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**Creating a Brain Toolbox:**  
 Building **Executive Function** Skills to Help your  
 students thrive!

**Part Two: In Your Classrooms**  
 Presented by Sarah Kesty

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**Perspectives...**

**Fault & Responsibility**


**Speed & Skill-Building**

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**What is “Executive Function?”**

**3 Main “Branches”**

- Future Skills
- Emotions and Attention
- Learning and Memory



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**Where do I start? (without adding to my plate?)**

- Make a "Should List"
- Think in terms of triage
- One skill at a time

**And if your brain is really tired one day, you can (Quick & Easy)**


- Turn directions into questions
- Ask the Magic 6
- Think aloud of your own EF process

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**Revisiting the Executive Function Tree**


**Roots of EF Development:**

- Self-Awareness
- Strategies
- Practice
- Reflection




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**Growing Students' Executive Function**



Direct Teaching



Questions and Coaching



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**Teaching EF Skills:**  
**Part One: Direct teaching**



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**Embedding EF Support:**  
**Opportunities to teach skills with a simple twist**

- Add it to [Social-Emotional Learning time](#)
- Turn [directions](#) into questions
- Focus on EF during [project introductions](#)
- Add small bits to your [opening/closing routines](#)
- Create a living “[Strategies Anchor Chart](#)” or bulletin board
- Use the [Calendar](#) to pick skills, make monthly themes

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**Directions → Questions (that develop EF!)**

“**Please take out your book**” → “What do you need to be ready for reading?”

“**Get ready for math**” → “What do you picture on your desk during this time?”

“**Stop clicking your pen**” → “Sounds like your brain wants some activity. How could you get movement without making a distracting sound?” (*Taps leg instead*)

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**Mini Lessons for Strategies**

**Connect:** Engage students with a story that illustrates the need

**Teach:** "Today I want to teach you that..."

**Active Engagement:** Invite students to practice/discuss with your help

**Link:** Invite students to practice the strategy and remind them when they will know they need it.

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**Teaching EF Skills:**  
**Part Two: Questions and Coaching**

A yellow watering can icon with a black handle and spout, spraying water.

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**The Magic 7 (questions that develop EF skills)**

1. "What do you notice?"
2. "What parts do you understand?"
3. "What do you think you might need right now?"
4. "How can you tell?"
5. "Where could you look for that information?"
6. "How will you remember to... ( use that strategy or take that action?)"
7. "What's your plan for..."

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**Question-Coaching techniques**

<b>Hear Responses without Judgement</b> EF Skill-building questions are designed to be open-ended.  They ask students to problem-solve and create their own solutions and systems.	<b>Remove Your Instructor Hat</b> You are simply seeking information, opinions, and reflections.  If you teach and preach, it won't be lasting learning.
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**Question-Coaching Techniques, continued**

Start broad and narrow until the student is self-identifying the first step or a strategy to try.

What homework did you bring today?  
Which assignment seems the easiest?  
Which one seems the hardest?  
What would make the most sense to work on while you have help?  
Tell me what you understand on/about this assignment...  
What's your first step?

**Funnel Your Questions**

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### Coaching stems to consider

- Some people like to...
- Have you considered...
- Tell me more about...
- What's your plan for...
- How will you be sure to...
- What's your strategy for...
- Let's practice what ---- will look like...

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### Try to Avoid...

**Closed**  
Yes/no, one-word answers give you little information and stall momentum.

**Leading**  
Let your students swim around a bit in thought. Don't lead them with your words—it will result only in short-term learning.

**Solution-Oriented**  
"Should you, Could you, Will you" have direction implied. They're often suggestions or directives in disguise and take thinking away from the student.

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### Try to Avoid...continued

**Why?**  
Why often puts people on the defensive. Instead, try to state it as "tell me more about..." or, "You were saying..."

**Rhetorical or Sarcastic**  
Avoid using emotional or judgmental questions or sarcasm, no matter how "duh!" the moment becomes.

**Step-Skipping**  
Try to avoid taking anything for granted as you walk your student through decision-making. Don't rush or skip steps that may be crucial to skill development.

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**The Magic 7 (questions that develop EF skills)**

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**Time to practice!**

I'm a 6th grader who's sat for 10 minutes looking semi-busy with everything but the written work you've assigned.

What are you assuming?

What are you wondering?

What questions can you ask?



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**Let's Calendar some EF Skills Themes**


January	February	March	April	May	June
Self-regulation (sit, manage attention) Goal-setting	Goal monitoring Project: Chunking Time Est Planning Sleep and health Social and love	IEP empowerment EF at home Stress management, emotional regulation Projects	State testing  Catch up plans (spring break)	Energy deficits, mental stamina low Hail Mary (last min grade-savers) Calendar management (backwards plan)	Grad check lists Reflections on what went RIGHT

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**Fresh start ideas: Reboot the semester!**

Consider "Organizing Parties"

- Digital declutter
- Archive emails
- Desks, backpacks, lockers
- Home study spaces




Collect/Dump → Sort → Organize → Plan to **Maintain**

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**Fresh start ideas: Reboot Your Classroom Space**


**Make Your Classroom EF-Friendly**

- Organization, with labels
- References as visuals ("You should know this...")
- Calendar and daily schedule (at every age)
- Create checklists for repeating tasks
- Limit distractions



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**You are the hope!**



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**Charting the Cs**  
Cooperation, Communication, Collaboration  
enhancing performance, development of people, the customer & the business

**Thank you!**

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