



Newton North High School

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING TIPS AND TOOLS

Supporting families in distance learning

Executive Function is a vital management system in your student's brain. The executive system monitors and controls organization of information, memory, task completion, impulse/emotional control, and planning of time and tasks. In the past, students have presented with varying levels of strength and challenges in different areas of executive functioning. A student's school team could recognize and target areas and problem solve. Now the boundaries between home and school are blurred and families are charged with the role of organizer and problem solver. See the tips below to support weak executive functioning skills:

1. Create a **dedicated workspace**. This space can be in your student's bedroom, a corner of the living room, or at the dining-room table.
2. **Organize** your student's workspace. Use old jars to hold pens and colored pencils. Post important login information. Reset the space at the end of each day. Have pens, pencils, paper, and calculator at the ready.
3. With your student, establish a daily **schedule**. Create the schedule and write it out; or print it and place it in the student's workspace and in a common family space. This allows you all to work together to remember start and end times for classes.
4. Ask your student to **create a "to do" list** each day and encourage students to check off tasks as they are completed. This empowers students and gives them a sense of control and accomplishment.
5. Encourage your student to take **movement breaks** throughout the day. Schedule a short walk between the end of the school day and the start of homework.
6. Each night **review and reset**, what is due the following day, any long-term projects, or assessments, and finally the schedule for the next day. Being prepared will reduce the workload pile up that often leads to the feeling of being overwhelmed.
7. Ask your student what challenges they encountered during the day. How can you **help them problem solve**. Encourage students to reach out to teachers when they feel overwhelmed or unclear, teachers can't help if they don't know.

8. Post a list of important names and emails in the students learning space to refer to for problem solving including their guidance counselor and classroom teachers.

9. When possible, monitor how and when your student completes assignments. Encourage your student to **remove distractions** from their work environment; for example; cell phones, video games, TV, or music. Students will work more efficiently without these distractions.

10. Remember **to breathe**, learning and developing executive functioning skills is an ongoing process.