

Recommendations



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New approaches sourced from a more integrated and scientific framework are needed. Fortunately, schools no longer need to wait for solutions to be developed and tested since neuroscience-based programs are proven and readily available. Science and technology have made the adoption of these interventions accessible and scalable today.

Every School Should Adopt an Executive Function Program

The U.S. cannot afford complacency. The power to take action and support the health, well-being, and intellectual development of our youth is within the reach of every school in the nation. School leaders have the capacity to come together to radically improve the learning outcomes and social-emotional landscapes of their students, and of our country's next generation. Whether an educator or administrator is looking to impact classroom cognitive development, student mental health, or school climate, the answer starts with the evidence-based step toward improving all of these areas: EF skills development.

Pathways for adoption of EF programs are clear and proven by the pioneering school leaders who stepped forward early to help define the steps for success. The most important step is the first step—to start. Whether adoption begins within a classroom, a school, or district-wide, the process is one that improves with practice. Educator leaders do not need to be EF experts to launch a program, as there are significant resources to help maximize

effective implementation. Early adopters have demonstrated that sustainable change is possible, and that the resources that help all schools advance best practices, collaborations, and outcomes are well within reach.

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District leaders, principals, and teachers who have successfully implemented one of the programs profiled in this report recommend:

1. A context-specific approach that considers a school's setting, demographics, and culture, and looks for programs that have previously succeeded in similar environments
 2. Preliminary planning to consider items such as timelines, potential calendar adjustments, a stakeholder working group, and favorable timing that support faculty teaching considerations
 3. Development of on-site local experts and community-builders who can lead the implementation and become trusted advocates and advisors for their colleagues, students, and students' families
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4. Pre-, mid-, and post-assessment metrics that demonstrate to all constituents the gains achieved comparable to intended targets, while providing teachers with invaluable data about students' current cognitive strengths and deficits
5. Funding options that are aligned with the capacity of the school and that consider any necessary equipment and training costs. For those schools with limited funds, ESSA monies are now more readily available for evidence-based interventions. Additionally, partnering with researchers to test an intervention can also significantly reduce adoption and implementation costs.

Executive Function Training Should Be Required in Teacher Certification Programs

In addition to providing information that helps current teachers and administrators see the value and imperative of adopting EF skill-building programs, we believe it is equally important to start this effort earlier in an educator's training. Schools of Education spend considerable time ensuring that future teachers are knowledgeable not only in the content of their subject(s), but also in classroom management, learning expectations, lesson planning, safe and reflective learning environments, assessment, adjustments to practice, and consideration of diverse student needs.

With science validating EF skills as foundational to all other learning, EF training should be part of teacher certification curricula. Learning how to become an effective teacher should include the understanding that a student's challenges with taking in and assimilating new content are not likely a matter of inherent capacities, but of present and past circumstances, and that focusing on EF development (rather than more subject content) can be a critical first step toward improving academic outcomes.