

Making Time for Executive Function

SUMMARY

In this episode of Research Conversations, cognitive neuroscientist Dr. Eve Miller and former educators Dr. Jennifer Chevalier and Kim Yaris discuss how strengthening executive functions such as cognitive flexibility, working memory, and inhibitory control can create more time for educators to meet other instructional priorities.

DEFINITION

Executive function refers to a collection of cognitive abilities that enable individuals to effectively control their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors in order to achieve their desired objectives. These abilities encompass various skills including cognitive flexibility, working memory, and inhibitory control. By utilizing these executive functions, students are better equipped to plan, organize, problem-solve, prioritize tasks, and adapt to changing circumstances which, in turn, can positively impact their academic performance.

TRY THIS!

- **To develop cognitive flexibility:**
Teach students to look at situations from multiple points-of-view. For example, when writing a literary analysis, ask students to look at an event in a story from the perspectives of multiple characters.
- **To develop working memory:**
Teach students to show what they know using multiple modalities. For example, if they recently learned how to multiply exponents through numeric representation, they could teach it to another student using a visual representation such as a diagram.
- **To develop inhibitory control:**
As a whole class, work on skill building around following instructions and resisting the urge to blurt out answers. For example, when reviewing for an upcoming test, play games with clearly outlined rules for responding.

MORE INFORMATION

- [Executive Function: Implications for Education](#)
This article discusses the ways in which executive function impacts students and schools.
- [Student Leadership Builds Academic Improvement By Strengthening Executive Function](#)
This infographic developed by the Research Team at FranklinCovey Education shows how developing leadership and applying the 7 Habits support strengthening executive function.