

Writing as Executive Function

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“Executive Function is a *neuropsychological* concept referring to the cognitive processes required to **plan** and **direct** activities, including **task initiation** and **follow-through**, working **memory**, sustained **attention**, performance **monitoring**, **inhibition** of impulses, and **goal-directed persistence.**”

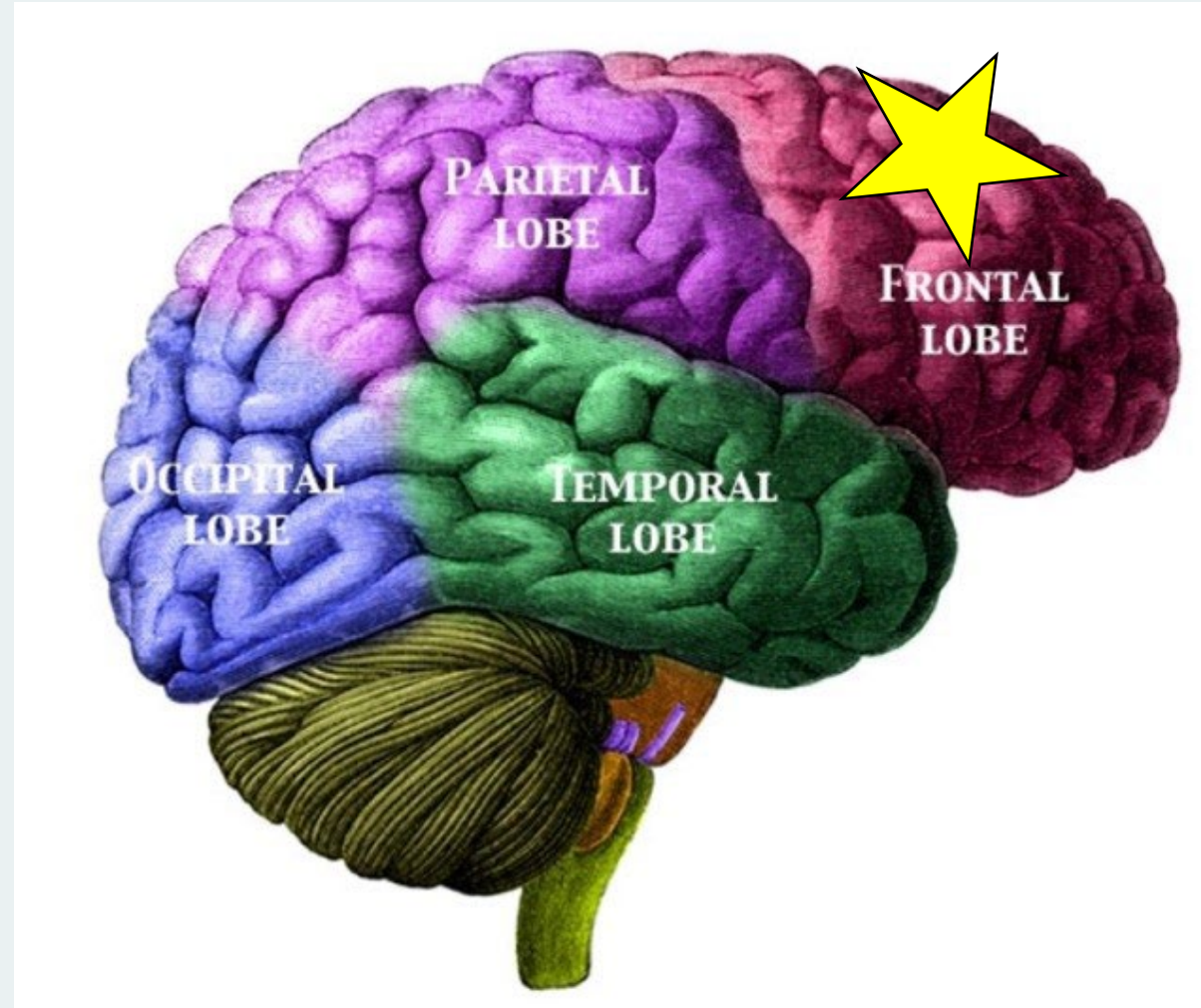
(Dawson, P. & Guarre, R., 2012, p.4)

EF is Responsible for

- goal-setting
- task-initiation
- task follow-through
- time-management
- flexibility
- processing information
- evaluating information
- understanding cause and effect
- organization
- making inferences
- evaluation and reevaluation
- self-regulation
- problem solving
- strategizing
- memory
- metacognition
- logic

(Bradley-Ruder 2008)

EF Skills live in the frontal lobe/prefrontal cortex of the brain



More about EF

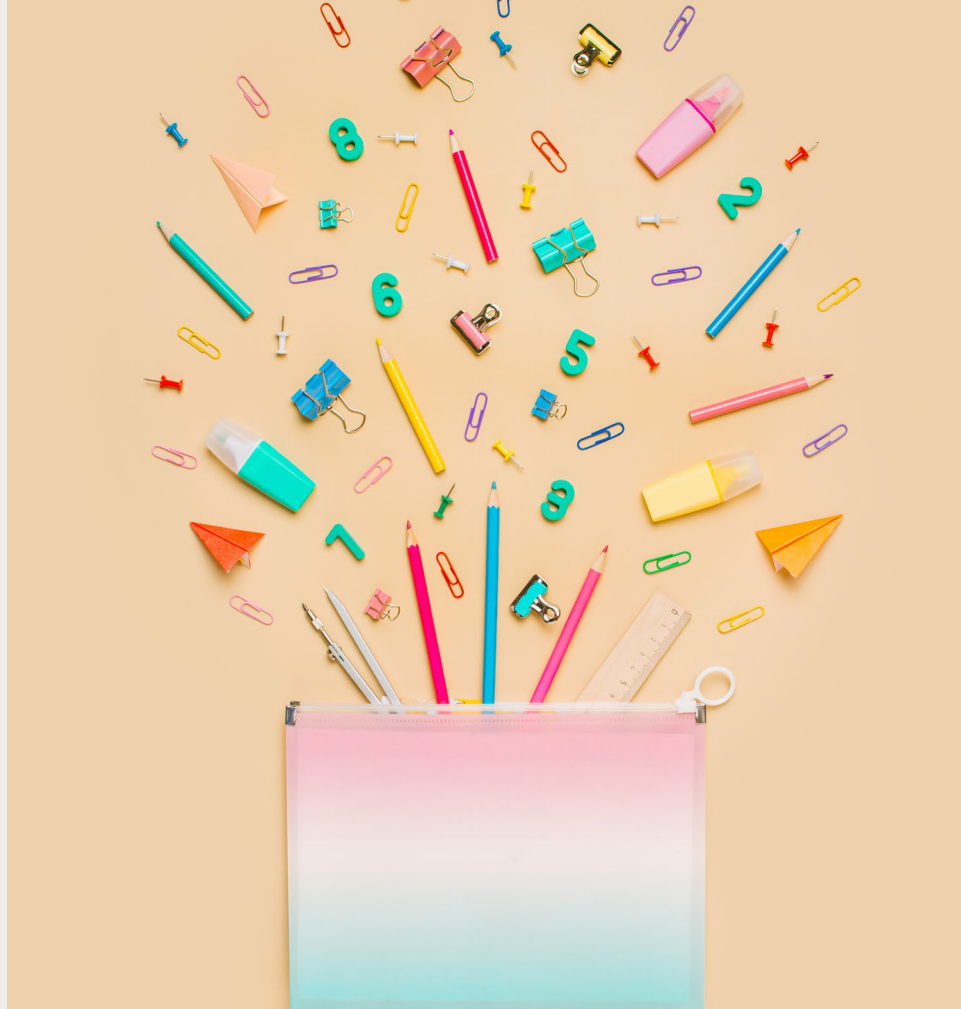
“The prefrontal cortex is one of the last regions of the brain to reach maturation...[it] is not complete until near the age of 25.”

(Arain et al., 2013, p. 435)

This part of the brain is *physiologically* and *cognitively* developing simultaneously

We need explicit instruction and support to develop EF skills

Student Writing Needs



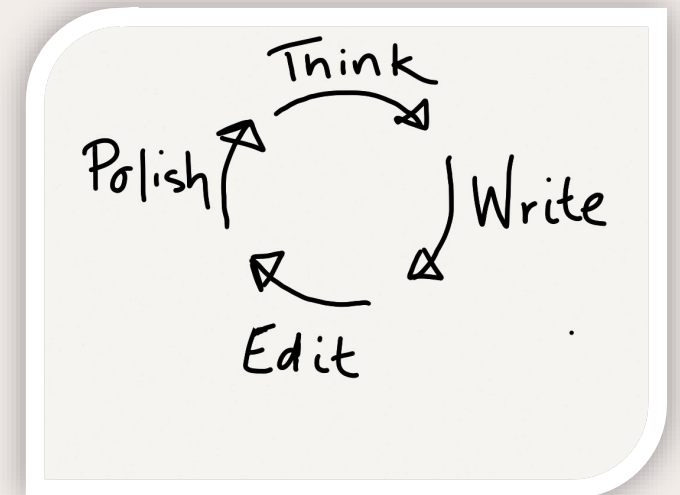
Since 2017, we've tracked student needs:

1. Organization (including planning)
2. Essay & Paragraph Writing
3. Grammar & Punctuation
4. Paraphrasing & Summarizing
5. Vocabulary Development
6. Resumes & Cover Letters*

Writing & EF

“Writing is used to **gather, remember, and share** subject-matter knowledge, as well as to **explore, organize, [convey], and refine ideas** about a topic.”

(Graham, et al, 2007, p. 216)



Writing IS EF!!

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(Bradley-Ruder 2008)

Strategies for Fostering EF Skills:

1. Talk about EF

- Name it
- Explain it
- Set realistic expectations
- **Use Cues**

2. Encourage Students to be Involved in Learning

3. Talk about Your Plan & What You're Going to Do (and why!) with Students

4. Reward EF Development/Strategy Use

(Wilson, D., 2015)

Strategies for Writing Development:

- Explain what happens when we learn, including:
 - Writing takes time and is a process
 - Processes need to be practiced
 - **Use a Correction Code**
- Encourage student involvement, peer evaluation
- Connect to prior knowledge
- Try a task-based approach vs. grammar focus
- Always have a plan and communicate it to students. Adults want to know why!
- Be positive and encouraging. Reward accurate use and development of EF and Writing Skills

Thank
you

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