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| **5 strategies to help students with executive functioning deficits learn online** |
| As educators teach students remotely, there is a risk that students with executive functioning deficits, such as students with ADHD and autism, may struggle to keep up and learn."Students are not going to have the teacher in front of them to offer the extra scaffolding and support," said Meghan Graham, a speech-language pathologist and clinical assistant professor at Boston University. "Teachers are going to have to use private messaging and check in a lot to see where they are and where they need help. Teachers are good at differentiated instruction, so thinking ahead about what those students are going to need is important."Below are five strategies teachers can use to ensure students with EF deficits don't fall behind in online learning. |
| **Strategy** | **How to implement it outside the classroom** |
| **1. Backwards planning.** | Students with EF deficits struggle to make plans and envision what the future looks like, Graham said. Suggest these students imagine what a finished assignment looks like, then look backwards, thinking of the steps needed to get the task done. For example, they can imagine a finished three-page report, then they can think about the websites and books they'll need to review to complete it, then they can think about the quiet space, pen, paper, or device they will need to start. "It helps for them to see the steps to it," she said. |
| **2. Visual schedules and timer apps.** | Students with EF deficits struggle with time management, Graham said. Have a visual schedule in a corner of your screen that has the time of each activity and break you plan to do with students. Also help students and their families set one up that incorporates the rest of their day.Show a timer app on the screen as students work on an assignment so those with EF deficits know how much time they have to complete the assignment and can watch as the time descends. "The app may show the time remaining in red so students can see the smaller and smaller movement of time as opposed to looking at a digital clock," she said. Students and their families can also set up timer apps on a cellphone if they want to time other parts of the day. "A timer is good for self-regulation," she said. "The student can think about what is robbing his attention away." |
| **3. Movement breaks.** | Build into your lessons breaks for students to stretch and take quick walks away from the computer, Graham said. Also use resources, such as GoNoodle, for organized movement and mindfulness activities you can do together as a class. "You can also make up silly things if you're all live streaming," she said. And, when students are learning remotely without a live lesson, you can direct them in the lesson plan to take a break for a few minutes at different points to do some yoga poses or deep breathing so they take a break from the screen. |
| **4. Videos and polls.** | Just staring at the screen is not going to keep students with EF deficits engaged for long, Graham said. Embed illustrative videos into your presentation so students can engage with you and classmates about what they watched. If you teach using a platform that provides virtual breakout rooms, you can ask students to watch videos and discuss them in small groups with some prompts about what to talk about. "Teachers have to be creative, but also set clear expectations for the rooms," she said.Also use apps, such as Kahoot!, to poll students about what you are teaching, Graham said. "You want to make it so that they have a chance to contribute to the lesson," she said. |
| **5. Ongoing chats.** | Students with EF deficits often rely on peers to stay abreast of what is going on if they lose focus, Graham said. They may ask their peers what the teacher just said or benefit from when a peer asks a question and the teacher answers in front of the whole class. This may be lost in distance learning. Create an ongoing document everyone can access where students can post questions and answer each other's questions. Just keep in mind this could be distracting for some students. You may want to ask those students to check in periodically rather than always have it open on their screen. |