Rubin Adams

IMPROVING ATTENTION AND FOCUS OF LEARNERS
Convergence of evidence pointing to the fact that early childhood is the period when practicing self-regulated behavior has the most profound impact on the developing brain

(Blair, 2001)
There is growing evidence that self-regulation is learned

- It does not develop naturally
- It is not a personality characteristic that cannot be changed
SELF REGULATION

- If self-regulation does not develop early, it seems to be less amenable to later intervention resulting in:
  - academic problems
  - anti-social behaviour
  - eventual school drop out
Self-regulation predicts school readiness, over and above cognitive skills and family backgrounds.

- Relates to early math and reading skills
- Affects children’s social relationships in the classroom critical for learning
ACTIVITIES THAT PROMOTES SELF-REGULATION

- Routines are combined or eliminated: for example, children take attendance on their own
- Keep engaging materials fresh
- Simple reminders are introduced
- Encourage self-talk to regulate themselves
EXECUTIVE FUNCTION (EF)

- Aspects of our relating to how we control our thoughts
- Environment situations or when you have to do something different to normal - organise our thinking
- Includes a number of different processes: Planning, shifting, working memory, inhibition, decision making
## EXECUTIVE FUNCTION - DOING THE WEEKLY SHOP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Executive Functioning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Remember a shopping list</td>
<td>Working memory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan route to the shop</td>
<td>Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stop yourself from buying the chocolate</td>
<td>Inhibition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List for different people eg mother, brother</td>
<td>shifting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you buy the expensive or no-name brand?</td>
<td>Decision-making</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## EXECUTIVE FUNCTION - PUPILS IN THE CLASSROOM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Executive Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plan you experiment</td>
<td>Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switch between listening to teacher and getting your work done</td>
<td>Shifting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stop yourself from being distracted by a friend</td>
<td>Inhibition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remembering the sequence /steps and everything to complete experiment</td>
<td>Working memory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you complete everything in class (speed) or complete some at home</td>
<td>Decision-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Executive Function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure /Predictability</td>
<td>Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demands from teachers, friends and completion of work</td>
<td>Shifting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for immediate gratification eg cellphone, story from friend etc</td>
<td>Inhibition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remembering the sequence /steps to complete assignments, retrieving previous learning</td>
<td>Working memory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do I do first? What will be the consequences</td>
<td>Decision-making</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BRAIN - ‘ELEPHANT AND RIDER’

- Elephant = automatic processing
- Rider = controlled conscious thinking (EF)
MANY OF THE EXISTING INTERVENTIONS

- Administered in one-to-one interactions with an adult
- Administered outside of the classroom
- Discipline and classroom management
- Systemic intervention
WHEN CHILDREN ARE NOT REGULATED AT ALL

- Activities where children are allowed to wander from activity to activity without getting involved in anything.
- Where children wait, and wait and wait....
- Where children are over-stimulated by the environment and materials
Children’s ability to **control attention** and action are stronger predictors of academic performance than is IQ or entry-level maths or reading skills.  


Primary school teachers rank Executive Functions as the most important characteristic necessary for school readiness and indicate that over half their children lack effective EF.

Rimm-Kaufman et al. (2000)
CONCLUSIONS

- EF skills are not fixed, even in very young children
- EF skills can be improved in pre-schoolers in regular classrooms by regular teachers, without expensive equipment or 1:1 attention
- Expect benefits from early EF-training to increase over time
CONCLUSIONS....

- Adults are more aware of their thinking - introspection
- They tend to evaluate a task and work out the best strategy
- Work through things systematically
- Use internal speech
- Children seem less likely to do this
TASK:

- Discuss within your group, based on the presentation;
- 1. What you would do differently in addressing learner behaviour on
- A one to one basis
- Within a class setting (3 actions per group)