



Creating a Brain Toolbox:

Building **Executive Function** Skills to Help your students thrive!

with Sarah Kesty

It started with a 7th grade “binder party”



Successful young man in front of his car

**We saw: physical chaos.
He needed: organization strategies.**



Iceberg image of above and below the surface

We stopped guessing, and we started listening



Female student with her teacher, smiling

We saw: limited work engagement
She needed: self-awareness and access tools.



Iceberg image of above and below the surface

It wasn't a matter of IF, but of HOW



Middle school boys, dissecting a squid

We saw: waiting for help, prompt dependence
They needed: to learn how to “student”

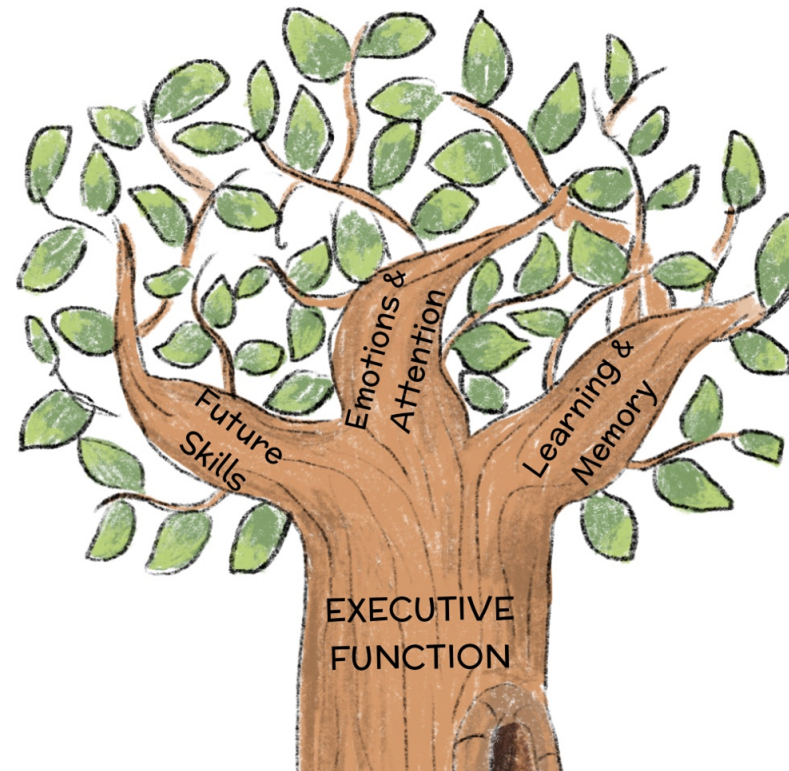


Iceberg image of above and below the surface

What is “Executive Function?”

3 Main “Branches”

- Future Skills
- Emotions and Attention
- Learning and Memory



Future skills

Include:

- Organizing
- Planning
- Prioritizing
- Visualizing
- Initiating

We see their **deficits** as:

- Forgetting assignments
- Difficulty starting tasks
- Not returning work (done or not)
- Working really hard but on low-value assignments
- Losing/hunting for the same things every day

Emotions and attention

Include:

- Emotional Regulation
- Attention and Focus
- Energy Regulation
- Inhibit Impulses
- Anticipating and meeting own needs
- Self-monitoring

We see their **deficits** as:

- Losing one's cool
- Difficulty focusing
- Attending to “wrong” things
- Feeling “odd” or left out
- Getting stuck with an emotion

Learning and Memory

Include:

- Working memory
- Steps and routines
- Processing Speed
- Flexible thinking

We see their **deficits** as:

- Forgetting steps to tasks
- Foggy thinking
- Difficulty with recall
- Struggles with synthesizing information
- Challenges with writing

Impaired EF Skills are associated with...

- **Learning Disabilities**
- **Autism**
- **ADHD and ADD**
- **Behavior Disorders**
- **Traumatic Brain Injuries and Stroke Victims**
- **Associated with poverty**
- **Associated with Mental Health Disorders such as depression and anxiety**

Update Your Tree

Roots of EF Development:

- Self-Awareness
- Strategies
- Practice
- Reflection



The Biggest Idea

Detective Perspective

When your child struggles, ask yourself:

- ★ What **skills** could they be **missing**?
- ★ What **strategies** do they need?
- ★ What can we **change** in the **environment**?



Key Phrases to Indicate Missing Skills

“Should”

You know that when you come into class, you should set up your device...

You're in 6th grade, you should...

“Just”

Just study more.

Just sit down and focus.

Just ask for help.

So. Much. Hope.



Student with her teacher

Tomorrow at our conference:



Roots

Water

Sunlight

All without adding to your plate!



Thank you!

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The Executive Function Podcast