

Executive Functioning Book Club

West End Secondary School

Session 1: February 6th 2019

1. Welcome and introductions (8:45am-9:00am)
2. Icebreaker (9:00am-9:10 am)

In pairs of two, tell each other one amazing thing about your teen (rose/aha thing) and one annoying thing (thorn/an irk). Share your understanding of executive functioning and your hope through this text.

3. Norms for the book club (9:10am-9:25am)

In small groups, consider some basic norms for the group to ensure trust, equity, participation etc.

4. Silent reading (9:25am-9:35am) (pp.1-10)
5. Reflection (9:35am-9:50am)

In small groups, consider/discuss what stood out from the reading, what was thought provoking, what presented challenges or other related bits that arise from the reading.

6. Discussion (9:50am-10:00am)
7. Reading for session two (chapters 1-3)

February 6, 2019

Dear All:

Thank you for joining us for our first book club meeting and here is a summary of what we discussed. We opened the meeting with introductions and welcome followed by an icebreaker activity in pairs. During this activity we shared with one another one amazing thing about our teen (rose/aha thing) and one annoying thing (thorn/an irk). We then unpacked our understanding of executive functioning and our hope through this text. We then moved onto establish some norms for how we would engage in a meaningful conversation as a group. The below summarizes our norms:



Once our norms were discussed, we moved onto a silent reading phase for about 10 minutes for the first 10 pages of the text and dived into a larger discussion where everyone around the table had an opportunity participate. A few key ideas emerged:

Executive Functioning (EF)

- Understanding the term in context and an increased need in the current 'age of attention' rather than 'an age of information'.
- EF is a time driven skillset that is fully developed by mid-twenties.
- EF goes beyond the classroom: education in and out of the classroom, across the lifespan.
- Skillset approach and not have a stigma attached to lack of EF.
- Relationship to growth mindset.

- According to Russel Barkely, EF is the use of self-directed actions (self-regulation) so as to choose goals and to select, enact and sustain actions toward those goals (as cited in Dellman, 2018, p. 7).

Mental Process for EF



Growth Mindset : A WESS Philosophy

- Theory developed by Carol Dweck: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M1CHPnZfFmU>
- In a growth mindset, most basic abilities can be developed through perseverance and hard work—brains and talent serve as points of departures. This view creates a love of learning and a resilience that is essential for great accomplishment. Students who embrace growth mindsets—the belief that they can learn more or become smarter if they work hard and persevere—may learn more, learn it more quickly, and view challenges and failures as opportunities to improve their learning and skills.

Relationship between EF and Expeditionary Learning (EL)/ Growth Mindset (GM)

- As we dive more into the text, it will be useful to consider the relationship between EF, EL and GM in thoughtful ways. In order to contextualize EF within EM/GM, it may be helpful to revisit the ten tenants of EL identified by its founder, Kurt Hahn. (http://www.kurthahn.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/james_final.pdf)
 - The primacy of self-discovery
 - The having of wonderful ideas
 - The responsibility for learning
 - Empathy and caring
 - Success and failure

- Collaboration and competition
- Diversity and inclusion
- The natural world
- Solitude and reflection
- Service and compassion

- At WESS, these principles translate to its core values: *creativity, wonder, compassion and resilience*.
- Consider watching this:
https://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_changing_education_paradigms

For Next Week (2.13.19):

- Read chapters 1-3 from the text.
- Consider the following questions:
 1. Within the context of the chapters, what themes emerge from the reading? (themes could relate to EF basics, relationship between EF/EL/GM based on the school's core values, personal stories etc.)
 2. What was most challenging in the reading? What kind of opportunities did those challenges present?
 3. What did you connect with the most?
 4. What practical tips did you take away?
 5. As you read, what kind of questions emerged for the author?
 6. What might be some unargued assumptions in the reading? Do you agree? Why or why not?
 7. What might be some counter arguments that emerge?
 8. Any other bits that you want to consider/share, interesting quotes etc.

Please let me know if you have any questions or suggestions/feedback from the first session. Look forward to a robust conversation next week. We will have coffee and cookies.

Have a wonderful week and thank you again.

Warmly,
Ami

Executive Functioning Book Club

February 13th 2019

1. Introductions (5 minutes)
2. Icebreaker (2 minutes):
 - a. Get yourselves in small groups.
 - b. Grab some gloves.
 - c. Your task is to fish out as many paper clips with your group in 30 seconds.
 - d. Group that has maximum paper clips wins.
3. Round table (5-7 minutes):

What is the relationship between spaghetti, paper clips and your teen's brain?
4. Silent time (5-7 minutes):
 - Note down three challenges that you might think your teen has with regards to EF.
 - Note down three challenges that you have in dealing with your teen with regards to EF.
 - At least one question for the author on the index card from chapters 1-3. Please include your name.
5. Turn and Talk (10 minutes for turn and talk + 10 minutes for large group):
 - Share your challenges with your partner.
 - Think about *what* from the first three chapters can work in dealing with those challenges (practical tips, think along the lines of every challenge presents an opportunity for growth).
 - One partner will share one common challenge and solution/opportunity for growth with the large group in the context of EF.
6. Large group & wrap up (20 minutes- we will get through whatever we can)
 1. **Together, let's think about** what themes emerged from the reading? (themes could relate to EF basics, relationship between EF/EL/GM based on the school's core values, personal stories etc.)
 2. What was most challenging in the reading? What kind of opportunities did those challenges present?
 3. What did you connect with the most?
 4. What might be some unargued assumptions in the reading? Do you agree? Why or why not?
 5. What might be some counter arguments that emerge?
 6. Any other bits that you want to consider/share, interesting quotes etc.

February 13, 2019

Dear All:

Thank you for joining us for our second book club meeting and here is a summary of what we discussed. We opened the meeting with new introductions and welcome followed by an icebreaker activity in pairs. During this activity we worked in small groups, and dug our hands into bowls with cooked spaghetti to fish out paper clips and lentils. We then unpacked our understanding of executive functioning in relation to a teen's mushed brain aka spaghetti—too much going on and hard to manage.

We then moved onto a silent time to identify challenges related to EF and opportunities those challenges that presented for growth in relation to our teens followed by discussion with our partner. Famous education philosopher/education theorist John Dewey (1859-1952) contextualizes the notion of problem/ challenges/ crisis beautifully: *a problem well put is half solved and beneath every crisis lies an opportunity for growth.*

We then came back as a larger group to debrief. The following emerged as part of our debriefing session:

Challenges faced by our teens for EF	Challenges faced by us as parents in teaching EF	Practical Tips from the text	How these challenges present an opportunity for growth and building EF
Organizing tasks	Long and short terms objectives	Goal setting	Self-regulation
Time management	Trade offs	Shifting the mindset	Flexible Thinking
Try their 100% / doing their best	Balance	Who is the adult in the room?	Organization
Developmental challenges: -social emotional -self identity -anxiety	Involvement	Ownership	Task and Time Management
Perfectionism	Giving children their space	Finding their path	Assessing Progress
Lack of confidence	Find their feet	Less about us, more about them	Effective Attention
Procrastination	Reorient	Choices	Self- regulation
I don't care teen attitude	Motivation	Listen	Priorities
Recognizing their challenges		Projection	Changing tactics

We did not get through the following questions, but agreed to complete our reading of the text as well as practice one strategy from the text during the break.

1. **Together, let's think about** what themes emerged from the reading? (themes could relate to EF basics, relationship between EF/EL/GM based on the school's core values, personal stories etc.)

2. What was most challenging in the reading? What kind of opportunities did those challenges present?
3. What did you connect with the most?
4. What might be some unargued assumptions in the reading? Do you agree? Why or why not?
5. What might be some counter arguments that emerge?
6. Any other bits that you want to consider/share, interesting quotes etc.

Please let me know if you have any questions or suggestions/feedback from the first two sessions. Look forward to a robust conversation post break. We will have coffee and cookies.

Have a wonderful week and thank you again.

Warmly,
Ami

Executive Functioning Book Club

February 25th 2019

1. Introductions of any new members (5 minutes)
2. Icebreaker (10-12 minutes):
 - a. Get yourselves in small groups.
 - b. Share a personal story about any one strategy that you used from the text.
 - c. Your task is to 'listen' to your partner and think about connections to the text/EF skills/WESS core values based on what is shared.
3. Large group (20 minutes)

One person from each group with summarize their conversation and we will make a connection to the school's core values: wonder/compassion/resilience/creativity as well as the basic EF skills: Self-regulation, Flexible Thinking, Organization, Task and Time Management, Assessing Progress, Effective Attention, Self- regulation, Priorities and Changing tactics.

4. Large or Small group & wrap up (20 minutes- we will get through whatever we can)
 1. What was most challenging in the reading? What kind of opportunities did those challenges present?
 2. What did you connect with the most?
 3. What might be some unargued assumptions in the reading? Do you agree? Why or why not?
 4. What might be some counter arguments that emerge?
 5. Any other bits that you want to consider/share, interesting quotes etc.

February 26, 2019

Dear All:

Thank you for joining us for our third book club meeting and here is a summary of what we discussed. We opened the meeting with new introductions and welcome followed by an icebreaker activity in pairs where we talked about the various strategies we used from the book.

- Checked parent assumptions (p.13)
- Prioritizing matrix (p.35)
- Making a bet (p.146)
- Covey quadrant framework (p.161)
- Other discussion revolved around many different perspectives that a lot of inherently practice but often not to the fullest!

We then moved onto make some connections between Executive Functioning and WESS's core values. As you can see all of the schools values based on the tenants of Expeditionary Learning are very much intertwined with Executive Functioning Skills supporting the notion of Growth Mindset. In order to contextualize EF within EM/GM, it may be helpful to revisit the ten tenants of EL identified by its founder, Kurt

Hahn. (http://www.kurthahn.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/james_final.pdf)

- The primacy of self-discovery
 - The having of wonderful ideas
 - The responsibility for learning
 - Empathy and caring
 - Success and failure
 - Collaboration and competition
 - Diversity and inclusion
 - The natural world
 - Solitude and reflection
 - Service and compassion
- At WESS, these principles translate to its core values: ***creativity, wonder, compassion and resilience***. As you review the connections we made as a group, you could continue to build these connections using your own children, their strengths and weaknesses and how it translates towards applying EF into EL principles whereby you can support their growth in and out of the classrooms at WESS but more importantly across their lifespan.

Executive Functioning Skills	WESS CORE VALUES			
	Creativity	Wonder	Resilience	Compassion
Self-regulation Flexible Thinking Organization Task and Time Management	Student Led Conferences (SLC) and Presentation of Learning (POL): Both require knowing one's strengths and weaknesses, flexible thinking as well as changing the tactics to meet goals.	Building background knowledge to achieve academic and personal excellence to feed into the curiosity of a growing mind can only be strengthened using flexible thinking and changing tactics.	SAN, SLC and POL aid towards building resilience which can be only be strengthened with a shifting mindset. The notion of every challenge presenting an opportunity to grow is at the heart of being resilient.	Self-assessment and self-regulation are key drivers to learn to be compassionate and support differentiated learning. These skills further aid towards assessing progress in areas of service learning and experiences in CREW advisories.
Assessing Progress Effective Attention Self-regulation Priorities Changing tactics	Organization and prioritizing become important factors in meeting academic and personal goals required for collaborative and creative learning.	Expeditions and associated camping trips/fieldwork serve as fodder for wonder which aid in progress assessment and growth mindset.	School culture focusing on the Socratic Seminar and public speaking revolves around an amalgamation of EF skills.	
	Effective attention becomes a crucial skill as well.	Parent education night feeds into the notion of wonder in the changing culture of childhood in the age of attention.	Learning to prioritize, progress assessment, task and time management along with changing tactics become vehicles to build resilience.	

- The arrows indicate the intricacy of interconnectedness between our values as a school community, our school culture and the much needed skills of executive functioning to survive the age of attention.