

## EXECUTIVE FUNCTION CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

### What Is Executive Function?

Executive function is an umbrella term for the complex cognitive processes students use to set goals, plan their time, organize and prioritize, think flexibly, access their working memory, self-monitor, and selfcheck. The model of a funnel helps to explain the importance of executive function processes for learning. When students learn to use executive function strategies, they are able to coordinate (or “funnel”) the various processes required to complete complex academic tasks such as taking notes or writing. When students have executive function weaknesses, the funnel becomes blocked and they are unable to produce work that reflects their true potential.

The SMARTS EF lessons below are grouped by five executive function processes that affect learning:

1. **Goal Setting**: Identifying short-term and long-term goals
2. **Cognitive Flexibility**: Switching easily between approaches; thinking flexibly
3. **Organizing and Prioritizing**: Sorting and ordering information based on relative importance Accessing
4. **Working Memory**: Remembering and manipulating information mentally
5. **Self-Monitoring and Checking**: Identifying and correcting personal errors

### Unit 1. Introduction to Executive Function Strategies

Learning Goals	Lessons	Outcomes
1. Students will understand their learning strengths and weaknesses and learn about executive function processes.	1.1 What is metacognition? Thinking about thinking  1.2 What is cognitive flexibility? Defining how to think flexibly  1.3 What is executive function?	Students will be able to:  <input type="checkbox"/> Define metacognition  <input type="checkbox"/> Understand the core executive function processes  <input type="checkbox"/> Apply their knowledge of executive function strategies to their understanding of themselves as learners

**Unit 2. Goal Setting—Identifying short-term and long-term goals**

Learning Goals	Lesson	Outcomes
<p>1. Students will learn to develop appropriate goals with definable outcomes.</p> <p>2. Students will develop strategies for implementing their goals throughout the school year.</p>	2.1 Identifying CANDO goals	<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Define CANDO goals</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Describe the elements of “good goals”</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Use a rubric to assess goals</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Design CANDO goals that demonstrate reflective thinking</li></ul>

**Unit 3. Cognitive Flexibility—Shifting problem-solving approaches; thinking flexibly**

Learning Goals	Lesson	Outcomes
<p>1. Students will learn that multiple strategies can be used to solve a given problem and will, through repeated practice, develop a variety of strategies to support flexible thinking and problem solving.</p> <p>2. Students will learn how to distinguish the main ideas from the less important details.</p>	3.3 Skim and scoop strategy	<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Explain the importance of shifting approaches flexibly</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Write according to multiple perspectives</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Shift between the main idea and details</li></ul>

#### Unit 4. Organizing and Prioritizing Materials and Time—Creating categories to work efficiently

Learning Goals	Lesson	Outcomes
1. Students will learn to organize their materials for school and schedule their time appropriately.	4.1 The 4 C's strategy  4.5 Weekly Planning	Students will be able to:  <input type="checkbox"/> Explain strategies for organizing belongings and the importance of planning  <input type="checkbox"/> Use calendars and tools for daily, weekly, and monthly planning  <input type="checkbox"/> Apply their knowledge of planning to breaking down assignments into meaningful parts

#### Unit 5: Organizing and Prioritizing: Information and Ideas

Learning Goals	Lessons	Outcomes
1. Students will gain the knowl-edge and the strategies neces-sary to organize information for reading, writing papers, taking notes, and studying for tests.	5.3 Note-taking from a lesson  5.4 Using the Triple-Note-Tote  5.5 Studying with the PPCQ strategy	Students will be able to:  <input type="checkbox"/> Describe strategies for or-ganizing thoughts for note-taking, essay writing, and studying  <input type="checkbox"/> Integrate memory strategies with organizational strategies to enhance understanding of topics