

UNDERSTANDING EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING

LEARNING SUPPORT ACTIVITIES • TEACHER RESOURCE

Executive functioning refers to the mental skills that help students plan, organize, manage time, pay attention, remember information, regulate emotions, and complete tasks. These skills are essential for learning but develop at different rates for different students. Difficulties with executive functioning are not a reflection of intelligence or motivation. With appropriate supports, students can be highly successful in the ASL classroom.

What Is Executive Functioning?

Executive functioning includes a group of cognitive skills that help students set goals, begin tasks, stay focused, organize materials, manage time, solve problems, and monitor their own progress. These skills continue to develop throughout childhood and adolescence.

What You May Notice in an ASL Classroom

- Difficulty getting started on assignments
- Trouble organizing materials or keeping track of work
- Forgetting directions or assignment steps
- Difficulty managing time during activities
- Becoming overwhelmed by multi-step tasks
- Inconsistent completion of assignments

Student Strengths

- Creative problem-solving
- Strong visual learning skills
- Curiosity and innovative thinking
- Ability to succeed with clear structure and support
- Growth through routines and consistent expectations

How Teachers Can Help

- Provide clear routines and expectations.
- Break large assignments into smaller steps.
- Use visual schedules, checklists, and reminders.
- Teach organizational strategies explicitly.
- Reinforce planning and self-monitoring skills.

Things to Avoid

- Assuming students are lazy or unmotivated.
- Giving too many directions at one time.
- Expecting organization skills to develop without instruction.
- Punishing students for executive functioning difficulties instead of teaching strategies.

★ Remember

Executive functioning skills can be taught and strengthened over time. Consistent routines, visual supports, and explicit instruction help students become more independent while maintaining high academic expectations.