cerebrate

Lively Minds Institute

Best Practices for Executive Function Instruction

Executive Function System

Cerebrate includes seven necessary components for optimal skill-building and habit development in students. The incorporation of these seven components while implementing the curriculum is considered best practice use for executive function instruction. The essential Cerebrate components are assessment, motivation, instruction, collaboration, engagement, application, and metacognition.

Best Practice Components

Assessment

To understand executive function needs, it is helpful to think of the challenges that students face behaviorally, emotionally, and cognitively. Then consider to what degree those challenges affect the student's ability to learn. By identifying and addressing your student's areas of greatest need, your instruction becomes more targeted and successful.

Note: See *How to Determine Student Need* in the Resources section of the Cerebrate platform.

Motivation

A student's desire and drive to improve are vital for success. Motivation can come from external rewards or even obligation. However, intrinsic motivators like enjoyment or pride in accomplishment prove to help students with long-term learning and application of skills. Whether intrinsic or extrinsic in nature, motivation serves as an essential tool to captivate a student's ability to grow.

Note: See *Ways to Motivate Your Students* in the Resources section of the Cerebrate platform.

Instruction

The development of executive function skills often requires close attention to habits. It is important to understand that the primary purpose of executive function instruction is to develop a skill. Teaching these lessons in a straight-forward, or direct approach, with repetitive, intentional practice over an extended period, proves to be most effective.

Note: See *Ways to Instruct* in the Resources section of the Cerebrate platform.

Collaboration

Strong habits are built when students actively listen, ask questions, and think critically to reflect and evaluate their progress during goal-orientated processes. When addressing executive function struggles, collaboration is not only helpful but necessary for students to develop self-awareness and problem-solving skills as they work toward improvement.

Note: See *Ways to Incorporate Collaboration* in the Resources section of the Cerebrate platform.

Engagement

An inherent piece for executive function instruction is student engagement, critical because it allows students to make abstract concepts more concrete by evaluating the "how." By providing varied opportunities for active learning, students maintain interest, develop curiosity, and demonstrate their growth.

Note: See *Ways to Engage Your Students* in the Resources section of the Cerebrate platform.

Application

When working with students to develop executive functioning skills, it is necessary to provide ample opportunities for practice. Optimal application occurs when students can demonstrate executive function skills in a live, supportive, and realistic environment. This practice equips them with specific strategies to use for personal goals, routines, and development of habits.

Note: See *Ways to Apply a Lesson* in the Resources section of the Cerebrate platform.

Metacognition

One of the most important components of executive function instruction is metacognition. Metacognition skills allow students to consider how they learn and what executive function skills work best in each circumstance. Students who consistently practice metacognition become increasingly self-aware, while they establish routines, goals and habits that are applied to everyday life in meaningful ways.

Note: See *Ways to Incorporate Metacognition* in the Resources section of the Cerebrate platform.