

Self-regulation according to neuroscientists

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Examples of practice designed to support executive functions

NB supporting children's pretend play is in session one, which is why it is not included here. It's a great way to support executive functions

Games like Zelaso's two dimensional card sort: Blink and Dobble



Match color, shape or count...but hurry!



Other activities supporting executive functions

Walk the line



Lets say it together: 'one, two, three, jump'
Waiting to jump supports inhibitory control
changing when to jump supports cognitive flexibility

Try head, shoulders, knees and toes and once familiar try changing the rules to support cognitive flexibility e.g. touch your shoulders when I say heads...



Simon says - change the rules to support cognitive flexibility
e.g. only do it when Simon does not say anything.



Tools of the Mind Activity photo taken from youtube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iu1MRlqn7Ms>

Buddy Reading



Listening role (pretend play) and promotes waiting and **inhibitory control**

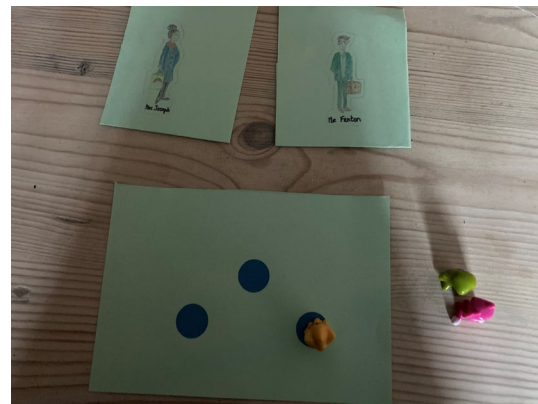
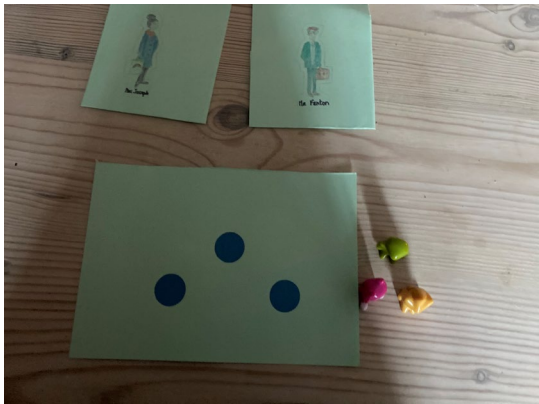
Playing the game, making sense of the story and remembering the rules promotes **working memory**

Swopping roles, changing the task with associated difficulty levels promotes **cognitive flexibility**



Teacher

Child



Tools of the mind - photo taken from youtube
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iu1MRLqn7M>

Making Collections



Waiting promotes **inhibitory control**

Playing the game and remembering the rules promotes **working memory**

Taking on different roles promotes **cognitive flexibility**



Most effective interventions (according to Dignath, Buettner & Langfeldt, 2008)

- Working memory and cognitive flexibility - **helping children to see the links between new learning and existing knowledge**

Choosing familiar contexts for new learning – e.g. teaching classroom rules using stories, songs, games, role play and through play, which are often familiar, and children have existing knowledge of.

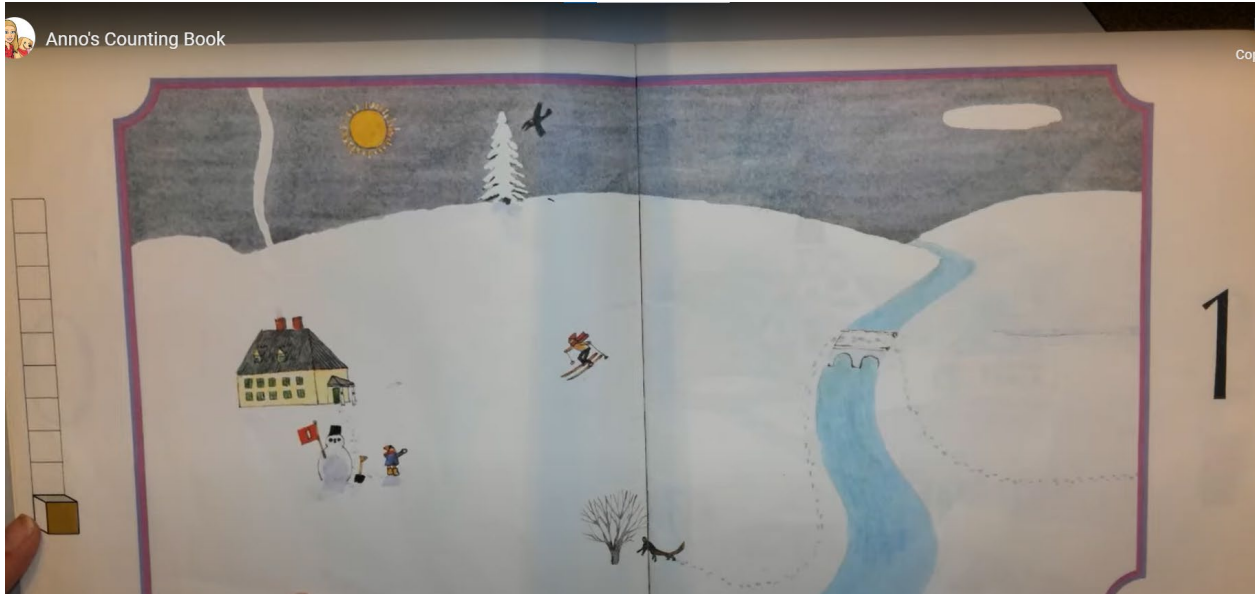
Scaffolding learning e.g. supporting children to understand rules: we were looking for shape, now we are looking for colour. We put our toys away when its tidy-up time.

Intentionally pointing out links (e.g. pointing out similarities and differences - does this remind you of something? What is the same and what is different?; and/or, using particular words to support making links e.g. 'remember' - remember we had the trikes to ride on, now we have the scooters. Do you remember what happened yesterday? Do you remember how you solved this before?)



Examples of problem solving: observe, predict and evaluate or reflect

Notice and wonder



Sorting and discussing groups of objects



Image by freepik



Photo by [amjd rdwan](#) on [Unsplash](#)

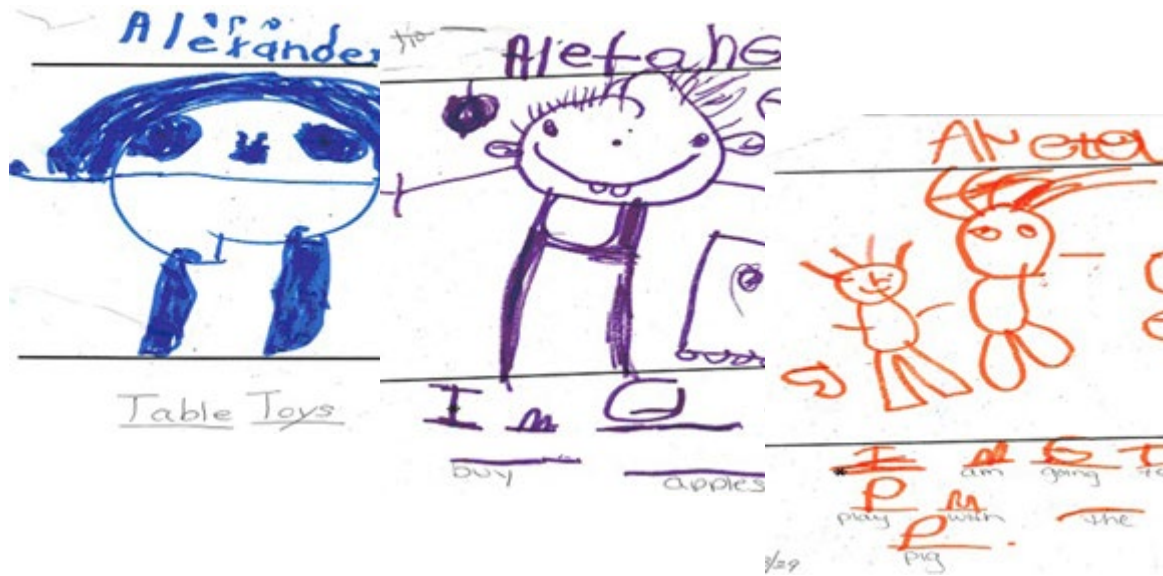


Image by freepik

Adult discussions and questioning:
What do you think we should do?
What do you notice? What do you wonder?
What makes those go together?
How are they the same?
What are you planning?
Can you see a pattern?
How did you know that?
How did you get your answer?



Bodrova and Leong (2007) taught pre-schoolers to plan their play activities and found planning helped children develop stronger self-regulation skills. Using drawing and writing purposefully, asking children to describe and elaborate on what they have written and drawn.



Modelling: the 'Think Aloud' strategy: A metacognitive approach

*makes the invisible visible
the inaccessible accessible*

A step by step process: supporting children to engage in thinking aloud themselves sometimes called external speech

Educator models thinking out loud as the 'expert learner' supporting children to understand the process and to do the same.

Examples:

Using real life experiences

While playing a game

During adult-guided learning



Supporting understanding and giving feedback

Tie language to action, descriptions and repeat the concept in different situations:

‘I can see you are not paying **attention**’ or ‘I can see your mind is wandering’

‘When you pay **attention**, your mind is like a beam of light and it shines only here’

‘When you pay **attention** your body is still and does not wiggle, your eyes are here, and you are thinking about this book’

Noticing attention:

‘I can see Adrienne is paying **attention** because she is sitting still and looking at me’

‘I could see you were really thinking hard and paying **attention**’

Other possible words to consider: remember, think, plan, organise, persevere, control and calm

Giving feedback

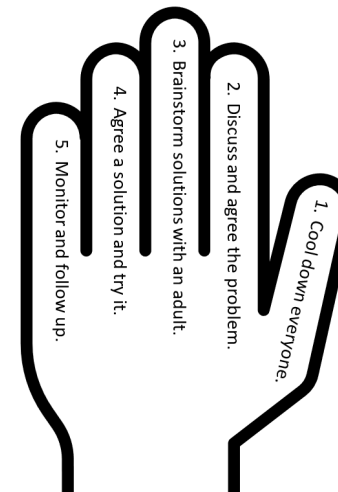
- Child beginning to get frustrated with an activity: hey (name), you can do this, you are in control. You can get through this....
- Child with a temper tantrum: ‘You are safe, you are feeling angry now but you can get back in control. You can do this, you can calm yourself.’
- I could see that you were working hard on your model, even though it was tricky you persevered and finished your boat.



Gartrell (2014) guidance approach using the Five Finger Formula (problem solving)

Providing children with knowledge about a strategy and about its benefits:

- 1. Thumb.** Cool down (all of you)
- 2. Pointer/index finger.** Discuss and all agree what the problem is
- 3. Tall guy/middle finger.** Brainstorm solutions (with adult's help if needed)
- 4. Ring finger.** All agree a solution, discuss a bit, and try it
- 5. Pinky/little finger.** Monitor and follow up (the children and adult may thank each other, they may share what they did with other children, and/or talk about how it worked out at a later time)



How are you feeling today?

1



angry

2



sad

3



tired

4



happy

5



excited



Teaching children calming techniques

1) Taking deep breaths with the child - The little book of calm

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qMvrK_8aIOE *I can calm book*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CWW9z80JD0U> *breathing for parents*

2) soothing words and touch

3) have the child count to 5 or 10 or sing a favourite song or rhyme

4) simply give the child time and let them know they have time to calm down

5) jumping up and down five times/star jumps with them

6) moving to a calming area in the room to cool-down and support breathing (but care that this is not time-out!)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3DQ4NBYX-EE> *e.g. with older children*

7) passive restraint – a last resort to prevent harm to child and others



EARLY CHILDHOOD QUALITY RATING SCALE— EMERGENT CURRICULUM (ECQRS-EC)



Kathy Sylva • Iram Siraj • Brenda Taggart • Denise Kingston

Foreword by W. Steven Barnett and Ellen C. Frede

Birth to
Seven
Matters



For further information on SSTEWS or ECQRS-EC training, professional development or evidence based evaluations or action research in early years, contact:

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EARLY CHILDHOOD QUALITY RATING SCALE - EMERGENT CURRICULUM (ECQRS-EC)



A David Fulton Book

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THE SUSTAINED SHARED THINKING AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING (SSTEWS) SCALE

Supporting Process Quality in Early Childhood



A David Fulton Book

IRAM SIRAJ, DENISE KINGSTON AND EDWARD MELHUIJSH

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