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I Never Knew That My Child had These Learning and Behavioral Issues!

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The information below is 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.

With precautionary procedures in place due to COVID-19, online learning has become the means for continuing the K-12 educational process. As parents work with their children to complete assignments, they may encounter behaviors from their children that they have not previously observed. We would like to provide a quick summary of executive functions and the possible signs a child may present if he or she has executive function deficits. While these signs may suggest executive function deficits in one or more categories, do not be alarmed. Executive Functioning Deficit is not recognized as a disability, it is: "...a group of processes that allows individuals to self-regulate the ways in which they interact with their environment. Executive function skills develop and improve throughout childhood and into young adulthood" (p. 6). Executive function skills can be improved with explicit strategic instruction.

Our model addresses 5 categories of executive functions: **Working Memory**, **Prioritizing-Organizing-Sequencing-Managing Time**, **Attending-Initiating-Focusing**, **Social/Emotional and Inhibiting**, and **Communicating-Cognitive Flexibility-Shifting**.

Possible Signs of Executive Functioning Difficulties

Here are some **Working Memory** look fors (p. 8)

- Does not connect current learning with previous learning
- Difficulty remembering sounds and words
- Difficulty with letter formation
- Forgets the sequence for spelling words
- Difficulty memorizing facts
- Starts talking and forgets what he/she is saying mid-sentence
- Forgets to complete assignments
- Forgets to turn in homework





Here are some **Prioritizing-Organizing-Sequencing-Managing Time** look fors (p. 8)

- Does not plan ahead, becomes overwhelmed with long term projects
- Loses track of time
- Cannot determine the sequence of a task
- Does not record assignments
- Cannot find materials
- Rushes through assignments
- Submits assignments late

Here are some **Attending-Initiating-Focusing** look fors (p. 8)

- Appears to daydream in class or at home
- Procrastinates starting assignments
- Easily distracted
- Fidgets
- Difficulty focusing on a speaker
- Asks questions or makes comments that are not on topic
- Rereads information multiple times
- Insecure about how to start or move forward on an assignment



Here are some **Social/Emotional and Inhibiting** look fors (p. 8)

- Difficulty filtering inappropriate comments
- Acts like the class clown
- Interrupts others
- Does not adjust emotions for different experiences
- Recognizes behavior needs to be improved but unable to control it
- Reacts before thinking
- Poor relationships with peers and adults
- May refuse to participate in class due to stress, sadness, shyness, lack of confidence



