



LANDMARK SCHOOL OUTREACH PROGRAM

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR EDUCATORS

The following is an excerpt from Patricia W. Newhall's new book in Landmark Outreach's Language-Based Teaching Series. **Executive Function: Foundations for Learning and Teaching** provides essential information and practical classroom resources K-12 educators need to build students' language and literacy skills...because all learning and skill develops through executive function. This book is available for purchase from Landmark Outreach. Many other resources for educators can be found at <http://www.landmarkoutreach.org>.

Knowing When to Intervene

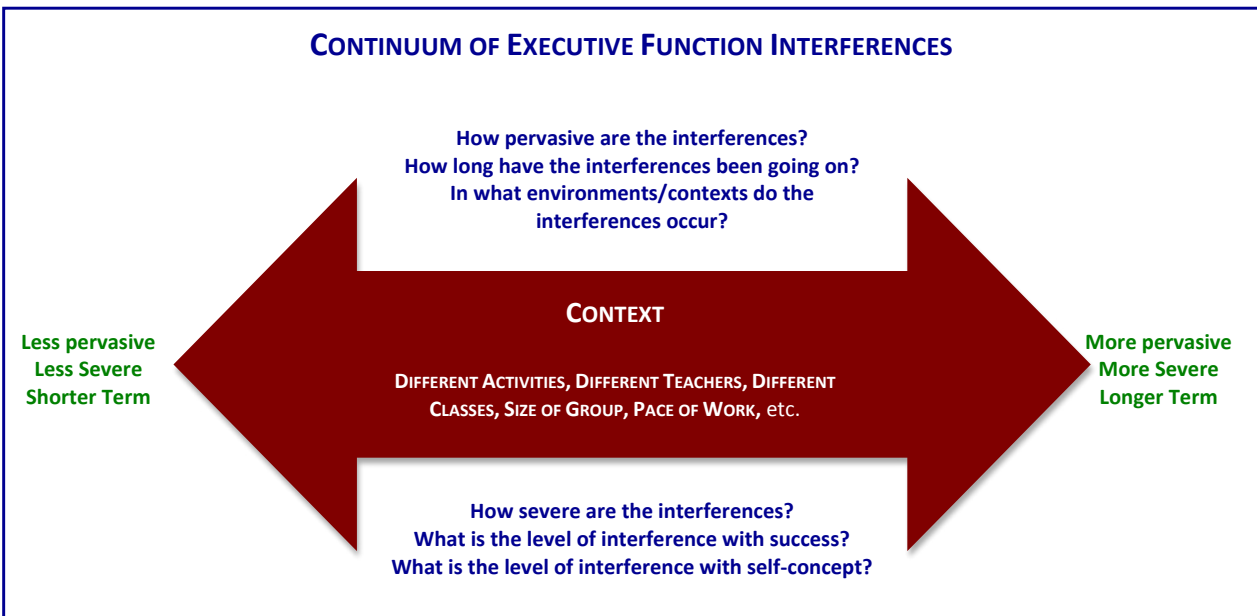
Knowing when intervention is called for, and what interventions to provide can be extremely challenging and frustrating for educators and caregivers, even when they know quite a lot about executive function. Difficulties with executive function vary dramatically in relation to the environmental context and the severity of interference with goal-oriented behavior. A student may have no difficulty in one class or activity but profound trouble managing others. A student may exhibit no executive function difficulty in elementary school, but start to struggle in middle school, or high school, or college. Figure 4 offers a graphic with questions to consider when reflecting on students' academic and interpersonal behavior.

One aim of this book is to provide readers with information to assist in thinking and observing various aspects of executive function interference. Many students have significant weaknesses in this area that go unrecognized. Some struggle with executive function enough to cause anxiety and impede their performance, but not enough that educators or caregivers recognize a problem. Others exhibit noticeable difficulties with schoolwork and/or have identified behavioral issues that stem from disorders of attention or executive function, but they are misdiagnosed or

Difficulties with executive function vary dramatically in relation to the environmental context and the severity of interference with goal orientation and achievement. A student may have no difficulty in one class or activity but profound trouble managing others.



underdiagnosed. Formal assessments of executive function are notoriously unreliable because the assessments usually occur in an environment that is quite different from the student's functional living and learning environments.



Interventions for Executive Function

No single book or workshop could provide a thorough course of intervention for difficulties with executive function. The role executive function plays in learning and living is so complex that a one-size-fits-all answer to the question, “What should I do to build my students’ (or my own) skills?” would be doomed to fail. Yet, there are principles that can guide us to empower ourselves as teachers and our students as learners.



LANDMARK SCHOOL OUTREACH PROGRAM

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR EDUCATORS

One of the most important principles is to acknowledge and remember that all learners, including ourselves, are unique. Our individual responses to opportunities for learning and demonstrating our proficiency vary according to our past experiences, the contexts in which we live and learn in the present, and our goals.

It is essential to become aware of our own learning and teaching profiles as well as our students' learning and performance profiles. How? We must be guided by a second important principle: we educators are learners ourselves. Not only do we learn from our colleagues, books, and professional development activities, we also learn from our students. As we strive to become ever-better listeners, observers, and communicators with our colleagues AND our students about what works and what doesn't in the dynamic ecosystem of the classroom, we become more attuned teachers. When we are attuned, we experience continual growth in our understanding of how people learn and demonstrate their learning most successfully, and what we can do to empower our students.

We educators are learners ourselves. Not only do we learn from our colleagues, books, and professional development activities, we also learn from our students. As we strive to become ever-better listeners, observers, and communicators with our colleagues AND our students about what works and what doesn't in the dynamic ecosystem of the classroom, we become more attuned teachers.

What You'll Find in This Book

Chapters 1-4 in this book offer a synthesis of information about an aspect of executive function, a selection of student profiles with reflective questions for educators, comments from students about their learning experiences, and models of suggested teaching approaches and strategies.

Chapter 1 introduces executive function as a construct for understanding the process that drives human beings' goal-oriented behavior. Chapter 2 describes the roles attention and memory play in the learning process and the workings of executive function. Chapter 3 extends the description of attention and memory by exploring the



LANDMARK SCHOOL OUTREACH PROGRAM

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR EDUCATORS

influences emotion, motivation, and effort have on learning and behavior. Chapter 4 explores the role executive function plays in the development of academic proficiency.

Chapter 5 builds upon the previous chapters' acknowledgement that successful learning and performance is dependent upon context and unique to each individual. The chapter offers a way to think and talk about our own and our students' learning styles, differences, and disabilities.