

## 1.0A2 Welcome to the *Effective Student*<sup>TM</sup> Curriculum

Welcome to Effective Student Curriculum. The goal of this curriculum is to help you learn more about executive functioning skills and to provide you with the tools to build these skills in your students. As you progress through the material, you will notice that this curriculum provides a **systematic way** for teachers, academic coaches, and tutors to help students **build reliable academic management skills**. The resources herein are designed to be used in a variety of settings: 1) the traditional classroom; 2) study strategies environment; 3) in private practice.

Initially, we define executive functioning skills and what you may observe in students who demonstrate these skills and those who do not. As you may have experienced, when students lack strong executive function skills, both those of academic management and the social-emotional, teaching them academic content can be challenging. The lessons may, at times, seem simple and direct. That is intentional. Students today, especially those with learning differences or ADHD, are juggling a lot of information simultaneously. The more complex instruction becomes, the more likely they are to dismiss it or “check-out”. The lessons in this curriculum begin in the concrete or tangible and progressively move to the abstract building on previously taught exercises. As with teaching any skill, we strongly believe in keeping the processes simple, so fading of instructional support leading to student independence is attainable and deliberate.

A student’s job is to be a ‘student’. For some of them, this is exceptionally challenging, which can create a negative connotation of school and learning. The Effective Student<sup>TM</sup> Curriculum seeks to teach them *how* to be a student so they can experience success and excel. As instructors, sometimes we are teaching and sometimes coaching. What is the difference? Teaching involves sharing new methods, coaching helps students follow through when they’re apt to abandon a practice or strategy. We believe that while adults may have an abundance of ‘strategies’, these, coupled with ‘extra time’, will not equip students to build the skills needed to experience academic success.

Resources within this curriculum share how to teach, model and evaluate executive function skills. Each unit includes mini-lessons that can be taught over multiple class periods all at once, depending on your student population. Materials include instructional videos, classroom handouts, parent handouts, unit guides, and lesson plans.

We encourage you to help your students reach academic success through scalable, small steps that are easily able to be implemented within your unique classroom environment. We encourage a **multisensory and experiential approach** because



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we believe that most students learn by doing. To help these lessons resonate with students, there are exercises to help them self-reflect, bringing an awareness to their valuable experiences. While we may not have specifically included social-emotional lessons, the processes of self-reflection leading to self-awareness is embedded throughout, which fosters the social-emotional learning of the child in their community.

This course is specifically designed to make it easier for students to be successful and for you to help them get there. Thank you for being an instrumental part of that process!

We look forward to you joining us on this journey!  
– The Effective Students™ Team

## **The What, Why, and How of Executive Functions**

### **What are Executive Functions?**

The term Executive Functions (EF) has become widely used within parenting, psychological, and educational communities. Researchers have written articles outlining the importance of these skills, while teachers and counselors are using the term to discuss areas of potential growth for students. It has been stated that Executive Functions are a key indicator of long term success. Parents and teachers are working to overcome executive function challenges, while striving to help their children and students be successful in school. So, what exactly are Executive Functions? Why are they so critical to the development and success of students? Is it possible for a child to grow these skills? If so, how can this instruction be effectively implemented into the classroom setting?

Executive Functions are a set of processes that have to do with managing oneself and one's resources in order to achieve a goal. It is an umbrella term for the neurologically-based skills involving mental control and self-regulation. Wow! That's broad.

Individuals need executive functioning skills to be able to evaluate their resources, develop a plan and follow through. Since the category is so broad, we typically break the observable skills into two categories:



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- 1) Social emotional skills
- 2) Academic management skills.

Here is a list of some of the executive functioning skills and one way they can be grouped.

Academic Management Skills	Social-Emotional Skills
Organization	Flexible Thinking
Time Management	Emotional Regulation
Planning & Prioritizing	Shifting
Starting Tasks	Impulse Control
Working Memory	Self-Monitoring
Task Perseverance (grit)	Perspective-Taking

While this delineation is not rigid, we feel it is important as it is the foundation of how this curriculum seeks to build the broad category of executive function skills in students. Some executive function curricula may seek to address the social emotional skills first, guiding students to ‘problem solve’ how they will self-direct their own solutions. While that may be effective for some students, and we agree that self-direction is an important component of independence, we seek to equip students with **skills first**. The lack of foundational skills can lead to anxiety, emotional dysregulation, and feigned disinterest which is really masking academic discouragement. When students experience success, they are likely to want to continue, which is why these lessons begin with practical application.

The list of executive function skills is broad and together, they connect a person’s ability to plan and be successful at school. Struggles with executive functions can sometimes, but not always, walk together with learning differences, most commonly, ADHD.



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### How do executive functioning skills present in students?

When these skills ARE present, we observe...	When these skills are NOT present we observe...
Handing in assignments on time	Poor grades (averages brought down by not turning in homework/assignments on time; low test scores)
Scoring well on assessments	Lost materials
Balance of academics and extracurricular activities	Forgetting about upcoming tests, quizzes, papers
Personal responsibility	Waiting until the last minute to study or finish projects (procrastination)
Feelings of confidence and competence	Avoidance of issues or feigned disinterest in material
Willingness to challenge oneself	Challenging behaviors
Academic independence	Feelings of anxiety, stress, fear, incompetence, and frustration (emotional response)

### Summary

Often, teachers, academic coaches, parents, and administrators focus on addressing the social-emotional aspects of Executive Functions, which are, of course, important. However, in the absence of direct instruction with measurable targets, thoughts and feelings do not always translate into quantifiable, quality outcomes equipping students to become self-directed learners. The illusion of success when it is not present (feeling better but not doing better) can lead to apathy or, over time, lack of task perseverance (academic grit) or acknowledgement of performance gaps, thus hijacking the learning cycle.

Teachers, academic coaches, and administrators can help students experience success through implementing consistent systems with practical small steps for students to build skills. In the Effective Student™ Curriculum, you will find scalable, small steps for teachers and coaches to implement, using a multisensory and an experiential approach that connects to social-emotional learning, measurable



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academic components, and metacognition. Incorporating these skills fosters capability which enables students to experience emotional relief through experiences of success, building their confidence, competence and courage to try new things.

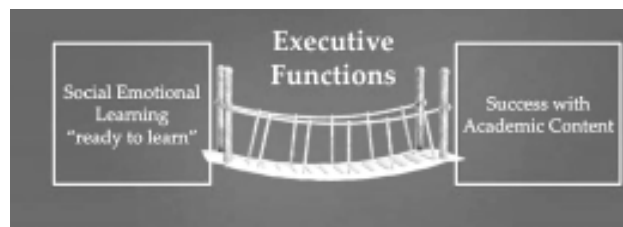
### **Why is it important to learn Executive Functions?**

Success in school is measured by final evaluations or assessments. Success in the professional world is dependent upon fulfillment of job expectations, but the most basic tasks include arriving on time, following through with multiple tasks, and communicating. The quality of task completion ultimately determines success. Executive function skills are required to plan and complete tasks efficiently, sometimes in the face of stress, and in a timely manner.

Adults encounter schedules and the need to **manage time and tasks** competently throughout life, well beyond the classroom. For example, when filing your taxes, you only get credit for doing so if you turn them in or actually *file* them. Even in creative industries, timelines exist for developing final products, such as an artist having a deadline for a commissioned piece of work. Building executive function skills helps students experience less stress, fewer periods of emotional upset, and a greater ability to focus on learning. By establishing good habits now, students can experience the significant impact of long-term success.

### **Executive Functions and the Bridge of Success**

Executive functions are the missing link between strong social-emotional learning and academic content teaching. Students need to feel cared for, have emotional regulation, etc., to learn well. Yet, we cannot ask students to retain academic content if they are overwhelmed by their materials, stressed about forgetting upcoming events and assessments, or unsure of how to properly prepare for those assessments. These are all skills that can be taught and practiced, which allows for individual students to be more focused and successful.



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### What do strong Executive Functions create for the individual?

- Ability to respond successfully to due dates and tests
- Greater capacity to learn and focus
- More ability to be creative – due to less stress/anxiety
- Work – turned in on time, organized manner
- Efficiency and less time spent finding materials
- Emotional margin and flexibility

*Our curriculum strives to emotionally connect students to academic success.*

### How can Executive Function Skills be taught?

After understanding what executive functions are and why executive function skills matter, we must evaluate where, when, and how these skills are taught to students. Despite many adults understanding the importance of skills such as organization, task completion, and time management, **there is rarely time dedicated to explicitly teaching these skills.**

Society and schools focus on social-emotional learning but don't give students the hands-on skills and processes to help them move forward afterwards. Students will only be successful long-term if they are equipped to maintain these skills, even in times of stress and being overwhelmed.

Given the foundational nature of executive function skills to student success, it is imperative to intentionally foster these skills so students can understand academic content, build a greater capacity to learn and focus, and experience interest in longer term learning. Where can we begin to teach these skills to have a long-term significant impact on students' success throughout life?

This is where our curriculum fits into the equation. The goal is to **build competencies within students for success in the school environment that will translate into successful adulthood.**

We provide the structure and content lessons for teachers and coaches to implement into their current classroom and tutoring routines. **Using the step-by-step process, educators are able to teach students executive function skills in easily attainable chunks.**



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Here are some things you will observe in *The Effective Student™ Curriculum*:

- Utilizations of self-awareness coupled with personal responsibility to give students the confidence to direct their own learning.
- Encouraging students to develop habits and turning these habits into skills overtime so they can respond successfully to pressure at school.
- Educators walking alongside students and giving them a process to use when encountering challenges. Over time, students should gain an awareness of their learning and their own challenges.
- Goes beyond teaching academic management skills exclusively. Instead, **the Effective Student Curriculum™ connects executive function processes to emotional awareness, creating a culture of self-directed learning and self-reflection.**

*How to use the Effective Student™ Curriculum in the classroom:*

	<b>Academic Classroom Teacher</b>	<b>Study Strategies Teacher</b>	<b>Coaches/Tutors</b>
<b>Time Per Week</b>	15 minute lessons per week  Repetition/reinforcement of certain skills daily	Daily review with classes  Time to follow through with previously taught lessons  1 or 2 direct instruction lessons per week	Evaluate how a student follows through with previously taught material  Introduce a new concept or continue practicing application to current academic demands
<b>Recommended Implementation</b>	Plan lessons using the curriculum as a guide  Use our online curriculum to reinforce through homework or independent work for	Implement the curriculum during the first 15 minutes of each study skills class. Students have the time to practice following through with previous taught exercises.	Provide 1-on-1 support for students needing extra guidance  Our curriculum becomes your syllabus.





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	students.	The curriculum becomes your syllabus.	
<b>How can this help you?</b>	<p>Curriculum and rubric gives you structure throughout teaching.</p> <p>This structure is malleable to apply to student needs.</p> <p>Online and guided evaluations help you measure student progress easily.</p>	<p>You are teaching a process, which overtime you use to fade support.</p> <p>Students apply the processes in a structured environment leading to independence, and greater self-directed learning.</p>	<p>Connect the outcomes to preparation, discuss students' emotional response to success, building on self-reflection and accelerating success.</p>

### The Effective Student™ Curriculum Overview

The *Effective Student™ Curriculum* provides teachers with all of the content needed to teach reliable academic management skills, equipping students to drive their own learning. As with all learning, application and internalizing of the practices to become skills is a process that is developed through time and attention. The curriculum is broken into six units or content areas:

#### Introduction to Executive Functions

#### Organization

#### Time Management

#### Study Skills

#### Test Analysis

#### Moving Forward

Each unit includes lessons that can be taught over multiple class periods or all at once, depending on your student population. Lessons include instructional videos for use in the classroom and accompanying assigned homework, handouts for exercises, slide presentations (if teachers prefer to instruct the material on their own), and a suggested lesson plan that can be modified based on the age or grade of students.





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The key to success with this curriculum is to keep it simple, **practicing consistency over time** with each unit. Once students have been taught a lesson, they can be given time to practice each lesson on their own. Some students benefit from supported practice and accountability to follow through.

Over time and with practice, students develop habits that lead to skills.

- Habits are the ability to do something without thinking.
- Skills are the ability to follow through successfully under pressure.

According to Malcolm Gladwell in his book *Outliers*, if we believe that it takes 3,000 repetitions for students to build habits and 10,000 for students to build skills, we begin to appreciate that **each** repetition that the student completes counts on the journey to building good skills.

*For example – How many opportunities do students have to write in their planner in a given school year?*

### How is learning accomplished?

Just as with learning content, the practice of teaching executive functions or academic management skills follows three basic steps. Beside each step are the tools embedded in the course that help achieve the learning objective.

Awareness & Feedback	Self-evaluations, observation and personal reflections, success and failure, graded feedback.
Practice	Instructional lessons, implementation in class setting or for students independently with task analyses to support step-by-step follow-through, accountability, time in a structured environment.
Adjustments	Modifications and changes made to the implementation of previously taught practices across each unit. Sometimes students can make adjustments on their own, sometimes with questioning, and others require more guidance.



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Each class period can begin with a discussion and review of the previously taught lesson, giving students a few moments to reflect and catch up so they are prepared for the next lesson to be introduced and can receive instruction. If no new instruction is presented, prompts for independent work can be shared on the board so students build the habits of preparing themselves appropriately. Enlisting students in this learning through their personal experiences, thought processes and reflection – also known as metacognition – is the foundation for independence and self-direction.

We will be available throughout this year for additional support and training to help you help each child you serve to be an *Effective Student™*.

## **Content Layout and Suggestions for Implementation**

### **Layout of the Curriculum**

The Effective Student Curriculum has been divided into six primary unit content areas. The units should be taught in order: Introduction to Executive Functions, Organization, Time Management, Study Skills, Test Analysis, and Moving Forward. Hook Activities, and End of Year lessons have been provided as well.

Each Unit begins with a Unit Overview to guide the teacher through the objectives and goals of the unit. Each lesson within the unit has been designed with a discussion and review to start, hook activities for engaging ways to grasp student attention, content area lessons, and preparation for the next class period. Lessons are between 10 to 30 minutes long, depending on the content. Suggestions for differentiation and extension are included at the end of each lesson to supplement the material where necessary. Finally, we've included Hook Activities and Case Studies to be interspersed throughout the Moving Forward lessons for reinforcement of the Executive Functions skills.

### **How to make the most out of this curriculum**

#### **Study Skills Teachers:**

For teachers implementing this curriculum in a Study Skills/Strategies course or through a private coaching setting, we suggest teaching each of the content Units and lessons on the timeline provided on our Curriculum Map. This can vary depending on the time of year, especially if you're working with a student in an academically vulnerable position. After teaching a lesson within each unit, continue to provide ample time for practice and review prior to moving onto the next unit. This can be accelerated or decelerated by age and stage – you know your students best.



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After the first five (5) content Units have been taught, use the Moving Forward lessons, Case Studies, Hook Activities, and reteaching of lessons to reinforce the skills taught throughout the curriculum. Students should have time each class period/meeting time to reinforce the Executive Function habits for a Study Skills course.

### **Academic Course Teachers:**

For teachers who are implementing this curriculum intermittently through an academic course, we suggest each of the content Units and lessons within be taught using the timeline provided on our Curriculum Map. For these teachers, however, we suggest only teaching one or two lessons per week, while allowing students time to practice the strategies on their own between lessons. Teachers should still consistently monitor student implementation of these skills through grading, student meetings, and student self-evaluations.

After the first five (5) content Units have been taught, use the Moving Forward lessons, Case Studies, Hook Activities, and reteaching of lessons to reinforce the skills taught through the curriculum. Continue implementing these review lessons once a week, or every other week, for the remainder of the school year.

### **Evaluations and Grading**

Students will benefit the most from this curriculum with consistent accountability and feedback. Suggestions are made throughout the lessons to provide opportunities for student self-evaluation, peer evaluation, and a grading plan for teachers.

### **Student Self-Evaluation**

For student self-reflection, we recommend using an Initial Student Self-Evaluation survey, Quarterly Self-Evaluation Survey, Personal Progress Evaluations (PPE) for students, and a Final Student Self-Evaluation survey (each of which is provided in handouts for students). Students need opportunities throughout this curriculum to build self-awareness and to learn to recognize their successes and struggles independently, which cultivates their desire for improvement. We recommend teachers of Study Skills classes, private coaches, and teachers of Academic classes have students complete a PPE once per quarter. A timeline of student evaluations is included on the Curriculum Map.

### **Teacher Evaluation**

For teacher evaluations of students, we recommend using the Grading Rubrics provided. Students need to receive feedback on their progress with the curriculum





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content on a regular basis. These regular evaluations will allow you, as the teacher, to also identify when skills need to be retaught or when students need extra guidance with the content. We recommend teachers of Study Skills classes and private coaches grade students about once per quarter, while teachers of Academic classes grade students every other week to monthly.

