

Inclusive Supports for Executive Functioning: A Guide for Teachers and Students

Student Name:

Introduction: The purpose of this Guide is to aid teachers in supporting students with Executive Functioning challenges. It is not meant to be a list of classroom accommodations although there are some included. The Guide is designed to help teachers and students better connect and communicate because connection drives engagement and engagement produces more successful learning environments.

1. Before the first day of class, the teacher, student and a trusted adult should meet, if possible. Use these categories and questions as a starting point for the conversation.

	Environmental Supports	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Preferred seating (for example: near the teacher or away from the door, low-traffic areas).	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Adjusting lighting if needed (natural lights are generally preferred).	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sensory tools available and normalized for all students (fidgets, noise-cancelling headphones, etc.)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Located preferred and appropriate quiet/cool-down spaces inside and outside of the classroom and discuss how and when to access those spaces.	
	Collaboration and Family Communication	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Discuss executive functioning goals for student growth.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Agree on communication frequency and content helpful for teacher, student, and family (communication flows both ways).	
	Teacher-Student Partnership	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/>	How can the teacher best support the student?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	How can Administration best support the student?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	How does the student prefer to communication (verbal, written, signal card, technology, etc.)?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Encourage and normalize self-advocacy.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Plan how to handle misunderstandings, overwhelm, and unpredictable schedule changes.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Agree on a plan for any missed instruction and work periods if the student misses class time for breaks or pull-out supports.	

	Executive Functioning Check-In	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/>	What helps you stay organized (for example, graphic organizers, printed copy of the lesson, etc.)?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	What helps you get started on tasks?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	What helps you stay focused?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	What makes group work easier or harder?	

2. Universal supports during classroom time and the school day.

	Routines and Structure	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Display a visual schedule or agenda for the entire class period.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Keep routines consistent (arrival, homework turn-in, transitions, etc.)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Give verbal and visual transition warnings (“two minutes left”).	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Advance communication for known schedule changes (substitute teacher, fire drill, etc.)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Maintain predictable daily and weekly patterns when possible.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Communication Supports	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Use clear, concrete language and avoid sarcasm while giving instructions.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide written and visual instructions for all tasks.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ask the student to repeat directions to confirm understanding if appropriate.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Offer nonverbal communication options (cards, signals, technology).	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Use amplification or multimedia supports if helpful.	
	Academic Supports and Differentiation	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Break assignments into smaller steps with check-ins.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide extended time when needed.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Offer multiple ways to show understanding (oral, visual, types, etc.)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Use graphic organizers, checklists, and templates.	

<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide models or examples of completed work.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Normalize movement and sensory breaks.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Offer assistive technology (speech-to-text, timers, digital planners, etc).	
	Social Skills and Peer Interactions	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Teach social expectations explicitly (joining groups, asking for clarification, and help, etc.)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Use a peer buddy or mentor system.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Monitor for bullying and exclusion.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Use social stories, scripts, or role-play for common situations.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Give clear roles during small-group work.	
	Executive Functioning Supports	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Color-code material by subject • Keep a consistent place for turning in work • Do frequent binder/folder checks 	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Task Initiation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a clear first step • Use timers or countdowns to begin work • Use checklists for routines and assignments 	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Working Memory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep instructions visible during work times • Provide written reminders for multi-step tasks • Use checklists for routines and assignments 	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Planning and Time Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Break long-term assignments into smaller deadlines • Use visual timelines or calendars • Teach students to estimate time for tasks 	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Self-Monitoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide rubrics or “what does done look like” checklists • Build in quick reflection moments (“What’s next?”; “Do I need help?”) 	
	Emotional and Behavioral Support	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify personalized calm down strategies.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Use positive reinforcement and motivation systems.	

<input type="checkbox"/>	Keep behavior expectations clear and consistent.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Use pre-correction and gentle reminders.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Collaborate with counselors and support staff.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Plan for early signs of overwhelm (break card, check-in, quiet space, etc.)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	When dysregulated give the student time to calm down. Then, revisit the situation to understand the student's point of view in a supportive and non-judgmental manner.	

3. Reflection and support outside of classroom time.

	Collaboration and Family Communication	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide regular updates to families and receive or request feedback from the student and their family.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Communicate consistently with aids, specialists, and other support personnel. Consider weekly or monthly meetings to facilitate check-ins.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Share academic and behavior data with others supporting the student.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Incorporate family input.	
	Teacher Self-Reflection	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Seek ongoing professional development on executive functioning supports.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Determine if you need support from your Administrative team.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Review this list and supports frequently. Discuss supports with student and adjust as needed.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Maintain empathy, flexibility, and a strengths-based mindset.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	If any behavioral concerns exist, remember to first consider the event leading up to the behavior as the cause.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	If a student is still struggling despite supports, consider referral for special education evaluation or a 504 plan.	

References

- Alsaedi, R. H. (2025). Relation between executive functioning, sensory processing, and motor performance in children with autism. *BMC Pediatrics*, 25(1), Article 457. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12887-025-05756-9>
- CAST. (2024). The UDL guidelines. CAST Universal Design for Learning Guidelines. <https://udlguidelines.cast.org/>
- Clements, F. M., & Luehrman, J. (2025, August 13). Supporting Kids at School. personal.
- Clements, F. M., & Sherwood, C. (2025, October 11). Twice Exceptional Students. personal.
- Daniel, S., Mahler, K., Ray, D. C., Sharp, K., Clairry, K., Inderbitzen, S. M., Laurent, A. C., Fede, J. H., & Delafield-Butt, J. T. (2026). Sensory-processing informed autism practice for child-centered therapists. *Research in Neurodiversity*, 2, Article 100015. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rin.2026.100015>
- Diamond, A. (2013). Executive functions. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 64, 135–168. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-113011-143750>
- Su, W. C., Srinivasan, S., & Bhat, A. N. (2025). Effects of Movement and Sedentary Play interventions on executive functioning and their relationships with sensory, repetitive, and negative behaviors of children with ASD – a pilot RCT. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 47(19), 4999–5007. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09638288.2025.2465600>

Author:

Mia Clements
Special Education LEND Trainee
JFK Partners, University of Colorado Anschutz
fmiacllements@gmail.com

Suggested Citation:

Clements, M. (2026, May). Inclusive Supports for Executive Functioning: A Guide for Teachers and Students. [guide]. University of Colorado Anschutz: Aurora, CO.

Acknowledgement

This project was supported, in part, by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) under the Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (LEND) Grant T73MC11044 and by the Administration on for Community Living under the University Center of Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCDEDD) Grant 90DDUC0014 of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). This information or content and conclusions are those of the author and should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should any endorsements be inferred by HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government.