

# Developing Executive Function to Empower Learners™

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## Overview

This document contains information specific to the course. For general information on PLS Classes including our academic integrity policy and more, please visit this URL: [PLSClasses.com/our-courses/syllabi](https://PLSClasses.com/our-courses/syllabi).

## Course Description

Developing Executive Function to Empower Learners is a three-credit hour course that focuses on the correlation between student learning and the executive function skills of the brain. Strong executive function skills enhance student learning and empower students academically, personally, and professionally. Participants learn strategies and activities that develop and strengthen executive function in the areas of organization and planning; focus and attention; working memory; inhibitory control and self-regulation; self-directedness (self-managing, self-monitoring, and self-modifying); and cognitive flexibility. Participants learn how to make thinking visible in the classroom in a way that fosters problem solving, perspective-taking, and creative cognition skills. Mind matters, and learning how to optimize the air traffic control system of the brain has a powerful impact on learning.

## Course Materials

For on-site and remote learning courses, each participant will receive a folder of materials along with access to digital materials. Upon registration, participants may choose to receive a printed participant manual in addition to the digital version.

Participants will receive access to digital materials prior to the first day of class. For remote learning classes, printed materials will be sent to the participant's provided address. For on-site classes, printed materials will be distributed on the first day of class.

Online class materials will be accessible through the learning management system (LMS).

## Course Outcomes

Upon completion of this class, the learner will be able to:

1. Evaluate course-related, research-based literature and resources, express opinions, and make correlations to the classroom and teacher practice.
2. Expand expertise and enhance teacher practice by researching, engaging in, and sharing methods, strategies, and activities related to the developing executive function skills.
3. Apply course concepts by reflecting on teaching and making correlations to the classroom and teacher practice.
4. Develop executive function skills that support goal setting, organization, and planning in order to enhance student learning and self-efficacy.
5. Develop executive function skills that support attention and working memory in order to enhance student learning and self-efficacy.
6. Develop executive function skills that support inhibitory control and self-regulation in order to enhance student learning and self-efficacy.
7. Develop executive function skills that support self-directedness through self-managing, self-monitoring, and self-modifying in order to enhance student learning and self-efficacy.
8. Develop executive function skills that support cognitive flexibility through problem solving, perspective-taking, and creative cognition in order to enhance student learning and self-efficacy.
9. Enhance lessons to advance executive function by incorporating executive function strategies and utilizing activities that make thinking visible in the classroom.

# Course Topical Outline

	List of Concepts
<p><b>Section 1: The Concept of Executive Function</b></p>	<p>Welcome and introduction to the course; community of learners and introductions; section overview, guiding question, and research excerpts; executive function framework; definition and description of framework terms; behaviors of students who do and do not demonstrate executive function skills; the concept of visible thinking; why is executive function important; Visible Thinking Strategy (VTS): Team chat—Consider this; modeling executive function skills; executive function self-assessment; relevant strategies for the classroom; reflect on content learned and make correlations to the classroom and teacher practice; supplemental assessment to evaluate one’s executive function skills; assessment that requires reviews of educational literature.</p>

<p><b>Section 2: The Neuroscience of Executive Function</b></p>	<p>Section overview, guiding question, and research excerpts; thinking game that requires strategy and executive function skills; the correlation between executive function and the prefrontal cortex, definition and description of terms; the controlled and automatic systems of the brain; the neuroscience of executive function; the subregions of the prefrontal cortex; VTS: Associations; the developmental stages of executive function; VTS: For Your Information; the arc of executive function development by age; executive function deficits; signs and symptoms of executive function deficits; recognizing the signs and symptoms of executive function deficits; executive function disorders: students with ADHD; students with ASD; students with LD; VTS: Connect–Extend–Question; peer-teaching presentations; relevant strategies for the classroom; reflect on content learned and make correlations to the classroom and teacher practice; assessment that requires research of methods, strategies, and activities that expand expertise; assessment that enhances lessons to advance executive function.</p>
<p><b>Section 3: Developing Preparation Skills</b></p>	<p>Section overview, guiding question, and research excerpts; defining and describing <i>Preparation</i> skills; preparation inventory and carousel share; goal setting skills described; goal setting in the classroom; organization skills described; organization styles; organization in the classroom; organization tips; organization and academics; VTS: Open-Ended Card Sort; time management skills described; time management tips; extending time management tips; VTS: What Makes You Say That?; planning and prioritizing skills described; <i>preparation</i> skills in the classroom: InfoHunt activities; relevant strategies for the classroom; reflect on content learned and make correlations to the classroom and teacher practice; assessment that develops a strategy or activity to enhance <i>preparation</i> skills in students.</p>

<p><b>Section 4: Developing Attention and Working Memory Skills</b></p>	<p>Section overview, guiding question, and research excerpts; <i>attention</i> and <i>working memory</i> skills defined and described; <b>Attention</b> includes multitasking; mind games: Identifier; <i>attention</i> skills and deficits; types of attention; developing <i>attention</i> skills; VTS: 4Cs—Concept—Connections—Challenges—Changes; strategies to develop <i>attention</i> skills; VTS: Peer-Teaching Presentations; transitions and shifting attention; transition procedures; <b>Working Memory</b> includes memory pathways; explicit and implicit memory; developing <i>working memory</i>; VTS: Concept Map; <i>working memory</i> subskills; deficits in <i>working memory</i>; strategies to develop <i>working memory</i>; VTS: Conversation Station; <i>attention</i> and <i>working memory</i> in content areas; relevant strategies for the classroom; reflect on content learned and make correlations to the classroom and teacher practice; assessment that develops a strategy or activity to enhance <i>attention</i> and <i>working memory</i> skills in students.</p>
<p><b>Section 5: Developing Inhibitory Control Skills</b></p>	<p>Section overview, guiding question, and research excerpts; define and describe <b>Inhibitory Control</b> skills; five qualities you can control; defining the five qualities; signs of problems with <i>inhibitory control</i>; signs of impulsive behavior; impatience and impulsivity; inappropriate communication and social skills; VTS: Give Me an Example; self-regulation skills; strategies for self-regulation centers: Center 1: Inhibitory control and the brain; VTS: 3–2–1 Insights; Center 2: The trigger tree; Center 3: Mindfulness and mindfulness strategies; Center 4: Emotional self-awareness; Center 5: Response choices; choice responses board or remote; Center 6: Self-regulation problem solving; VTS: What Would You Do?; relevant strategies for use in the classroom; reflect on content learned and make correlations to the classroom and teacher practice; assessment that develops a strategy or activity to enhance <i>inhibitory control</i> skills in students.</p>

**Section 6: Self-Directedness—Self-Managing Skills**

Section overview, guiding question, and research excerpts; evaluating self-directedness skills; defining and describing *Self-Directedness—Self-Managing* skills; self-directed learning; characteristics of the self-directed learner; self-managing skill: develop self-efficacy; strategies to develop self-efficacy; develop a growth mindset; tipping the scales with success equation; VTS: Chalk talk/text talk; self-managing skill: encourage self-motivation; student choice and student voice; task initiation; pacing; procrastination; strategies to address procrastination; VTS: Headlines; self-managing skills: nurture grit and resilience; VTS: Think or Wonder; VTS: Now I Think; strategies to foster grit: cultivate curiosity; inductive instruction; allow risk-taking and embrace mistakes; promote problem solving; tips for mind resilient problem solvers; self-directed learning; spectrum of inquiry-based models; VTS: Connect–Supply–Apply; self-directed learning presentations; relevant strategies for the classroom; reflect on content learned and make correlations to the classroom and teacher practice; assessment that develops a strategy or activity to enhance *self-directedness* and self-management skills in students.

<p><b>Section 7: Self-Directedness—Self-Monitoring and Self-Modifying Skills</b></p>	<p>Section overview, guiding question, and research excerpts; define and describe <i>Self-Directedness—Self Monitoring and Self-Modifying</i>; stress management; VTS: Self-Monitory and Self-Modify Stress Management; tips for stress management; self-monitoring skills and opportunities; compelling whys for self-monitoring; designing self-monitoring forms; self-modifying skills: feedback, reflection, and self-adjusting; self-modifying in action hands-on activity; self-assessment; benefits of self-assessment; self-assessment strategies; self-assessment of hands-on activity; peer-critique; benefits of peer-critique; the peer-critique process; tips for quality feedback; tips for receiving feedback; utilizing peer critique in the classroom; strategy videos; peer-critique hands-on activity; VTS: Praise–Question–Suggestion; reflection and reflection strategies; VTS: Reflection of hands-on activity; self-adjusting and self-adjusting strategies; VTS: Self-Adjusting of hands-on activity; relevant strategies for the classroom; reflect on content learned and make correlations to the classroom and teacher practice; assessment that develops a strategy or activity to enhance <i>self-directedness</i>, self-monitoring, and self-modifying skills in students.</p>
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<p><b>Section 8: Cognitive Flexibility— Problem Solving</b></p>	<p>Section overview, guiding question, and research excerpts; define and describe <b><i>Cognitive Flexibility—Problem Solving</i></b>; characteristics of strong cognitive flexibility; cognitive flexibility deficits and cognitive rigidity; cognitive flexibility in action; the process of thinking; visible thinking; VTS: Think–Pair–Share; independent thinking; types of thinking; VTS: Where Do You Stand?; type of thinking; cognitive distortions and obstructive habits of mind; VTS: How Do I Think?; thinking styles framework based on orientation and focus; define and describe critical thinking, problem solving, and problem-based learning; VTS: Interplanetary Escape; relevant strategies for the classroom; reflect on content learned and make correlations to the classroom and teacher practice; supplemental assessments to evaluate one’s thinking style; assessment that develops a strategy or activity to enhance <i>cognitive flexibility—problem solving</i> skills in students.</p>
<p><b>Section 9: Cognitive Flexibility— Perspective- Taking</b></p>	<p>Section overview, guiding question, and research excerpts; expand expertise and enhance teacher practice in a networking exchange of methods, strategies, and activities; define and describe <b><i>Cognitive Flexibility—Perspective-Taking</i></b>; VTS: Frame and Reframe; know your own perspectives and values; VTS: Who Am I?; perspective utilizing discernment and reasoning; VTS: Red Light, Yellow Light; perspective evaluating pros and cons; the pros and cons of comparisons; VTS: Tug of War—Pros and Cons; perspective expressing opinions; opinion phrases; VTS: Opinion OREO; perspective showing empathy; theory of mind; VTS: Step Inside; perspective thinking from multiple perspectives; VTS: Circle of Viewpoints; relevant strategies for the classroom; reflect on content learned and make correlations to the classroom and teacher practice; assessment that develops a strategy or activity to enhance <i>cognitive flexibility—perspective-taking</i> skills in students.</p>

<b>Section 10: Cognitive Flexibility— Creative Cognition</b>	Section overview, objectives, and research excerpts; define and describe <b><i>Creative Cognition</i></b> ; the creativity crisis; creativity crisis update; developing creative cognition in the classroom; VTS: Creativity Hunt—The Sky Pool; creative cognition characteristics; students with creative cognition; VTS: The da Vinci Notebook; the creative process: observing, questioning, networking, associating, experimenting; VTS: Color–Symbol–Example; creative cognition in action; mini-golf design project; relevant strategies for the classroom; reflect on content learned and make correlations to the classroom and teacher practice; reflect and share the impact of developing executive function skills to empower learners.
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## Course Portfolio Assessments

### Correlations to Course Outcomes and Institutional Outcomes

Throughout the course, participants complete a Course Portfolio which includes a multicomponent Action Research Project comprised of several Action Research Assessments, as well as multiple Application Assessments aligned to Course Outcomes. The Action Research Assessments comprise 50% of the final grade and the Application Assessments comprise the other 50% of the final grade in accordance with the Course Portfolio Assessments table shown here. Grades are assigned in accordance with the criteria for each corresponding rubric.

Course Portfolio	Pts.	Correlations to Course Outcomes
Assessment 1: Resource Reviews	30	Outcome 1
Assessment 2: Expanding Expertise	35	Outcome 2
Assessment 3: Reflection Connection	20	Outcome 3
Assessment 4: Developing Executive Function for Learning	20	Outcome 4 Outcome 5
Assessment 5: Developing <i>Inhibitory Control</i> Skills	20	Outcome 6
Assessment 6: Developing <i>Self-Directedness</i> Skills	20	Outcome 7

Assessment 7: Developing <i>Cognitive Flexibility Skills</i>	20	Outcome 8
Assessment 8: Enhance Lessons to Advance Executive Function	35	Outcome 9
<b>Action Research Assessments Total</b>	<b>100</b>	
<b>Application Assessments Total</b>	<b>100</b>	
<b>Course Portfolio Total</b>	<b>200</b>	
Virtual Classroom and Reflection/Discussion Forum {REMOTE LEARNING ONLY}	TBD	Outcome 3
Supplemental Assessment 1: Self-Evaluation of Executive Function Skills	[20]	Outcomes 4, 5, 6, 7
Supplemental Assessment 2: Self-Evaluation of Thinking Style	[20]	Outcome 8
<b>Final Course Portfolio Total</b>		

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