

Building Executive Function Skills to Support Self-Advocacy in Gifted Teens

PAGE Conference
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WIU Mission/Vision and Standards

Our Mission:

The mission of the Westmoreland Intermediate Unit is to provide a collective system of support to enhance educational opportunities for our community and the learners we serve.

Our Vision:

To equip all learners for success by providing high quality, purposeful and fiscally responsible solutions to community needs.



Today's Objectives

- Define Executive Function Skills that Lead to Self-Advocacy
- Explore Reasons that Delay the Development of Executive Function Skills
- Examine Strategies that Teach Self-Advocacy Skills

Slides:

<https://bit.ly/3FC8hVf>

(case specific)

Needs and expectations that
are not communicated
WILL NEVER BE MET.

”

Welcome!

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STEP TO THE LINE

1. When you were a student, you knew how you learned best.
2. When you need help with a task at work, you tell your boss, even if it is something you should already know.
3. When you get a haircut you don't like, you ask the hairdresser to fix it before leaving.
4. You work hard toward and accomplish every goal.

Adapted from "Executive Skills Questionnaire" by Peg Dawson and Richard Guare

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5. When someone else receives credit for a task you did or contributed to, you speak up.
6. When you are speaking to someone and don't understand them, you ask them to speak more clearly.
7. When a co-worker continuously interrupts your work to chat, you tell them that it isn't a good time.
8. If you become disabled, you know all of your rights under the law.

Adapted from "Executive Skills Questionnaire" by Peg Dawson and Richard Guare

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Connections Between Executive Function Skills and Self-Advocacy



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What are Executive Functions?



CEO



Conductor



Air Traffic
Controller



Images: Creative Commons

Common Executive Function Skills

Response Inhibition

Emotional Control

Sustained Attention

Organization

Flexibility

Goal-Directed Persistence

Working Memory

Task Initiation

Planning/Prioritization

Time Management

Metacognition

Dawson, P., & Guare, R. (2009). *Smart but Scattered: The Revolutionary "executive skills" approach to helping kids reach their potential*. The Guilford Press.



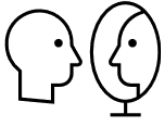
SELF ADVOCACY is the process of understanding your wants and needs and speaking up to assure they are met.

”

Wirthlin, E. (2022, March 28). Tips for students: The power of self-advocacy. Davidson Institute. <https://bit.ly/3QkdKpS>.

CC Image: <https://bit.ly/3rKNBHi>

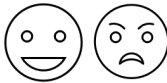
Executive Function Skills that Lead to Self-Advocacy



Metacognition



Goal-Directed Persistence



Emotional Control

Executive Function Skills that Lead to Self-Advocacy

Metacognition

Goal-Directed Persistence

Emotional Control

How do each of these executive function skills contribute to self-advocacy?

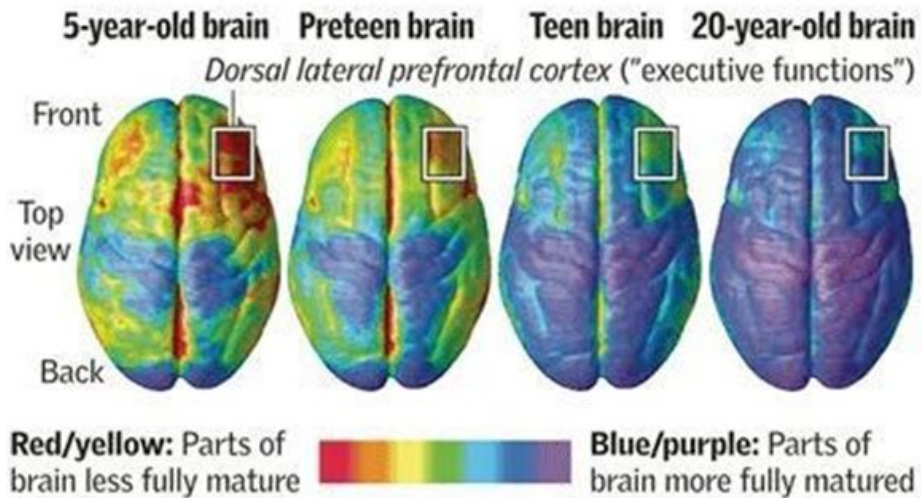
Think...Turn...Talk

The Brain and Gifted Adolescents



Image: Creative Commons

Maturation of the Brain

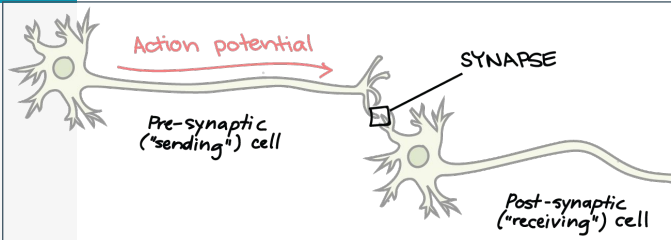


Sources: National Institute of Mental Health;
Paul Thompson, Ph.D., UCLA Laboratory of
Neuro Imaging

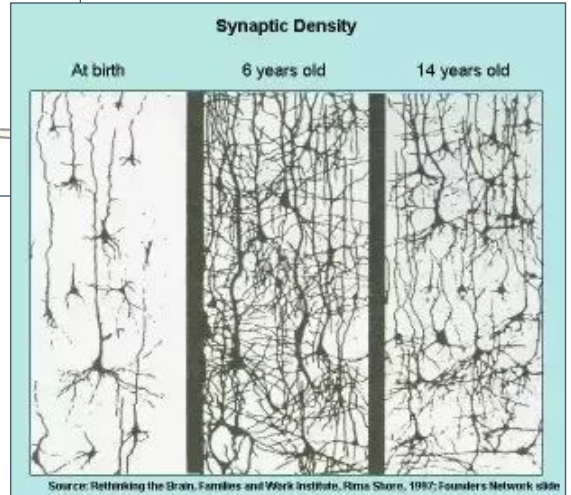
Thomas McKay | The Denver Post

Synapse Pruning and the Gifted Brain

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100+ trillion



Synapse Pruning

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Neurotypical synapse pruning begins ~8 years old.

Highly gifted synapse pruning begins ~12 years old. This creates a delayed “sponge phase”, thus delaying energy to grow prefrontal cortex by 3-4 years

Asynchrony: uneven development in cognitive, physical, and emotional development

Wirthlin, E. (2023a, February 15). Executive functioning and gifted children. Davidson Institute. <https://bit.ly/3S1Avil>

Shaw, P., Greenstein, D., Lerch, J., Clasen, L., Lenroot, R., Gogtay, N., Evans, A., Rapoport, J., & Giedd, J. (2006). Intellectual ability and cortical development in children and adolescents. *Nature*, 440(7084), 676–679. <https://doi.org/10.1038/nature04513>

Supporting Students' Executive Functioning to Improve Self-Advocacy



Image: Creative Commons

CC Image - <https://bit.ly/46NWiUu>

Steps to Self-Advocacy

01

Identify yourself and your rights as a learner and matching needs to opportunities

Metacognition

02

Creating goals and action plans to obtain learning opportunities

Goal-Directed Persistence

03

Utilize coping and emotional regulation to communicate what you need from others

Emotional Control

Identifying the Learner and the Learner Rights

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Metacognition

- 1) Measuring strengths and areas of growth of executive function skills
- 2) What kind of learner am I?
- 3) What are my passions?
- 4) What are my transition goals?
- 5) What does GIFTED mean to ME?
- 6) What are my RIGHTS as a GIFTED INDIVIDUAL?
- 7) How are these need being met, or not being met?



High
Achievement



Low
Growth

286 Surveyed Students:

Only 31% of Gifted Coordinators explained what gifted means to students.

Douglas, D. (2017). *The power of self-advocacy for gifted learners: Teaching the 4 essential steps to success*. Free Spirit Publishing Inc. (pp.16)

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Metacognition

Executive Function
Skills Questionnaire

Link:

<https://bit.ly/EF-SKILLS-HS>*(Dawson and Guare from Smart But scattered...)*Executive Skills Questionnaire – Teen Version
(Dawson and Guare from Smart But scattered...)

Rate each item below based on how well it describes you, using this rating scale to choose the appropriate score. Then add the three scores in each section. Use the key on the next page to determine your executive skills strengths (two to three lowest scores) and weaknesses (two to three highest scores).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	Strongly	Disagree	Tend to	Neutral	Tend to	Agree	Strongly	
	Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Agree	
Item								Score
1. I act on impulse.								_____
2. I get in trouble for talking too much in class.								_____
3. I say things without thinking.								_____
	TOTAL SCORE:							_____
4. I say, "I'll do it later" and then forget about it.								_____
5. I forget homework assignments or forget to take home needed materials.								_____
6. I lose or misplace belongings such as coats, gloves, sports equipment, etc.								_____
	TOTAL SCORE:							_____
7. I get annoyed when homework is too hard or confusing or takes too long to finish.								_____
8. I have a short fuse – am easily frustrated.								_____
9. I get upset when things don't go as planned.								_____
	TOTAL SCORE:							_____
10. If the first solution to a problem doesn't work, I have trouble thinking of a different one.								_____
11. I get upset when I have to change plans or routines.								_____
12. I have problems with open-ended homework assignments (e.g., deciding what to write about when given a creative writing assignment).								_____
	TOTAL SCORE:							_____
13. I have difficulty paying attention and am easily distracted.								_____
14. I run out of steam before finishing homework or other tasks.								_____
15. I have problems sticking with schoolwork or chores until they are done.								_____
	TOTAL SCORE:							_____
16. I put off homework or chores until the last minute.								_____
17. I have difficulty setting aside fun activities in order to start homework.								_____
18. I need to be reminded to start chores or homework.								_____
	TOTAL SCORE:							_____
19. I have trouble planning for big assignments (knowing what to do first, second, etc.)								_____
20. I have difficulty setting priorities when I have a lot of things to do.								_____
21. I become overwhelmed by long-term projects or big assignments.								_____
	TOTAL SCORE:							_____

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Metacognition

Roger's Interest
Inventory;
Karen B. Rogers, 2000

Link:

<https://bit.ly/49fPhcE>Rogers' Interest Inventory
© 2000 by Karen B. Rogers

1. Your school has decided it wants to raise money for new equipment for the playground. You and your two best friends have been asked to brainstorm a list of possible fund raisers. You have quite a long list now and must decide which three to recommend to the school principal. Mark your first choice activity with a 3, second choice with a 2, and third choice with a 3. Pick ones that you think would be FUN to do.

_____ Sell candy door-to-door	_____ Put on a school play and charge for tickets
_____ Offer a class on using computers to parents in the school	_____ Arrange a basketball tournament class team vs. class team and charge for tickets
_____ Make children's toys and sell them	_____ Put on a fund-raising telethon
_____ Charge admission for viewing science fair exhibits at the school	_____ Create a literary magazine of students' creative writing and sell it
_____ Visit local businesses and solicit donations	_____ Host a math or chess competition and charge admission

2. It's summer vacation and you will now have lots of time to read. What kind(s) of books will you read?

Kind of books (like fiction, mysteries, fantasy, adventure, joke, science, history, biography, reference books, etc.)

Titles of books you have already read but want to read again...

Titles of books you have never read, but really want to read...

3. Put a check next to those book titles below which sound interesting enough for you to read.

_____ The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales	_____ The Iliyan Adventure	_____ Carry On, Mr. Bowditch
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Metacognition

Possibilities for Learning; Lannie Kanevsky, 2017

Link: <https://bit.ly/3FDMVGK>

POSSIBILITIES FOR LEARNING
Lannie Kanevsky (2017)



Name _____ Date _____
Age _____ Grade _____

This form is all about your learning. It's NOT A TEST. It gives you a chance to tell teachers what you like to learn and how you'd like to learn. You'll also be able to say what you don't like. The form has 5 parts. Each part helps you discover different things about the ways you like to learn.

=====

Please circle your favourite school subject or write the one you like best in the blank.

Math Reading Writing Science Social Studies Other _____

=====

PART ONE: SETTINGS FOR LEARNING

This part of the form is about the places, people and things you like to have around you while you are learning your favourite subject. Always think about the school subject you said was your FAVOURITE when you are rating the sentences in all parts of this form. Use the letters to show how much you agree with each sentence:

SA	A	N	D	SD
Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

What are some other words that have the same meaning as these letters?

SA	A	N	D	SD
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Now, please use the letters to rate each of these sentences.

SA	A	N	D	SD	1. I like doing projects in a group when I get to choose my group.
SA	A	N	D	SD	2. I like doing projects in a group when my teacher assigns us to groups.
SA	A	N	D	SD	3. When I'm working in a group, I like working with others who learn slower than I do.

- 1 -

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Goal-Directed Persistence

Now that I know myself and my rights, how do I obtain what I need to grow?

- 1) I will learn about and be an active member/leader of my Gifted Individualized Education Plan (GIEP).
- 2) I will communicate the goals and short term learning outcomes in my GIEP.
- 3) I will investigate options for enrichment and acceleration.
- 4) I will explore how my goals will support my post-graduate career and education goals.

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*Emotional
Control*

Now that I know what I need, how do I advocate for it?

- 1) I will receive support from a trusted teacher or staff member at school to learn how to self-advocate for my needs as a learner.
- 2) I will practice communication skills.
- 3) I will learn how to follow-up with my requests.
- 4) I will practice coping skills to overcome anxiety, nervousness, and frustration when self-advocating for myself.

Standards to Support Self-Advocacy Goals

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Standard - CC.1.5.9-10.D (9th Grade Standard - Speaking)

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning; ensure that the presentation is appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

Standard - CC.1.4.9-10.U (9th Grade Standard - Writing)

Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology's capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.

323 Surveyed Students:

87% of students occasionally or always wished a teacher would modify something for them.

Douglas, D. (2017). *The power of self-advocacy for gifted learners: Teaching the 4 essential steps to success*. Free Spirit Publishing Inc. (pp.28)
CC image: <https://bit.ly/3SkdWXm>

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Resources

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- 1) [“The Power of Self-Advocacy for Gifted Learners”](#) by Deb Douglas
- 2) [“A Guide to Self-Advocacy for Gifted Students”](#)- Davidson Academy
- 3) [“Boosting Executive Skills in the Classroom”](#), by Joyce Cooper-Kahn and Margaret Foster
- 4) [“Smart, but Scattered”](#) by Peg Dawson & Richard Guare
- 5) [“Self-Advocacy for Gifted Teens”](#) VIDEO - Bloom Edu - Good and quick video for students

for being
an advocate
for gifted
youth

