IMPLEMENTATION TIPS

This program would be ideal for whole-school implementation, as it can be easily adapted for age and grade level. The benefits to having a common language that follows a child through their school career would be ideal, as well as the opportunity to track a child's progress through the years. If, however, you are piloting this program in your own classroom, there is no reason why that cannot also work for you and your students. The implementation of a program like this takes time. Before you can expect your children to understand and use strategies, you as the teacher must also do your homework. We recommend researching executive functions so that you have some foundational knowledge before you begin teaching these concepts in your school community.

In terms of your classroom, you will of course, figure out what works best for you. Here are just a few ideas to get your classroom "EF ready". If you come up with a great idea, share it to @EFs2theRescue on Twitter!

1.   CHECK IN

We mentioned a "check in" previously in the section on **Flexibility**. We made 5 felt pouches and stapled them to the wall by the door to the classroom. Popsicle sticks were used for each of the kids, with a photo of them (making a hilarious face) taped onto the stick. Each time they noticed a change in how they were feeling, they were encouraged to come up and place their stick in the appropriate pouch. Teachers even had one too. This is a great (and very simple) way to create awareness around how we are feeling, and help others to understand how we are feeling as well. You could work with your kids to create the headings for each pouch, and have as many as you feel necessary for your specific classroom. Ours ranged from a 1 (calm, relaxed, tired) to a 5 (angry; "give me some space"). The kids used it all the time, and it was a great way to get them to start discussing their feelings rather than shutting down. It

also helped to create a classroom of students who were now very easily able to see how their peers were feeling. Students began to ask their peers; "Why are you sad?", "Do you need help?", etc.

2. VISUAL REMINDERS

Children respond well to visuals that make concepts and strategies more attainable. Visual reminders should be everywhere. Post images of the characters, lists of strategies, pictures of strategies, schedules with pictures, reminders taped to desks, etc. Students with EF deficiencies need these explicit reminders in order to achieve success. Of course, it is not sufficient to simply post the images and expect that everything will fall into place. You will need to familiarize yourself with the executive functions and teach your children the strategies. This process takes time, but visuals will certainly help you on your way.

3. "BLOW OFF STEAM" ROUTINE

This strategy is to help with emotional regulation. Our poster has **4 simple steps**, with diagrams, that students could go into the hall and complete if they needed a break. The steps were:
1   10 jumping jacks
2   10 sit ups
3   10 push ups
4   10 deep breaths

*This routine could be personalized for a student, depending on their needs

Students would sometimes need to be sent to try out the routine, but later began asking for it on their own, as they started to build awareness of their feelings and energy levels. It should **never be a punitive measure**, but instead students should be praised for using this strategy as a way to calm their bodies and attempt to increase levels of focus during a lesson.

It also works to create awareness (**metacognition**) about their learning and allows them to take ownership over their actions.

4. EXPLICIT PRACTICE

Choose a character each week and discuss with your students what "success" looks like. Once you have agreed on the criteria, you can begin to practise the skill with your students. We post a small version of the chosen EF character at the top of the board with everyone's initials underneath. Students could earn rewards for achieving 5 tallies. For example, if we were practising shifting, students would earn a tally for lining up when the timer went off, or for putting away materials when asked. The funny thing is, often when you practise one skill, other skills improve as well.

5. "WHICH EFS ARE YOU USING RIGHT NOW?"

It is important to have a list of the EFs, with pictures of the characters, posted in your classroom and refer to them throughout the day. For example, if beginning a writing task, ask students; **"Which EFs do you think you will use the most for this task?"** Answers will vary, but they should. Every student will experience different challenges with different tasks. This always brings the focus back to how our students are learning, the **metacognition** piece that is so important. It also makes them aware of their challenges and may help them to choose a strategy before becoming frustrated.