



Chasing a  
Child's Potential

# IMPROVING EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING IN THE CLASSROOM



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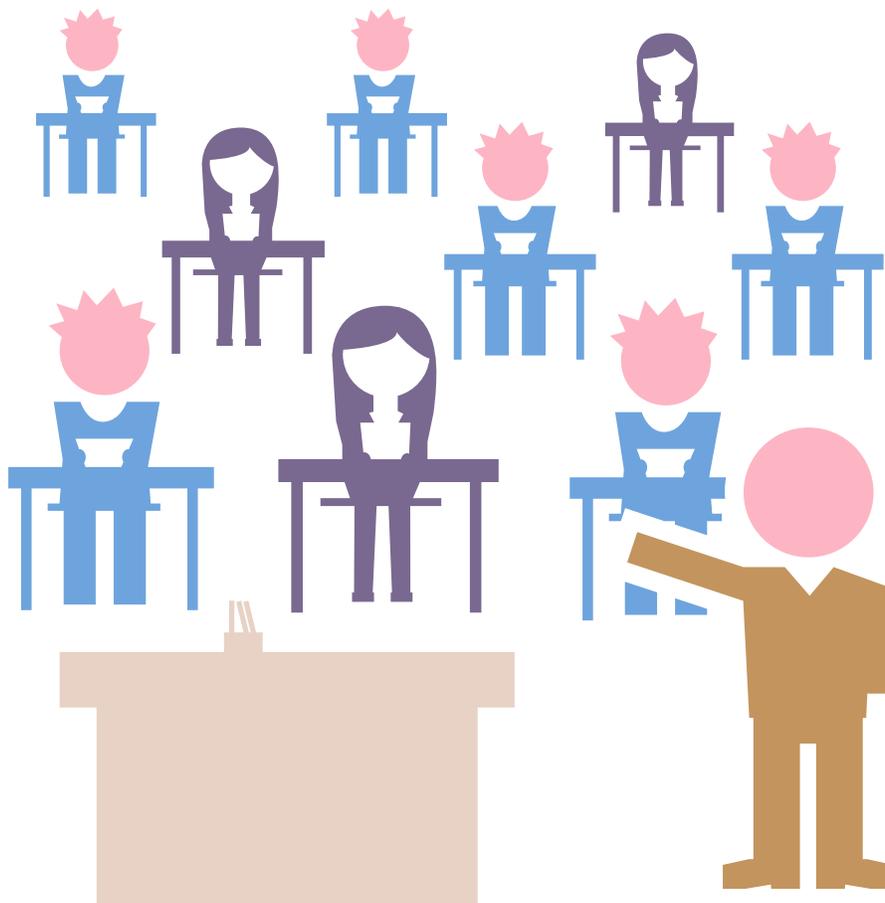


## Improving executive functioning in the classroom

For students to learn and perform to the best of their capacity, it helps if they have good executive functioning skills. There are five ways we can help improve the executive functioning of all students in the classroom.

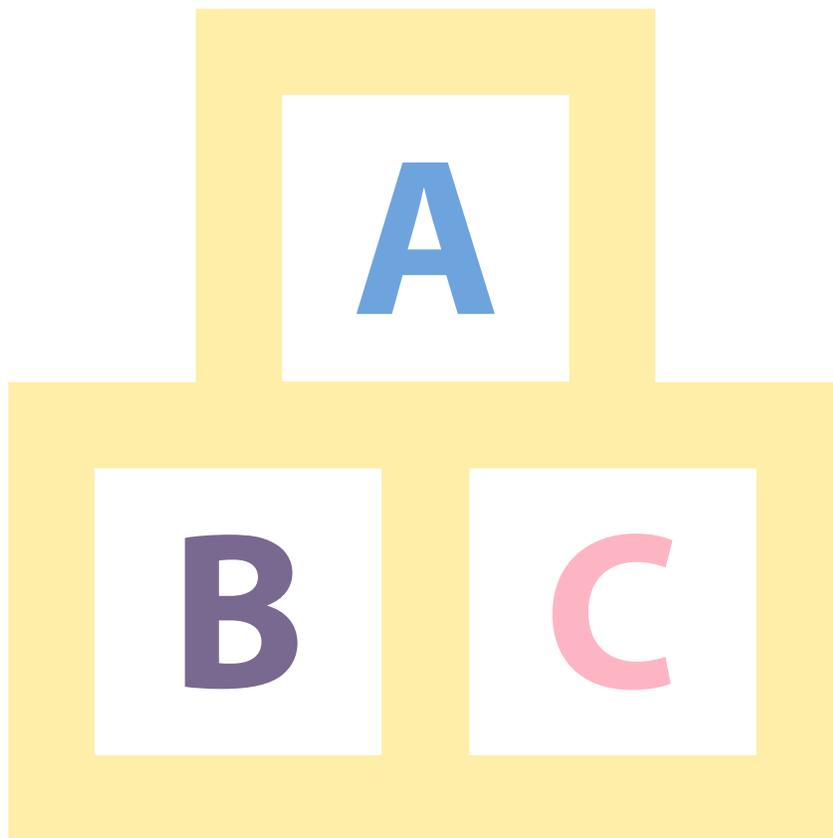
## These five strategies include:

1. Displaying important information
2. Doing one thing at a time
3. Using strategies
4. Keeping consistent routines
5. Being proactive



## Displaying important information

The first way is by displaying important information. Have you ever wondered why, in a first grade classroom, we have the ABCs posted prominently on the wall? At that age, students are still learning the letters, and we post the ABCs so that kids can look up every once in a while and remind themselves what the letters look like. There is nothing wrong with that! We can continue this practice as children get older, such as posting the names of their classmates or teacher. For older students, we can post math formulas. And by post, I don't mean this has to be a poster on the wall. It could be a binder at the student's desk that he or she can reference as needed to remind him or herself of the important information.



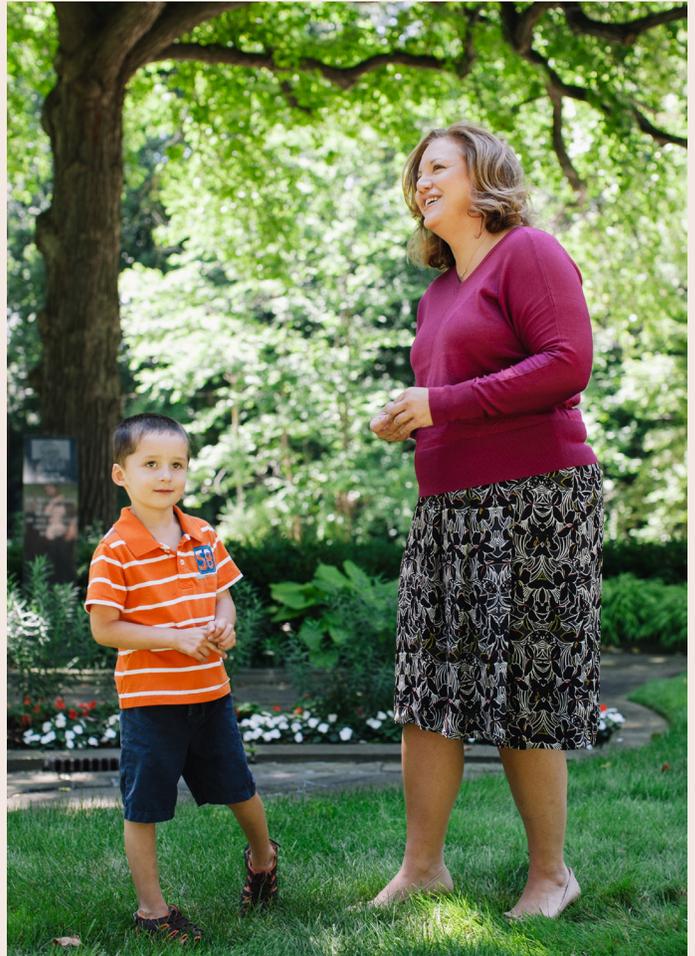


## Doing one thing at a time

The second way is by doing one thing at a time. The fancy way of saying this is, "minimize the simultaneous processing requirements in the classroom." What that means is, expect your students to do only one thing at a time! We manage and control that by doing one thing at a time ourselves. When you're passing out a worksheet, for example, pass out the papers first and only when everyone has a paper do you go ahead and give the instructions on how to complete the worksheet. If you ask a question, allow your students some time to think before calling on a responder. For many students, listening while thinking about their answer can be really difficult. Another way you can practice this is to show a visual aide, then give students time to look and think about it before starting to discuss what you've shown them. Students really do benefit from you taking your time and giving them ample opportunities to process information at a rate and level of complexity they can handle. Again, do one thing at a time.

## Using strategies

The third way is using various strategies, and encouraging your students to use them as well. Using strategies is the **smart** thing to do! It is a good idea to have methods and strategies to get things done. For example, we're all familiar with the common way of remembering the colors of the rainbow. ROYGBIV, red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet. That's a great, short and easy way to remember a lot of information. I can't emphasize this enough - it is not cheating to use strategies. It's not taking the easy way out to have a strategy, system or way of remembering things. In fact, it's even better if you can create a culture of strategy use in your classroom. In other words, have students share their strategies with each other. Keep a strategy wall or place that students can put up their ideas about how to learn and remember things. Let them share with each other! Also, allow students to keep strategy binders so they can keep track of their strategies in ways that work for them. The bottom line, is encourage strategy use and show your students when and how to use the strategies they've developed.



## Keeping consistent routines

The fourth way is by keeping consistent routines. When events and procedures play out in the classroom the same way at the same time each day, students are relaxed and much more available to learn. They devote a lot of their attention and energy to learning their new routines - learning the process, learning how to learn. When they become more comfortable, they are available to learn new information. Think back for a minute on when you learned how to drive -- all of the things you had to do before you could even put the car in reverse! Now all of those things happen automatically and you end up at your destination without having to think much about it. Well, with children, they're still learning *how to learn* and *how to be at school*. If we can keep things consistent, they can be relaxed and available to learn the new material we are showing them.



## Being proactive

The fifth way is being by proactive. Look at the tasks and assignments you give to your students. Think about where they might struggle and which parts of those tasks may give them problems. Show them methods, tools and strategies ahead of time. It's hard for anyone to solve problems when stressed, so it's a good idea to be proactive so when those areas come up, they already have a plan to work around them. It will save a lot of tears and heartache.



## Closing

Today we learned five different ways you can help all students in your classroom improve their executive functioning. These five strategies include: displaying important information, doing one thing at a time, using strategies, keeping consistent routines and being proactive. I'm sure you'll find these ways helpful as you and your students are out there chasing a child's potential.



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