a mental anchor that allows the child to better resist distractions and maintain a pace so as to reach a goal. When forethought guides children's actions, they can carry out tasks more successfully. Small glitches, such as looking for a missing item, can also be

a Beat Ahead

handled more smoothly. However, when children with weak executive function skills hear the instruction "get ready," they hear the words, but do not pre-imagine the task or the steps to be ready. Even if they respond, "Okay," they do not initiate any actions to move toward their goal. When these children finally enter their rooms, because they have not pre-imagined the task, they are only starting to ask themselves, "Okay, what am I doing?" Without the vision of an outcome in mind, they are open to distraction. When these children go into their bedrooms and see books, Legos, and a laptop, they easily disengage from the goal of getting ready. They are
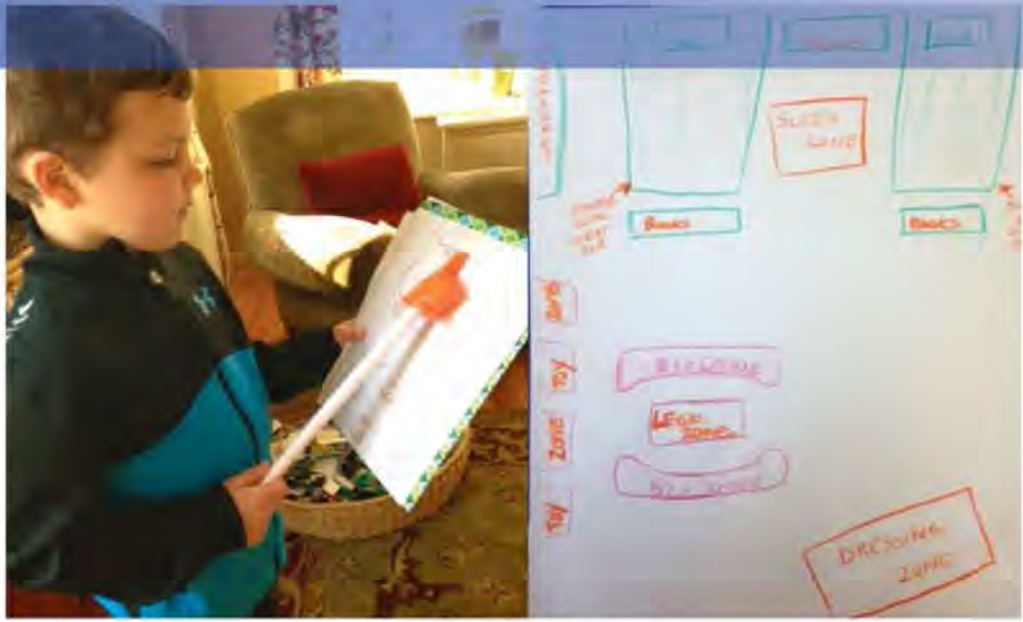
ORGANIZATION & FOLLOWING DIRECTIONS: A basic map of a bedroom or a classroom can be used with a pointer to plan out directions and rehearse routines. This strategy can improve the use of mental imagery and self-talk, which are two skills that support a child's ability to carry out tasks and routines.

now a beat behind. Likewise, a senior moment is simply the loss of this pre-imagined intention.

Developing strong executive function skills

So, what can we do to develop a child's capacity to be a beat ahead and successfully carry out intentions in the future? According to Russell Barkley, in order to develop strong executive function skills, individuals "need to repeatedly practice: self-monitoring, self-stopping, seeing the future, saying the future, feeling the future, and playing with the future so as to effectively 'plan and go' toward that future."

Our natural inclination might be to provide checklists. While this strategy can sometimes work, it is limited. Checklists made by adults are not that helpful in creating mental imagery for children. For example, as adults, we might make a list of items to buy at the market. While making this list, we create, if only for a brief moment, a mental image of the supermarket, our dinner table, or shelves in our cabinets. These images help us navigate the market and remember items even if the list is left at home. When we hand children a checklist we've made, they have not used imagery to create the list and may find it hard to create imagery after the fact.

A better technique, when giving directions, is to use words that create mental imagery. For example, rather than asking a child, "What do you have for homework tonight?" pose a question such as: "When you walk into

class tomorrow, what do you see yourself handing to your science teacher Mr. Jenson?" Instead of directing your child to get ready for soccer, try asking, "If you were standing at the door ready to go to soccer what would you look like? What does 'ready' look like?" To improve the effectiveness of your instruction to go upstairs and get dressed, try saying, "What drawer do you see opening to find your sport clothes?"

Visuals are also helpful in teaching kids to get ready and organize themselves. It's often a struggle to get children out the door in the morning. Multiple prompts and checklists might get your child out the door, but the process is likely to be difficult. Instead, try snapping a quick photo of your child when he is ready for school and standing by the door with his coat, clothing, shoes, backpack, and lunch. The next morning, show your child the photo, and simply say, "This is what 'ready' looks like." Ask him to imagine a plan that enables him to "match the picture." Once children remember the images in these photos, they can use their mental imagery and the photos no longer need to be shown.

In the classroom, cue students to imagine their actions before they transition. For example, when students are transitioning from recess, as they line up, say: "Imagine yourself at your cubby. What do you look like? What do you see yourself doing?" For younger students, ask them to describe how they will prepare for an activity. They can use a pointer to point to the space they will go to and pre-imagine themselves in

What does 'ready to start the lesson' look like? You need 5 minutes before your lesson actually starts at 4:30 to prepare so that you are ready when the lesson starts. This 5 minutes gives you time to take your instrument out of the case, open the sheet music to the practice warm-up page and to be seated in front of the music stand.

Working backwards to shade in the time needed, what does the travel time look like? 5 minutes to walk through the parking lot, 15 minutes to drive to the music lesson.

Shading in 5 minutes to gather your instrument and sheet music and 10 minutes to dress and brush your hair and teeth, you can see that you need to start getting ready for your 4:30 music lesson at 3:50.

that space carrying out the expected actions, "I am going to go to the back of the room and get a worksheet, then I am going to walk to the counter under the windows and get my text book, then I am going to sit at my desk and take out my pencil."

Take this technique a step further. Ask the student to draw a blueprint of the classroom or their house. Tape this blueprint to a clipboard, so the child can 'tap out their plan' before a task. Use a pencil or pointer to tap on the blueprint while encouraging them to pre-imagine and verbalize their plan; this method will foster an important skill—self-talk. For example: "I am going to walk into the bathroom, brush my teeth, then go across the hall to my bedroom. Next, I'll go to my closet, get my shoes, then walk downstairs to the front hall to get my backpack."

Use an analog clock

Children may still have difficulties using an appropriate pace even if they have a mental image of the directions. If their pace is slow, then they are vulnerable to distractions. What helps children to imagine carrying out a plan within a particular time frame? An analog clock.

As adults, we often strategize times before verbalizing the plan to children. We say, "You need to start getting ready at 3:45." However, this direction is given after we have thought, "Dance starts at 4:30, so we need to leave the house at 4:00." Try asking children to work backwards from an end time. Many children benefit from seeing how time fills up on an analog clock. A dry erase marker can be used to shade "slices" of time and write actions when planning backwards on a glass analog clock. See the example of backwards planning for estimating the time to prepare and travel to a music lesson (see graphic above).

Students can also use the clock to visually plan their time for homework or in-class assignments.

Another advantage of drawing on the clock is building self-awareness. Students can see visual markers of the time that has passed, and then determine if they have used time effectively or had any "time robbers" such as daydreaming or getting distracted by the television or Internet. To stay a beat ahead, students must monitor how closely their outcomes match the future plan they had imagined.

Ask students to plan checkpoints when they can stop and determine if they are on track with their plan. Students set a midpoint timer to stop and check how well they are working towards completing an assignment. The purpose of the timer is to improve self-monitoring and an awareness of how time is used, but not how quickly they can complete an assignment. Students who set timers for the end of a task frequently experience more stress, whereas a timer set for check-ins midway through a task provides opportunities for problem solving. Overall, when students are given guidance to plan and self-monitor while using mental imagery, they often experience independence and a better sense of self-control. Try it! ❂

Sarah Ward, MS, CCC-SLP, *and* **Kristen Jacobsen, MS, CCC-SLP,** *are the codirectors of Cognitive Connections: Executive Function Practice, LLP, in Concord, Massachusetts. Ms. Ward has over fifteen years of experience in diagnostic evaluations, treatment and case management of children, adolescents and adults with a wide range of developmental and acquired brain-based learning difficulties and behavioral problems. Her particular interest is in the assessment and treatment of executive function deficits. Ms. Jacobsen, an ASHA certified speech-language pathologist, has worked in public education, private schools and hospital settings and has provided teacher training seminars and school consultations nationally. She has strong interests in cognition, language and mindfulness.*

Executive Function Groups

1. What do I look like? Take photographs of each student when they are ready for school and or ready to go home.
    a. Block and box the features of being ready.
    b. Put in a plastic sleeve protector
        i. Have the students practice sketching how they would look 'Same but Different'
2. Have students work together to create photographs of their morning and end of day routines.
3. Have students make Self Talk – Stated Intention notecards.
4. Have students clean and then photograph their desk, locker, cubby, backpack, room etc. Have students use their photos and "stated intentions" cards to gesture and self talk the steps to carry out to maintain a clean space.
5. Manage Materials: Have students take the materials out of their backpack.
    a. Lay the items on the floor and then group the items that go together
    b. Take a photograph of the items
    c. Use an app (try Skitch!) or print the photo and then Block and Box the features of the packed bag
    d. Create a luggage tag, create an Album in the students Phone/Device, or print the phots and place in a plastic sleeve protector in a notebook.
        i. Practice sketching how their bag would look the 'same but different' for given situations:
            1. Bringing in a school project
            2. Needing to have a signed permission slip
            3. Going on a field trip and needing a bagged lunch and water bottle
            4. Having class outside and needing a change of clothes, a warm coat, and waterproof shoes
            5. Having study materials (flash cards, notebooks, etc.) for an upcoming exam
            6. Needing money for a book fair | school sale | school dance tickets, etc.

6. Practice the process of "How to Make a Checklist"
    a. Use a Get Ready * Do * Done Template
        i. Place a photo of the completed "To Do" in the Done space
        ii. Have the student identify the locations of where they will go to do the task
        iii. Have the student create a checklist from the Visual
            1. First create the list using action words: Pack Backpack; Make Lunch; Wear Sneakers; Bring Project, etc.
            2. Next create the list using the noun label: Backpack, Lunch, Sneakers, Project

7. Increase transitions
    a. Have students create "future-self" sticks and use them to 'pre imagine' their plan
    b. Have students place STOP Dots on Doors and Practice Reading the Room
        i. Space | Time | Objects | People
    c. Create a STOP and read the room bulletin Board or Poster
    d. Practice Pointing Out a Plan when Standing Outside of a Space
    e. Take photos of Spaces where actions take place and put in plastic sleeve protectors in a Notebook
        i. School: Classrooms, Library, Cafeteria, Recess, Bathroom, Skills Center, etc.
        ii. Home: Mudroom, Kitchen, Bedroom, Bathroom, Living Room, Garage, etc.
        iii. Community: Pool, Dunkin Donuts, Park, Athletic Field, Restaurant, etc.
            1. Have a student sketch themselves and their plan in the space
            2. Have the student gesture their actions in the given space
                a. Try the DMD Panorama App!
    f. Map it Out, Walk it Out, Tap it Out!
        i. Have students work together to create a sidewalk chalk map of their classroom. or Have students do the Mapping the Classroom Activity: Look at the National Geographic Classroom Cutouts:
        http://www.nationalgeographic.org/activity/mapping-classroom/
            1. Re-create the map on a 8 x 11 piece of paper
                a. Laminate or place in a plastic sleeve protector
                    i. Have the student tap or draw out their plan of action to move through a space.
        ii. For students who struggle with making maps
            1. Check out the Me on the Map Book
            2. Use blocks to make the space, photograph the blocks, put the photo in a plastic sleeve protector and/or use tracing paper and trace the map from the blocks
8. Get Ready * Do* Done Model
    a. Create the GDD workspace: set out your mats
    b. Practice all Tasks Have 3 phases
        i. Which phase does the photo represent
            1. Change the position? How do the Get Ready * Do *Done phases change?
    c. Start with the Done!
        i. Plan backwards from a picture of a known task
        ii. Plan backwards
            1. using a simple assignment
            2. with a Craft Project
            3. for a treatment activity or learning tool

       4. for everyday tasks: cleaning a room, organizing notebooks, cleaning locker, packing a lunch, etc.

d. Visual: Be a Future Sketcher
    i. From Verbal Directives Sketch out what Assignments will look like

e. Complex:
    i. Sketch out Multistep Assignments, Prioritize the Order of the Steps
       1. Spread out the Visual Steps on the Calendar to Increase the Time Horizon

f. Abstract
    i. Find an image of a known Outcome
    ii. Block and Box the Features of what is Known
    iii. Use the Features to abstract details for a novel task.

g. Independence
    i. Remove the planning mats
    ii. Working backwards, have students gesture their Done goal and the steps to achieve the goal

Time

1. Practice reading analog clocks and converting digital to analog time
2. Practice shading volumes of time (5 min, 10 min, 20 min, etc.)
   a. Start in the middle of the clock
   b. Draw out the minute hand
   c. Shade in a clockwise direction, counting by 5's
   d. Draw back to the middle of the clock to create a 'slice' of time
   e. Shade in the time in the direction time will fill up
3. Practice shading time for given scenarios
   a. It is 4:00pm and Sarah has 20 minutes to read her book.
   b. It is 7:15 pm and Sarah has 45 minutes to work on her project before starting her bedtime routine.
4. Practice Shade | Mark | Check
   a. Have students practice setting time markers and marking time on a corresponding activity
      i. I like to practice this with easy worksheets such as word searches, easy math problems, crosswords, coloring tasks, a short story, making flashcards, etc.
         1. Practice doing the work while monitoring time
   b. Have students use the Time Calculation Tool to calculate the volume of time they will need for given tasks
      i. Then have the student use the Shade | Mark | Check strategy to create time markers for the given task
5. Manage Time Robbers

      a.   As a group make lists of internal and external Time Robbers

      b.   Create a list of Time Savers

           i. Before a task starts have students practice predicting time robbers

                1. Then Jail their time robbers

                2. Implement Time Savers

20 Tips to Help De-escalate Interactions With Anxious or Defiant Students

Katrina Schwartz
Apr 21, 2016

Students' behavior is a form of communication and when it's negative it almost always stems from an underlying cause. There are many reasons kids might be acting out, which makes it difficult for a teacher in a crowded classroom to figure out the root cause. But even if there was time and space to do so, most teachers receive very little training in behavior during their credentialing programs. On average, teacher training programs mandate zero to one classes on behavior and zero to one courses on mental health. Teacher training programs mostly assume that kids in public schools will be "typical," but that assumption can handicap teachers when they get into real classrooms.

A National Institute of Health study found that 25.1 percent of kids 13-18 in the US have been diagnosed with anxiety disorders. No one knows how many more haven't been diagnosed. Additionally between eight and 15 percent of the school-aged population has learning disabilities (there is a range because there's no standard definition of what constitutes a learning disability). Nine percent of 13-18 year-olds have been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (although the number one misdiagnoses of anxiety is ADHD), and 11.2 percent suffer from depression.

> 'We are 50% of every interaction with a child, so we have a lot of control over that interaction.'

"So basically we have this gap in teacher education," said Jessica Minahan, a certified behavior analyst, special educator, and co-author of *The Behavior Code: A Practical Guide to Understanding and Teaching the Most Challenging Students*. She spoke to educators gathered at a Learning and the Brain conference about strategies that work with oppositional students.

Minahan is usually called into schools to help with the most challenging behavior. She finds that often teachers are trying typical behavioral strategies for a group of kids for whom those strategies don't work. However, she says after teachers learn more about why kids are behaving badly there are some simple strategies to approach defiant behavior like avoiding work, fighting, and causing problems during transitions with more empathy.

ANXIETY

Anxiety is a huge barrier to learning and very difficult for educators to identify. "When anxiety is fueling the behavior, it's the most confusing and complicated to figure out," Minahan said. That's because a student isn't always anxious; it tends to come and go based on events in their lives, so their difficulties aren't consistent. When we are anxious our working memory tanks, making it very difficult to recall any salient information.

Researchers surveyed a group of first graders none of whom had any reading or math disabilities. Those who had been diagnosed with an anxiety disorder were eight times more likely to be in the lowest achieving group in reading, and two-point-five times more likely to be in the lowest quartile in math achievement by the spring.

"Anxiety is a learning disability; it inhibits your ability to learn," Minahan said. But it isn't usually recognized as a learning disability and there is almost never a plan for how to address it in the classroom. "For kids with anxiety, the 'can'ts fluctuate," Minahan said. "When they're calm they can. When they're anxious they can't. And that's very deceiving."

Anxiety isn't about ability, it's about interference, which means that traditional rewards and consequences don't often work with this group of learners.

"Rewards and consequences are super helpful to increase motivation for something I'm able to do," Minahan said. But an anxious person's brain has shut down and they aren't able in that moment to complete the task being asked of them. The best way to combat this tricky problem is to try to prevent anxiety triggers and build up students' social and emotional skills to cope with the moments when anxiety sets in.

When kids are in the throes of bad behavior they have poor self-regulation skills, often get into negative thinking cycles that they can't stop, have poor executive functioning, become inflexible thinkers and lose social skills like the ability to think about another person's perspective. That's why kids can seem so unempathetic when teachers ask, "how do you think that made Sam feel?" At that moment, the student acting out has no ability to take Sam's perspective, but a few hours later or the next day, he might be able to show the remorse educators want to see.

ALL BEHAVIOR HAS A FUNCTION

Bad behavior is often connected to seeking attention, and when kids act out, they can see the results.* "Negative attention is way easier to get and hands down easier to understand," Minahan said. "It's much more efficient." Adults tend to be unpredictable with attention when a student is doing what she is supposed to do, but as soon as there's a dramatic, obvious tantrum, the student has the teacher's attention. And negative attention is powerful -- one student can hijack a whole classroom.

A common teacher response to low-level negative attention seeking is to ignore the student. The teacher doesn't want to reward bad behavior. "I want to caution you about ignoring someone with anxiety because their anxiety goes up," Minahan said. Ignoring an already anxious student can accidentally convey the message that the teacher doesn't care about the student, and worse might escalate the situation. Perhaps a teacher can ignore a student tapping his pencil or banging on his desk, but threatening behavior can't be ignored. And the student learns exactly what level of behavior he must exhibit to get attention.

TIP 1: Instead, "what you need to do is make positive attention compete better," Minahan said. She often suggests that teachers actively engage the most difficult student at the beginning of class saying something like, "I can't wait to see what you think of this assignment. I'm going to check on you in 5 minutes." When the teacher actually comes back in five minutes, validates the student's progress, and tells her another check-in is coming in ten minutes it sets up a pattern of predictable attention for positive behavior. And while it might seem unfair to take that extra time and care with one student, it ultimately saves instruction time when a teacher doesn't have to deal with a tantrum that sends the student out of the room.

TIP 2: Often in an attempt to form a positive relationship with a student teachers will publicly praise positive behavior. That can backfire, especially with anxious kids who don't want any extra attention from peers. Private or non-verbal praise is often better. Minahan recommends pulling students aside at the beginning of the year to ask how teachers can best tell them they're proud. "It's a gift to your February self if you can figure out a system now, otherwise you'll get stuck on the negative attention scale," Minahan said.

Tip 2.1: She also recommends fact-based praise as opposed to general praise. Vague praise is easy to dismiss.

ANTECEDENTS TO BAD BEHAVIOR

Many kids have predictable anxiety triggers like unstructured time, transitions, writing tasks, social demands or any unexpected change. Similarly the antecedents of negative behavior are fairly predictable: unfacilitated social interactions, interaction with an authoritative adult, being asked to wait, when demands are placed, being told no, writing, and transitions.**

Tip 3: "Teach waiting now," Minahan said. "When you are anxious, despite your age, it's very hard to wait." She was asked to observe a boy who constantly disrupted class. Minahan soon noticed the boy often did his work, but if he finished early or there was downtime in the class, he would start causing trouble. When Minahan pointed this out to him he had no idea what "wait time" was. She had to spell out to him that when he finished a task he should apply a strategy, like turning over the paper and doodling appropriately on the back. After this small intervention the student's behavior was so improved that his teacher thought he'd gone on medication.

'You can have really bright, able children whose anxiety is interfering so much.' For kids with anxiety, there are a number of strategies teachers can employ. The first is not to take any student behavior personally. The student isn't trying to manipulate or torture the teacher, his behavior is reflecting something going on internally. Often a short movement break can help relieve anxiety, but not the way they are commonly given.

Minahan described a seventh grade girl who was recovering from an eating disorder. The girl was scraping her arms so badly they would bleed. After lunch, predictably, the behavior was worse, so her teachers were letting her color and draw to relieve her anxiety. Another common break is to tell a student to go get a drink of water down the hall. The coloring break wasn't working for this seventh grader and Minahan soon figured out why. "We accidentally left her alone to fester in her anxious thoughts," she said.

Tip 4: Leaving class doesn't give the student a break from internal negative thoughts like "I'm fat," or "I'm not smart enough," which paralyze thinking. But a break paired with a cognitive distraction does offer respite from the "all or nothing" thinking that's so common with anxious students. An older student might take a break and record herself reading a book out loud for a younger student with dyslexia. It's impossible to read out loud and think another thought. Other distractions could include sports trivia, sudoku or crossword puzzles. Little kids might do a Where's Waldo or look through a Highlight magazine for the hidden picture.

Tip 5: When teachers want to wrap up a task they often use a countdown. "Silent reading time is going to be over in five minutes." But counting down doesn't support a high achieving anxious child who feels she must finish. And it takes a lot of executive function skills and cognitive flexibility to fight the urge to keep going after the time is up. So instead of counting down, a teacher might walk over to that student and say, let's find a good stopping point. She may stop a minute later than the rest of the class when she reaches the designated point, but it won't escalate into a tug-of-war.

Transitions are another common time for kids to act out. Younger students often don't want to come in from recess, for example. But when a teacher says, "Line up. Recess is over. It's time for your spelling quiz," it's no wonder the student doesn't want to go from something he loves to something he hates.

Tip 6: The teacher can give students an in-between step to make the transition more palatable. Go from recess, to two minutes of coloring, to the spelling quiz. The intermediary step gives that non-compliant student behavioral momentum. He's already sitting down, quiet, with pen in hand, so the jump to spelling isn't as jarring.

For middle and high school students, school is all about being social, but the only times students get to see their friends are in the two to five minute passing periods between classes. Again, the transition is from something they love to something they hate, so don't make that transition extra hard by collecting homework as they come in the door. The toughest kids are probably already not doing well in the class, and a reminder of the homework exacerbates feelings of inadequacy.

Tip 7: One high school geometry teacher started playing two minute YouTube videos about geometry as students came into class. It got students from the hallway into the classroom without thinking negatively and her class started to run more smoothly. She didn't have the same interruptions she used to, which made the lost two minutes seem worth it.

Tip 8: Minahan also likes some of the biofeedback tools that are now available, like the EmWave. A wound up student puts a sensor on his finger and calming down becomes a game. He might start out with a picture of a black and white forest, but as he calms down (and the sensor monitors his heart rate) the colors start to pop in. It can take as little as two to five minutes to completely calm a kid down when they can see the feedback so clearly.

"I like it because it's so concrete," Minahan said. A student with high functioning autism might not even know what a teacher means by "calm down," but with the biofeedback device she can see what it means.

WORK AVOIDANCE

Minahan says it's very common for students to have trouble initiating work, persisting through work and asking for help, but there are strategies to help kids build the skills to get better in these areas.

"You can have really bright, able children whose anxiety is interfering so much," Minahan said. The anxiety isn't coming from nowhere; it's coming from prior experiences of feeling frozen and stupid. In that moment the child's working memory isn't working, so teachers need to find ways to bypass it until the anxiety passes.

Tip 9: One way is to let students preview the work for the day. In the morning, an elementary school teacher might work on the first few problems with the anxious child so she knows she can do it. Then, when it's time for that work later in the day, that child receives the sheet she's already started and can go from there.

Tip 9.1: In high school, teachers can give students with trouble initiating the preview as homework. Students can start at home without any pressure and continue at school. "Fight or flight is the worst when they first see it," Minahan said, so try to bypass that moment and prevent a breakdown.

Tip 10: At the same time, when the teacher names the strategies a student is employing, he is helping the student build a toolbox that can be used independently. Strategies might include, asking a teacher to help her start when she feels frozen, or asking to preview the homework. For perfectionist students, difficulty starting can stem from a fear of messing up. Give those students dry erase boards, where the mess ups can be easily erased. It helps when teachers treat the difficulty starting as a small problem and say something like, "Looks like you're not initiating. What strategy are you going to use?"

> 'When I shift the reinforcement to skills, I've noticed the skills go up and that's what makes the difference for the kids who have mental health difficulties.'

Tip 11: Some strategies to build persistence include skipping the hard ones and doing the ones a student knows first, working with a buddy, and double checking work on problems that have been completed.

Giving help in class is often a tricky balance, especially if a student is too embarrassed to ask vocally. Instead of acting out because she can't do the work, the student might raise her hand, pass the teacher a note or make eye contact. Then the teacher has to be careful not to give too much help. "We accidentally create dependency because we help so much," Minahan said.

That goes for academics as well as behavior. Often a teacher will notice a student becoming agitated and dysregulated and tell him to take a short walk. But ultimately the student will be better served if he can learn to monitor himself and implement strategies when he notices early signs of agitation. "Kids have to learn how to catch themselves on the way up and calm down there," Minahan said, because that's when the strategies work. But kids need to be taught how to recognize the signs.

Tip 12: Teach kids how to do a body check. With younger students a teacher can describe the signs of agitation as they are happening so the student starts to recognize them. With older students, ask them where in their body they feel anxious, for example, "in your belly?" "Give them the data every day," Minahan said. "This is your body on the way up." After the groundwork has been laid, a teacher can just say "body check, please" to let a student know it's time to check in with themselves and start using a strategy.

But what can you do when a kid is already exploding? Minahan says, not much because the child will have a very hard time reacting in a reasonable way once he or she is riled up.

Tip 13: What educators can do is anticipate those moments and rehearse self-calming strategies when the child is calm.

In one case, Minahan knew an elementary student she was working with was going to have a traumatic change in her life. The child's mom was giving her up to foster care and the date had been set. To prepare for what would undoubtedly be a moment when the student couldn't control herself, Minahan had her practice self-calming in the social worker's office, where she would probably go on the day. Twice a day for five minutes she rehearsed a self-calming routine when she was already calm so her working memory was available and she was learning the strategies.

When the day came and the child did freak out, Minahan quickly got her into the office with very little touching or verbal interaction which might further set her off. Once there, the girl got into her routine, and started singing to herself as a cognitive distraction. "The rehearsal allowed for automaticity and did not require cognition or working memory in that moment," Minahan said.

Tip 14: Rehearse replies to confrontations. Minahan worked with a high school student who constantly got in fights. If he felt disrespected he'd start swinging. Together they rehearsed over and over him saying, "I don't have time for this," and walking away. During the rehearsals, Minahan gave him something to hold in his hands as he said this. And soon, he stopped getting in fights. It gave him the moment he needed to make a decision not to use his fists and a go-to automatic reply.

Tip 15: Use data to disprove negative thinking. Writing is a common barrier for kids with anxiety, Minahan said. But one way to begin getting students past this hurdle is to ask them how hard a task will be before they start and again after they've completed it. Almost always the perception of the task is worse than the actual task. With several weeks of data you can show students the pattern in their responses.

Minahan worked with a girl who hated writing so much that she was skipping school twice a week. She would often say that writing was torture to her. Minahan broke writing down into component parts with corresponding strategies for getting started on each part. When the student worked on a writing task Minahan would ask her how many strategies she employed. Often the girl didn't use that many strategies, which didn't fit with her own conception of herself. "We reframed her whole thinking and she felt more empowered to solve her problems," Minahan said.

INTERACTION STRATEGIES

In any interaction with students teachers can only control their own behavior, but that's actually a lot of power. "We are 50% of every interaction with a child," Minahan said. "We have a lot of control over that interaction."

Tip 16: If a teacher gets off on the wrong foot with a student early in the year, try randomly being kind to the child, rather than only giving positive attention based on his or her behavior. This kind of noncontingent reinforcement helps the child to see the teacher likes him for who he is, not because he does math well or reads perfectly, Minahan said.

Tip 17: In areas where the difficult student is competent, give her a leadership role. Maybe let her take a younger child to the nurse or start an activity club. This helps change the child's perception of herself and also her relationship to the teacher.

Tip 18: When demanding something of a student, don't ask yes or no questions and teach kids not to ask yes or no questions. In that scenario, someone has a 50 percent chance of being disappointed with the answer. By changing the question, the teacher opens the door for the answer to be diffusing, rather than an escalation of defiance. For example, if a student asks, "Can I work with Jack?" The teacher can reframe the question: "Oh, did you want to know when you could work with Jack? You can ask: When can I work with Jack." The student might not like the answer, but it likely won't produce the same explosive reaction as getting an outright "no."

Tip 19: Give kids time and space. If a student is prone to arguing, eye contact and physical proximity can escalate potential protests.*** For example, if a kid is humming in an annoying way, a typical teacher move might be to make eye contact with the child and shake your head to get him to stop. But in this situation eye-contact is non-verbally asking the child for a response, which he may be incapable of giving at that moment. Instead, calmly walk over and put a note on his desk that says, "please stop humming." Then run away and do not make eye contact with that student for a few minutes.

"The initial reaction is not pleasant and you have to wait for them to de-escalate before they can comply," Minahan said. Sometimes the mere presence of the teacher prevents that de-escalation.

Tip 20: Reward practice or strategy use, not performance. "When I shift the reinforcement to skills, I've noticed the skills go up and that's what makes the difference for the kids who have mental health difficulties," Minahan said. Ultimately, educators are teaching kids the skills and strategies that they can then use throughout their life when they're anxious, so rewarding practice makes sense.

The more teachers can empathize with students, teaching skill building and focus on preventing challenging behavior, the smoother the classroom will run. Often that means learning about the student in order to identify triggers and design new ways of interacting with even the most challenging students.

*An earlier version of this post overstated the connection between bad behavior and seeking attention.

**An earlier version of this sentence highlighted only one type of negative behavior --fighting.

*** This section was updated to include the situations under which eye contact could make a situation worse for a student. We regret these errors.

Helping Anxious Students
Move
Forward

*Strategic accommodations can help students with
anxiety develop persistence and independence.*

Jessica Minahan

Sitting across a graffitied desk from
me, an exasperated 9th grade English
teacher says, "We've given him every
chance!" She's talking about Jeremy,
a basketball star by all accounts, who
is bright but getting little to no homework or
schoolwork done and spending more time in the
bathroom than in his classes. "Basketball is his only
love, and many of us hope it is his ticket out of the
inner city," the teacher tells me. The teacher also
explains that Jeremy has a diagnosis of generalized
anxiety disorder and has been struggling with aca-
demic performance and work engagement since
elementary school.

The school's guidance counselor told Jeremy that
unless his grades improved, he wouldn't be allowed
to play basketball. Unfortunately, his grades did
not improve and Jeremy was kicked off the team
in January. He ended the school year failing all but
one course.

Anxiety disorders are extremely prevalent among
children and adolescents in the United States. With
31.9 percent of adolescents having had an anxiety

disorder at some point in their lifetime, anxiety
is the number one mental health concern that
educators and counselors face (Merikangas et al.,
2010). Yet most teacher preparation programs only
mandate one course (or none at all) in behavior
and mental health principles. Overwhelmed
teachers like Jeremy's are trying, but lack the
training to help their students adequately.

Work Avoidance Is *Not* an
Issue of Motivation

In my work as a behavior analyst and consultant, I
see work avoidance at all grade levels: a 1st grader
staring at the wall during reading group, a 5th
grader asking to see the nurse when she's called
on in class, an 8th grader putting his head down
and disengaging during independent math work.
Many people might think this behavior indicates
a lack of motivation, especially when attempts at
incentivizing the student don't work. That's what it
looks like.

And yet if we consider Jeremy's plight, we see
this isn't true. Despite his anxiety, Jeremy couldn't

have been more motivated to play basketball. Yet that wasn't enough. Why?

Though extremely motivated and academically capable, Jeremy lacked four crucial executive functioning and emotional skills:

■ *Accurate Thinking*: The ability to look at an assignment or situation and accurately judge its difficulty, the time it will take to complete, and one's own ability to engage in and complete it.

■ *Initiation*: The ability to organize one's thoughts and start engaging in a task.

■ *Persistence*: The ability to sustain effort, even when faced with a mistake or difficulty (perceived or real).

■ *Help-Seeking*: The ability to ask for help when difficulties arise (rather than avoid the task or feel defeated).

Penalties and incentives don't teach these skills and are unlikely to improve students' behavior. Instead, they often leave students like Jeremy feeling misunderstood and rejected. What is more helpful for students with anxiety is to teach them *how* to engage in work and to develop these skills.

Teaching Skills for Work Engagement

When we teach our children to ride a bike, we give them training wheels. Similarly, we should provide accommodations, such as placing math problems on cards on a key ring so students see one problem at a time instead of a long worksheet, to support students while explicitly teaching work engagement skills. Providing students with accommodations supports their ability to think accurately, initiate, persist, and seek help, allowing them to succeed while they are building these skills. If we remove the supports before students are ready, they'll crash.

Accurate Thinking

Behavior occurs for a reason. Work avoidance behavior—putting your head down on the desk—is the behavior we notice, but it is often precipitated by mild avoidance behaviors and an invisible series of negative thoughts. Students with anxiety or depression are at a particular risk for these kinds of inaccurate thoughts. Students may create an all-or-nothing situation in their minds ("I hate math" versus "I struggle with multiplication"), which can cause defeat before the student even begins. Another common version is catastrophic thinking ("I don't know how to do the third problem, so I'll probably flunk 6th grade"). Because thoughts are invisible, it is important that negative thinking should be measured—not assumed—through data gained from interviews and thought journals.

One approach to turning negative thinking into accurate or positive thinking is to have the student rate the difficulty of a writing assignment before and after the activity (Minahan & Schultz, 2014). Before the activity, the student might rate it "very difficult" due to his anxiety-fueled perception, but an hour after completion, he'll likely have a more accurate perception and assign a lower number. Referring him back to those ratings may shift his mindset for future work.

Another strategy is to create a chart that breaks a task into parts (Minahan, 2014). Make a list of different task parts, mixing in neutral items (writing lower case letters, using punctuation), favorite things (drawing, telling a friend about my idea), and some aspects they dislike (spelling). Then have students categorize each of the items into one of three columns: "I like it," "It's OK," and "I don't like

it." Show the chart to the student when she makes an all-or-nothing statement such as, "I hate writing!" You can reframe by saying, "Actually it seems you *like* writing. Are you having trouble thinking of an idea? That's a small problem. I can teach you how!"

These strategies give the student a realistic view of tasks and isolate the exact skill that's a challenge. Combined with reframing language, it reduces the student's all-or-nothing thinking, empowering both student and teacher (Chambers, 2017).

Initiation

Have you ever asked a student to start work, only to realize a few minutes later that she is staring into space? If you offer help at that point, you may find that the child has already been wallowing in negative thoughts and is on the verge of shutting down. It isn't realistic to ask negative-thinking, anxious students who lack initiation skills to begin work independently. Instead, we must help them start and then ask them to continue on their own.

If teachers can assist the student within the first 30 seconds of assigning materials, they can help dissuade negative thinking (Minahan, 2014). Another helpful strategy is to look at the assignment together earlier in the day—or even the day before: "This is the math sheet we'll be doing later. Let's start the first and second problem together."

Chunking (breaking work into smaller pieces) can also help students with low initiation skills. Give them one sheet at a time instead of the whole packet, or tell them to do only the even-numbered problems. If a student still doesn't engage, teachers can give the student a math sheet that

Have you ever asked a student to start work, only to realize a few minutes later that she is staring into space?

is completed except for the last few problems and ask the student to finish it. This is actually more effective than giving them a blank sheet and asking them to do only the first five because the sheet *looks* almost finished and easier to complete. It gives the student a sense of completion and gratification and can bypass negative thinking.

For a writing assignment, try filling in the first sentence and first half of the second. Stopping in the middle of a word, mid-sentence, is a great way to get the student to continue. He can be taught to stop mid-sentence so when he returns to the assignment it'll be easier to keep working.

For students who are risk-averse or perfectionistic, provide a whiteboard for writing. Teachers can also put worksheets in a transparent sleeve and allow students to use a dry-erase marker. In middle or high school, provide a second copy of a paper-based quiz to remind students that mistakes aren't permanent.

Persistence
Teaching and nurturing persistence can be accomplished using psychologist Carol Dweck's growth mindset theory, which teaches students that

FIGURE 1. Self-Monitoring Strategy Sheet		
What am I worried about?	**What strategy can I use?**	**Did I use it?**
Initiation *My thoughts might be* This looks difficult. This is going to take forever. I can't do it.	Ask a teacher to help me start. Use a wipe off board instead of paper. Skip the problem I'm stuck on and try another. Change seats so I am away from distractions. Tell myself I only need to do work for two minutes and then I can take a break. Tell myself I only need to do the first five items and then take a break. Use positive self-talk.	
Persistence *My thoughts might be* This is too hard. I need to stop.	Skip the hard problems and do the easy problems first. Work with a classmate. Check the problems I've completed. Take a quick break. Pair the task with something pleasant (comfy chair, listening to music). Picture the completed product.	
Help Seeking *My thoughts might be* I don't know how to do this. I forget how to do this.	Raise my hand. Hand the teacher a note. Look in my notebook. Ask a classmate or ask to work with a classmate.	

"every time you push out of your comfort zone to learn hard things, your brain grows new connections and you get smarter" (Dweck, 2006).

Rewarding persistence, not just product, can prevent students who work hard but don't earn great grades from "turning off" and not bothering to try. Do this by focusing part of the grade on *small* evidences of persistence, like, "Did I attempt more problems today than on my last quiz?" "Did I correct an answer?" "Did I attempt one of the challenge problems?" This allows a disengaged student to focus on effort and not be intimidated by a need for correctness.

Help-Seeking
Students with anxiety or depression may lack the initiative to ask for help when they're stuck or overwhelmed by a task, and instead feel defeated and give up (Minahan, 2017). In some students, it could be that they are embarrassed about asking. Pull them aside and decide on a nonverbal or private system they are comfortable with, such as putting a pencil behind their ear when they need help.

Once we get students to ask for help, the next step is to assist the student to reflect on and articulate specifically what they need to reduce dependency. While talking, they may realize there's another strategy available. When a teacher won't accept the nonspecific request for "help," and instead requires students to answer, "What do you need help with and why?", students are forced to look more closely at the challenge. In articulating, "I don't remember the formula," a student may realize the problem is one he can solve himself by looking in his math book. The teacher can then reinforce that independence by saying, "Great! You *didn't* need help! I'm glad you figured it out."

FIGURE 2. Independent Work Inventory	
Input	**Output**
Watching a movie	Verbally answering questions
Listening to a recorded book	Playing content-specific cause/effect games on iPad
Reading one line	Circling multiple-choice answers
Reading one paragraph	Circling true/false answers
Reading two paragraphs	Filling in the blank
Reading two to three pages	Writing a one-sentence answer to an open-ended question (indicated by one line)

The flip side of this is that some students respond to anxiety by asking for help too frequently. Jeremy's classmate Monique always asked, "What do I do?" immediately after being given directions. When the teacher asked her, "What were the directions?" she would be able to repeat them perfectly. This type of help-seeking is actually reassurance-seeking, and making this distinction is important to building students' self-awareness. Helping them replace, "I don't know what to do," with "Can I have a check-in with you?" or "Did I understand the directions correctly?" will promote anxious students' more accurate and confident self-concept.

Increasing Independence
When all reminding and prompting attempts have failed, teachers commonly sit with reluctant students and plod through the assignment with them without explicitly teaching strategies. However, working one-on-one or profusely prompting them through each task can cause dependence.

A better strategy is to teach students how to self-monitor. If students can learn how to assess their own needs and find the strategies to get help, they will not need to overly rely on the teacher. Figure 1 (on p. 47) shows an example of a self-monitoring sheet that visually lists strategies a student can use independently to initiate, persist, and seek help. For students who seek reassurance, teachers can add options such as "Ask the teacher for a check-in," "Ask three classmates before asking the teacher," or "Reread the directions." This type of chart can be made into a class poster for all to reference.

Even with teachers' daily suggestions of strategies to help students solve problems independently, most students still believe that asking the teacher for help is their best tool when they are stuck. For that reason, the teacher needs to be persistent in referring to the self-monitoring sheet when prompting a student to solve problems independently. First, the teacher can label the struggle as one of the small skills, such as, "Looks like you are having trouble initiating." This reframes the student's all-or-nothing

thoughts into smaller, easier-to-tackle problems he can solve independently. Teachers can then point to the strategies column on the chart and ask the student which strategy he's going to use to solve his own problem, saying, "Show me the strategy you've chosen to help yourself." The teacher can provide guidance if needed, but the student is gaining independence.

Independent Work

Often, I see a teacher work with students in a small reading group or one-on-one and then ask them to finish the assignment independently, only to be surprised when the students go off-task or become disruptive. The frustrated teacher often feels a particular student *can* do the work, as evidenced by his earlier production with her, so she assumes that he must be choosing *not* to do work back at his desk.

The teacher does not realize that she was essentially giving the student help without his asking for it, thereby preventing him from developing his initiation and persistence skills. Without the initiation, persistence, and help-seeking skills necessary to tackle the assignment independently, he becomes stuck and avoidant.

So how can she help him? An input/output inventory (see fig. 2) can help teachers think about where to meet students so they can be successful independently and give teachers

guidance on how to gradually increase students' level of input/output as they show signs of success. For example, students may be intimidated by reading an entire chapter of a book, but might be able to easily listen to an audio book. They may fail fill-in-the-blank quizzes, but be excellent at verbally answering questions in class. If you can identify where they are on the inventory, then you can meet them there and help them succeed independently.

If, however, a student's independent

work skills are at a lower level than his capability in a supported environment, then we'll likely see work avoidance or disruptive or challenging behavior. Like a helium balloon, if the student is not tied to the structure of work, he'll float aimlessly. Meeting students where they are independently and systematically introducing more difficult methods of showing knowledge is the only way to shape behavior toward success while building work tolerance and skills.

For example, one day in class, Jeremy's teacher asked students to conduct research on the computer and answer two open-ended questions on a sheet of paper. Instead, Jeremy was scrolling through social media and encouraging classmates to join him. The teacher eventually asked him to leave the room. When meeting with Jeremy's team, I asked, "How often

does Jeremy complete open-ended writing independently?"

"Never!"

His teachers were overshooting the method of output. Looking at work samples, we found Jeremy wouldn't engage in reading when there were more than two paragraphs on the page. I suggested they accommodate the work, requiring him to read only one or two paragraphs. I also suggested accommodating assignments from open-ended questions to multiple-choice. Jeremy's history teacher agreed to try this, and within five weeks, Jeremy was completing work and beginning to improve toward reading one page of text in a book and completing fill-in-the-blank answers. Jeremy told the principal, "It's like I'm a student! I hand in work and get graded." History was the one class he passed that term.

Simple changes, like increasing the font size of an assignment, can help a student think the task is less difficult. Students sometimes can find pencil-and-paper tasks intimidating, but almost all assignments or concepts have a non-paper equivalent that may be less off-putting (for example, a math game on a tablet or laptop). Being patient and flexible is also key—students' abilities may fluctuate daily, depending on underlying levels of anxiety. On Monday, they may need to take a step back, while on Wednesday they can continue to move toward more difficult methodology.

Teachers readily reduce or accommodate the way we give assignments to students with dyslexia, dysgraphia, or visual impairment, but we don't always think to make such accommodations for students with anxiety or other emotional disabilities. By meeting students where they are and systematically increasing the difficulty with support—while teaching ini-

> Penalties and incentives are unlikely to improve students' behavior. What is more helpful for students with anxiety is to teach them *how* to engage in work and to develop these skills.

tiation, persistence, and help-seeking skills—we build independent work tolerance.

To embrace the skill-building approach to work engagement and to expedite the learning of initiation, persistence, or help-seeking skills, recognize and celebrate when students use strategies instead of focusing on whether they did the work. This promotes independence and generalization of the skills, allowing teachers to increase learning time and meet the needs of *every* student. 🅴🅻

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Video Extra

In this short interview conducted at ASCD Empower17, behavior analyst Jessica Minahan describes specific and counterintuitive ways teachers can help students who experience anxiety so it doesn't thwart learning. Watch the video at www.ascd.org/el1217minahan.