



## Some Executive Functioning Pointers for Supervising Your Children's Home Schooling

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***Here are some simple pointers that can facilitate the home-schooling process. Please note that the executive function skills addressed are highlighted.***

Make certain children know what the assignment is and have an opportunity to ask questions before beginning.

If there is more than one assignment, help the child **prioritize** which to do first, second etc.

Give your child advanced notice of the materials needed to complete the assignment. If he or she does not have the materials needed, give them a checklist of materials needed for successful completion prior to his or her starting (**planning, organization, self-regulation**).

If the child has difficulty **initiating** or stops working, find out why. A self-check card is helpful, to help your child start the assignment and monitor his or her progress as the assignment is completed. Directions for making a Self-Check Card are attached. (**initiating, planning, organization, self-regulation**).

If your child has a short attention span, take that into account. Even when the work is not too difficult for the child, he or she may not be able to complete an assignment in one sitting. They may need the assignment chunked/divided into parts to be finished one at a time with a short break to move around between the chunks. Estimate how long your child attends to an assignment by observing them complete the first part of an assignment. Note their attention span when completing an assignment may be much shorter than when he or she is playing a video game because different parts of the brain are activated. In addition, the child may look like they are **attending to an assignment**, but they may be daydreaming. We want children to demonstrate "focused attention" where they attend to the assignment and focus on the part of the assignment they need to know in order to successfully complete it. Children vary in how long they can sustain this type of attention, so assignments need to be tailored to what is possible for them. We find the use of a silent timer is helpful to children who tend to lose focus and

ultimately attend to other environmental stimuli. Err on the side of estimating too much time at first rather than too little, however, set time limits that need to be completed. It is difficult for some children to sustain attention over enough time to complete the assignment even if it has been chunked. In that case, let them come back to the assignment at a later time. (attending, initiating, focusing, self-regulation).

When you ask your child to check his or her work, they may find it too difficult to focus on each word and just look at the whole before turning it in. Provide simple instructions that address how the child needs to check his or her work. For example, if the assignment involves writing a response you might say, "Please check your work by reading what you wrote out loud and stopping to use self-talk to make sure that you have:

- spelled words correctly
- written complete sentences
- used correct punctuation." (attending, initiating, focusing, organization, self-regulation).

If the work is too difficult for your child, check the available resources provided by the school, or use some of the online resources like Kahn Academy or apps to help. Some children have difficulty remembering (working memory) how to do an assignment even though they have known how to do it in the past. (initiating, working memory, self-regulation).

Going to the next assignment or stopping work on an assignment can be difficult for some children (shifting). A visualization of what is happening next and a visual reminder of when is very helpful. Checklists or a sequence chart can be helpful when children are completing an assignment over time or completing a series of assignments.

Reading and writing (communication) can be problematic for some children when trying to complete an assignment, so you may have to provide an e reader or reader pen and voice to text technology. For reading **Word Talk** is one example of a free e-reader program. For writing **VoicetoText.org** is an example of a free online speech to text software.

This brief tip sheet addresses some of the executive function difficulties your child may experience during homeschooling; however, we will be posting additional information for you on our website as we all work through this together.

## Self - Check Card Directions

### Materials Needed:

- 4x6 index card with one hole punched at the top and another at the bottom
- 1 pipe cleaner
- 1 bead that fits tightly over the pipe cleaner
- tape for securing the pipe cleaner on the back of the card

Everyone wants to do well in school, and we all know that one way to do well is to work hard in class. We can help ourselves in class by paying attention to instruction and explanation of the information we need to start and finish our work in a timely manner. Some days it is harder to focus on our work than others. It is helpful if we each keep ourselves alert and on task. This self-check scale helps you keep track of how you are doing getting started, working on, and finishing your assignments correctly.

You will have a card with a movable bead. When your teacher says self - check, move your bead to where you rate your work at that moment. This is your opinion of how you are doing. Ask yourself this question

Where am I on this self-check card in terms of staying on task and finishing my assignment on time?

Be truthful with yourself. Your teacher may walk around and look at how you self-rated. You are not being graded on where you put your bead.

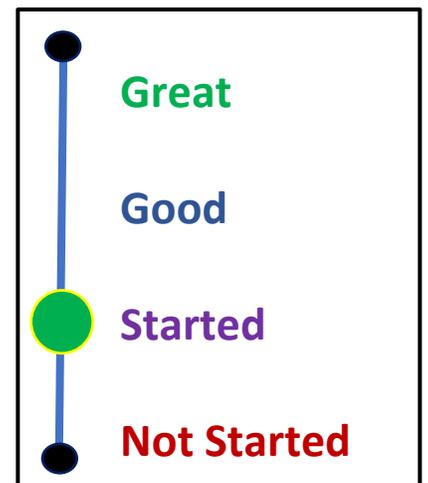
These are the monitoring ratings—

**Great** – moving at a brisk pace and having no problems

**Good** – moving at a pace to finish my assignment on time

**Started** – have started and have questions

**Not Started** – have not started my assignment yet



What if you do not like your rating? Ask yourself what you can do to improve. Try and see if you can move up to the next higher rating by paying attention, getting started, and working until the task is finished on time.

**Taken in part from Strosnider, R. & Sharpe, V. (2019). *The executive function guidebook: (Strategies to help all students achieve success.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 153-156.**