

Teaming for Well Being: Season 2 Episode 2: Unstuck and On Target and Executive Functioning

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

executive functioning, social-emotional needs, special education, curriculum tools, student support, classroom management, adolescent curriculum, parent engagement, flexible planning, school counselors, tiered support, vocabulary development, consistent language, affordable curriculum, Virginia Tech

00:00

Music.

00:08

Welcome to teaming for well being brought to you by the Training and Technical Assistance Center at Virginia Tech, where our mission is to improve educational opportunities and contribute to the success of children and youth with disabilities. We do this by supporting and building up the educators who work with them. You. We are your hosts. Project coordinators, Natalie May

00:30

and Jen Baldwin Join us as we talk about tools, tricks and tips to help positively impact the social, emotional and behavioral needs of your students, as well as keeping you healthy. Welcome.

00:47

Welcome everybody to this week's episode of teaming for well being. I am Natalie, and I'm here with my co host, Jen Baldwin, and today we are talking about executive functioning. We've talked about it before, we have but you know, we feel like it's important to also give you a tool or a curriculum, and so Jen, remind the people about executive functioning. What makes it so important? Absolutely.

01:10

We've done a lot of conversations around this. We've also done our ABC, 123, weekly email with an executive function focus several times, and we like to bring it up because, and this is a quote from an Edutopia video, you know, backed up with a lot of research. I love this quote because I think it's, it's very impactful in the way that you think about it. Because I think people hear executive function, they're like, blah blah blah blah blah, like self care, blah blah blah. But this is crucial to remember, right? The skills that make up executive function are better predictors of success than test scores, IQ or socio economic status. But that's huge, huge. That's huge. So

01:53

I mean, again, we know that these are not inherent they're not something that kids magically get as they age. There's something that needs to be taught, have to

02:02

be taught, have to be taught. I think that's also critical. They do not show up with these skills. We as educators and even as a parent, my goodness, I wish I could have really processed it as a parent, especially as a parent of a child with attention deficit disorder, right? That if I could have processed that as a parent, that would have been super helpful. But I think we need to remember they have to be taught, and we as educators are responsible. Help them develop those skills all the way through, and they shouldn't be this hidden secret you've talked no to. Let's post them on the walls. Let's, let's call attention to what they are. Let's talk about who's strong and which ones. You know, all the things that we've talked about before, and this should be taught all the way through high school as we prepare them for post secondary

02:48

all the way Absolutely, absolutely. And we talked about how students with disabilities, their executive functionings, they don't develop at the same rate as their typical peers, and so you kind of have to scaffold those supports as well. So let's dive in. Jen, are you ready? I'm ready. All right. And to help us out today, we have a very special guest from our office. Yeah, Virginia Tech, T tech, the one, the only, Lynn Everett, she, she is our guru on executive functioning in particular this curriculum called unstuck and on target. So Lynn, why don't you tell us a little bit about yourself?

03:28

Wow. What an intro. Man, I think they really make that code for I'm old,

03:35

seasoned, well seasoned, well

03:37

seasoned. So to tell you a little

03:38

bit about myself, I've been in education for 35 years, 35 and all of them have been in special education. What I find so interesting about on second one target is as a special ed teacher, I would have loved to have had a curriculum like this, because every one of my kids needed some direct instruction in this area, absolutely, and we I was negligent in that I really didn't know what to do or how to do it. I knew that in their present level of performance, I had listed that they had weak skills in this area, but I didn't really know what to do about it. And so one of our other co workers, Holly love and I, we went to a summer conference with our cola group, which are

04:30

the COLA is the communities of leaders and autism, right? Yes,

04:33

I think learners or leaders. They they change

04:37

those things all the time. Leaders, learners, anyway, I'm

04:40

part of it. And we met during that conference. We had a presentation given by Lauren kentworthy, and she is a school psychologist, psychologist, actually, and she did all the research on unstuck and on target. And what was really cool that caught our eyes. That most of the research was done on kids in Virginia, really, which is really, really kind of cool in the Northern Virginia area specifically, but also in some of the rural areas around Northern Virginia. And that was appealing to us because it had the group of kids had the same expectations that kids in our part of the state would have, yeah, we were very interested in that. When she kicked it off, they first had shared with us the curriculum unstuck and on target for the elementary kids, which was fantastic. It comes with a code in the front of the book that teachers can access all sorts of materials in order to implement this curriculum. There, there are posters, there are vocabulary terms that can be used throughout a school building or division even, which was very, very cool in our opinion. There are videos for parents. There's a piece so parents can go online and learn the same vocabulary and curriculum that the school is using. That was also exciting for us. We We actually went ahead and did a full kick off of unstuck and on target and far southwest Virginia with the yes one fall, and we had a very good turnout, and now we're beginning to see a lot of schools in our regions use this curriculum with their students, and that's been exciting,

06:32

absolutely. And we Lynn was gracious enough to come and do a presentation for school counselors in Region six and seven as well, so that they could start to think about utilizing this, not only with groups, but individual students and and how to support those kiddos. And that was excellent. We really appreciated that as far as school counselors go. And I think what really caught me about this is that it is there and ready, right? You may have to prepare a few things, but how to do it? What to do is there, and a lot of times we we are get lost in a theory of things, which is great. We need to understand that foundational piece, but we want the tools to be up and running and moving. Yes,

07:17

you want to push the easy button. Yeah. I mean, you go from a textbook to practice, and you really just need to know, what do I need to do to help these kids learn these skills? And I think that this unstuck and on target does just that Well, absolutely.

07:31

And like you were saying, Lynn, you know this, it can work with students with autism, it can work with students with attention deficit. It really can work with any student. And so that leads me to, there's a way to use it that we've seen a whole school, right? Yeah, multiple people use it whole

school. We've seen people use it with just a group of students, right? You could even use it as just a classroom in your as a classroom teacher. And then we've, we've seen it used even further down the row with an individual student who's really working on something very specific. Yes,

08:12

I love that part, because it can be used with all three tiers. We there's a school out in Botetourt that was using it full school at the tier one level, which was really, really cool. You Jen and I took that school and we walked through the classrooms, and they had common language on the walls and their posters. They were all using targets for kids emotions, which was really cool to see the principal and the school counselor were leading small groups at tier two, which was also super cool, and then some of the special ed folks were drilling down and using it at tier three with individual students, which was very cool, because then all the kids are hearing the same language. All the teachers know what to say, and kids just feel safer in that type of environment, and they know what's expected of them, which is consistency

09:09

is huge across the

09:11

building. I think it is huge. And you know, you can start small, you certainly can and grow it from individual to group to that larger tier one, however, like getting your your teachers involved and on board can be so huge, especially is we know that behaviors are impacting classrooms, and these, these folks really do want support, and so I think that's a big piece of the buy in around this, is that this really can be such a helpful tool to you in the classroom management level, and just really set up and designed and ready to use that I can then, as a school counselor, drill in in groups, and then work individually, in conjunction with a special educator, with this individual Cadet for sure,

09:58

one the. Thing that also was kind of cool. About a year after we launched our own stuck in on target for elementary Lauren got back to work and did a little more research with some other researchers, and came up with an adolescent curriculum for kids ages 11 through 15. However, when you look through this curriculum, it can pretty much be used with any student, in my opinion, over 11 years old. The cool part about this curriculum that is, it comes with a student workbook. Oh, nice. And so you don't you can also download materials, just like you can in the elementary level. There's a code in the front of the book that allows you to do that, but the Student Workbook pretty much incorporates a lot of those same handouts, so they've made the work a little easier, I think, with this curriculum, and I think older kids kind of appreciate that more. Grown up look to the materials. It's less I'm

11:01

not a baby anymore. Yeah, I'm a teenager. Yeah, another

11:04

cool thing we got to zoom in with Kara. I think you pronounce her last name, pugelies. She she went to Virginia Tech, and she did a lot of the research on the adolescents for this curriculum, and actually did kind of come down 81 and do some more research of kids in Virginia, but a little further out of Northern Virginia, which I know a lot of us also appreciate. So it's really cool. One other thing I forgot to mention earlier is that there is a Spanish version, one second with target. If you go online on their website, there's a Spanish tab, Spanish speaker tab, and parents can go in and watch the support videos in Spanish. So all of that is super cool. They've really thought about everything. And the only other thing I would say is, when I say the word curriculum, it feels overwhelming. There's only 21 lessons in the elementary curriculum book, so that's very doable in the school year, probably even in a semester. Yep, you would want to maybe teach one lesson a week, and then reinforce that lesson all week, throughout a kid's day, it would probably only take about 15 to 30 minutes to teach a lesson. Some schools that we've been in have even decided to teach it at tier one during the morning announcements. I love that. I love it too, because then the entire staff gets to hear the vocabulary and kind of get that model for them. And they're not overwhelmed by teaching one more thing, but they can reinforce all the vocabulary and kind of support it during the day with their students. Yeah,

12:55

we're going to give a shout out to Radford city, who did that. Yeah, my car did that. Bradford City and Blake burdak, who's their behavior interventionist, an amazing support person for them, utilizing this this curriculum, as much as he can, really,

13:10

yeah, he even he and one of their cola representatives wrote a grant to try to get As many online licenses they could for parents in the Radford area. Oh, wow. They wanted to lead, like a parent cohort three, one second on target. And haven't been able to talk to Blake since we need to that was done, but maybe he can be a another. Yes, because, like, hear that Blake, yeah, that would be really cool, because he He really put a lot of thought into that. And I think that would be a very cool thing to

13:46

highlight. I love that because parents are begging for any kind of support they can for executive functioning, because these skills are in school and at home. You know, you ask a young person to clean a room, and if they don't understand the steps involved in that they're never going to get it done so simple, but it's yet, it's that is executive functioning.

14:06

So I think that's a huge bridge for me about how to engage families in this, in this whole curriculum. And let's also talk about person as a school counselor you know me, supporting students, whether they're individual or in a group, often, what would happen is this happens with special educators, who were, you know, doing social skills as well. When we're doing it in this closed office environment, the generalization out into the classroom did not stick the way we wanted it to, right? And so what I love about this is, if you take it to that tier one level, even with

just the vocabulary flexible plan A, plan B, and and teachers are modeling that. Because, man, I would have modeled the heck out of that. Yeah, my plan A for the science experiment just blew up, literally. So we're going to go to plan B, and we're going to have to be flexible with that. I mean, the ability to model that.

14:59

Yeah. I think of the big deal, little deal. And as a former diet coke addict, you know, a big deal for me back in the day would have been if the machine was at a Diet Coke big deal, big deal. But for somebody else who maybe doesn't drink soda, it would be a complete little deal. And so just knowing those differences in your your young people is huge, too.

15:20

Lots of great things to utilize. Everybody can use model. I love the model piece of this, yeah, because I totally would have picked up on this as a teacher in the classroom and run with it, for sure. Yeah.

15:32

The last thing I want to say is it's also a very affordable curriculum. That's the price range for unstuck manual is like \$75 I think one teacher could utilize that. Actually, you could pass it around and share it. Then the student pack workbook pack for the adolescent version, there's five in a pack, so you could literally work with a small group or with five different, you know, individual kids. I did forget to mention that the adolescent one is definitely more conducive to small group tier two and tier three. Yeah, it's not really a tier one type,

16:16

more specialized for the adolescents. Yeah,

16:18

it's more of a small group one on one type thing, but again, very short, quick lessons, not going to take a lot of time, because it's very hard to fit that into, like the middle school day or high school day.

16:33

Yeah, it can be really tricky.

16:34

And one thing we did see, and we were trying to dig into the resources, you can go to the unstuck and on target website easily. Just type that in, you'll find it. But there was mention of possibly something for those who are in that 14 to 22 range, right? So what we found was, on the website, there is you can click and go and to an online course where you can kind of learn more about it and what that's like. We I did not see an actual book, but that could be coming. We don't know, but that is there, if you're interested in thinking about it, for those 14 to 22 range Absolutely.

17:11

And you know, Lynn, we do have these in our library, don't we? We do. So just put

17:20

three copies of the adolescent book in our library. Two are checked out right now. They're popular, popular, and then we have a lot of copies of Yeah.

17:32

So if you're in Region six and seven in southwest Virginia, we are happy to lend these to you, for you to use and peruse, if you would like to check it out before you buy it, and we'll mail it to you or get it to you for free. As always, our services are free, so we're here to support you, and I think executive functioning is super important. And then this is just one tool that we wanted to share with you all today. You can use this in your teams, as we all do, because you should be doing everything in a team absolutely. And

18:00

we appreciate you guys. Today. We appreciate Lynn Everett, Thank you Lynn today on the show, thank you guys. All right. All right. We

18:08

will see you next time on The teaming for well being podcast, thank you.

18:20

Thank you so much for listening, and as always, we hope this has given you a resource tool or idea that you can easily use and share.

18:26

You can find the show notes on our website@ttac.vt.edu where all the resources discussed are linked. Don't forget to sign up for our weekly newsletter, ABC, 123, AT T, tech, dot, v, t.edu, backslash, index, backslash, A, B, C, 123, dot, HTML, Thank you.