Making the Hard Things Easier

And Knowing When You've Arrived

New Leaf
CLINIC

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Activity

- Write down something that was difficult for you to do as a child
- Write down something that is difficult for you to do as an adult
- Same/different?
- Does it prevent you from living a satisfying/productive life?
- How do you make accommodations for yourself?
- When did you realize the need for these accommodations?
- What had to happen for you to realize your need for help?
  - Self-awareness, humility, willingness to change, asking for help
- Life does not require the smartest/most talented individuals
- Hard work and determination to attain goals wins over pure talent

Overview

- Role of CASP
- Manage, Measure, and Mobilize student growth and development
- Benefits of MMM
- Define Executive Functioning
- Identifying the Executive Functions
- Classroom examples of Executive Dysfunction
- Ways to support/develop Executive Functions in students

Role of Covenant Academic Support Program

- Temporary support while remediation is occurring AND/OR help in strengthening weak areas
- Pre-Grammar/Grammar- Testing Center, plus extra help (reteaching, accommodations, etc)
- Logic- Content mastery, testing center, or both
- Rhetoric- Testing center only

Student Growth and Development

- Manage
  - Reteaching, testing accommodations, liaison, advocating.

- Measure
  - Grades, behavior changes, teacher feedback, direct observation
  - Are management strategies working?
  - Have we met our goals?
  - Do we need to change strategies?

- Mobilize- "To make something movable or capable of movement"
  - Autonomous learners
  - Lifelong learners
  - Self-advocates

How to Measure what you Manage

- Develop Goals
  - Identify struggles (teacher input, assessment reports)
  - Specific to the individual and his/her diagnosis
  - Behaviors that support academic functioning
- Measure movement toward goals
  - pre/post
  - Teacher and parent feedback
- Reassess Goals
  - Quarterly, semester, annually

Executive Functions- Support Academic Development

- Definition
    - An umbrella term for the management of cognitive processes, including working memory, reasoning, task flexibility, problem solving including planning and execution.
    - A set of mental skills that helps you get things done. These skills are controlled by the frontal lobe. Allows you to manage time and pay attention.
- The brain's hub/administrator
- Not a specific diagnosis, but affected by
    - Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
    - Anxiety
    - Depression
    - Learning Differences

The Executive Functions

- Specific
- Measurable
- Support Academic Functioning
- Struggles with the Executive Functions are seen in multiple diagnoses
- Necessary for successful and autonomous (self-governed) learning
- Not all struggles with Executive Functioning represent pathology
- Remediation is possible
- Direct instruction is necessary for some to develop
- Can be facilitated by routines, modeling, and meaningful relationships

What are the Executive Functions

- As assessed by the Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Function (BRIEF-2)
  - Inhibit
  - Self-Monitor
  - Shift
  - Emotional Control
  - Initiate
  - Working Memory
  - Plan/Organize
  - Task Monitor
  - Organization of Materials

Inhibit

The ability to not act on impulse; to stop one's own behavior at the appropriate time.

- Classroom Example
  - Student blurts out answers without being called upon.
- Scaffold the skill
  - Pause when the student interrupts you, address what has happened, discuss alternatives (raising hand, standing, writing down answer)

Self-Monitor

The ability to measure the effect one's behaviors have on others, including teachers and peers.

- Classroom Examples
  - Student speaks tersely or disrespectfully to a teacher when angry
  - Student brags about abilities
  - Student asks teacher inappropriate questions about another student in front of the class
- Scaffold the skill
  - Provide real time feedback to student, "I know you may not have meant it, but you sounded very disrespectful when you said that. What's another way you could say that?"
  - "Sally, I noticed the look on Kelly's face you said that. It seems you may have hurt her feelings."

Shift

The ability to move freely from one situation, activity, or aspect of a problem to another.

- Classroom Example
  - Transition to specials, or from one type of instruction to another
  - Getting stuck on one type of math problem and not transitioning to the more complicated or different problem
- Scaffold the skill
  - Provide a schedule of activities for the day, week; Daily "what to expect today"
  - Provide transition time/5-minute warnings
  - Give an explanation of how the math problems build on each other/are similar or different

Emotional Control

The ability to modulate emotional responses with change in situation/setting

- Classroom Example
  - Becomes tearful or irritable very easily and often
  - Is easily offended/hurt by peers
  - Struggles to remain calm on school party or special activity days
- Scaffold the skill
  - Develop a specific strategy for special activity days (bathroom break, walk to water fountain)
  - Develop a signal between teacher and student to alter it is happening and initiate plan
  - Designate a friend to help calm the student
  - After the fact, discuss what was upsetting and alternate behaviors

Initiate

The ability to begin a task or activity, as well as independently generating ideas, responses, or problem- solving strategies.

- Classroom Example
  - Difficulty getting started on their work or project (distractions, multiple breaks, pencil sharpening)
- Scaffold the skill
  - Give the student a prepping time period. Warnings or timers may be necessary.
  - Problem-solve a plan with student (1,2,3) or starting with easiest/hardest thing

Working Memory

The ability to actively hold information in the mind for the purpose of completing a task or activity.

- Classroom Example
  - Difficulty following through with multi-step sequential directions (multiple tasks in the room, or multi-step math problems)
- Scaffold the skill
  - Make a list
  - Talk through the steps of the problem before beginning (What's first, second, third; how many steps total)

Plan/Organize

The ability to manage current and future-oriented task demands within the situational context.

- Classroom Examples
    - Maintaining their planner, managing study schedule with appropriate priority and time, having supplies necessary to begin work
- Scaffold the skill
    - Go over study plan for the week based upon homework and test schedule. Discuss the amount of time, frequency, and urgency of each assignment/test. Help the student develop the daily habit of checking the planner at key points in the day.

Task Monitor

The ability to assess one's own performance during or shortly after finishing a task to ensure accuracy or appropriate attainment of a goal.

- Classroom Examples
  - Running out of time on class assignments (distracted or too invested)
  - Seems unaware of how elaborate/simple the work needs to be
  - Completes the assignment incorrectly, even though it was not making sense
- Scaffold the skill
  - Encourage reading directions twice
  - Pausing after every couple of problems/questions and "taking a step back"
  - Checking in with the teaching after a few questions for feedback
  - Before starting work ask, "Is this the best use of my time?"

Organization of Materials

The ability to manage one's everyday environment with respect to orderliness of work, play and storage spaces (desk, backpacks, lockers)

- Classroom Examples
    - Student completed their homework or project and left it at home
    - Backpack, desk, and/or locker are a mess
    - Student never seems to have the appropriate materials at the right time
- Scaffold the skill
    - Discuss realistic goals for organization (weekly cleanouts, central location for supplies)
    - Work with students and parents to develop a consistent strategy for helping the child remember materials (kids with multiple houses really can struggle)

Resources

www.understood.org

http://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/executive-function/

Smart but Scattered, Peg Dawson and Richard Guare (also an edition for teens specifically)

Executive Function in the Classroom, Christopher Kaufman

The Everything Parent's Guide to Children with Executive Functioning Disorder, Rebecca Branstetter

Thank you!

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