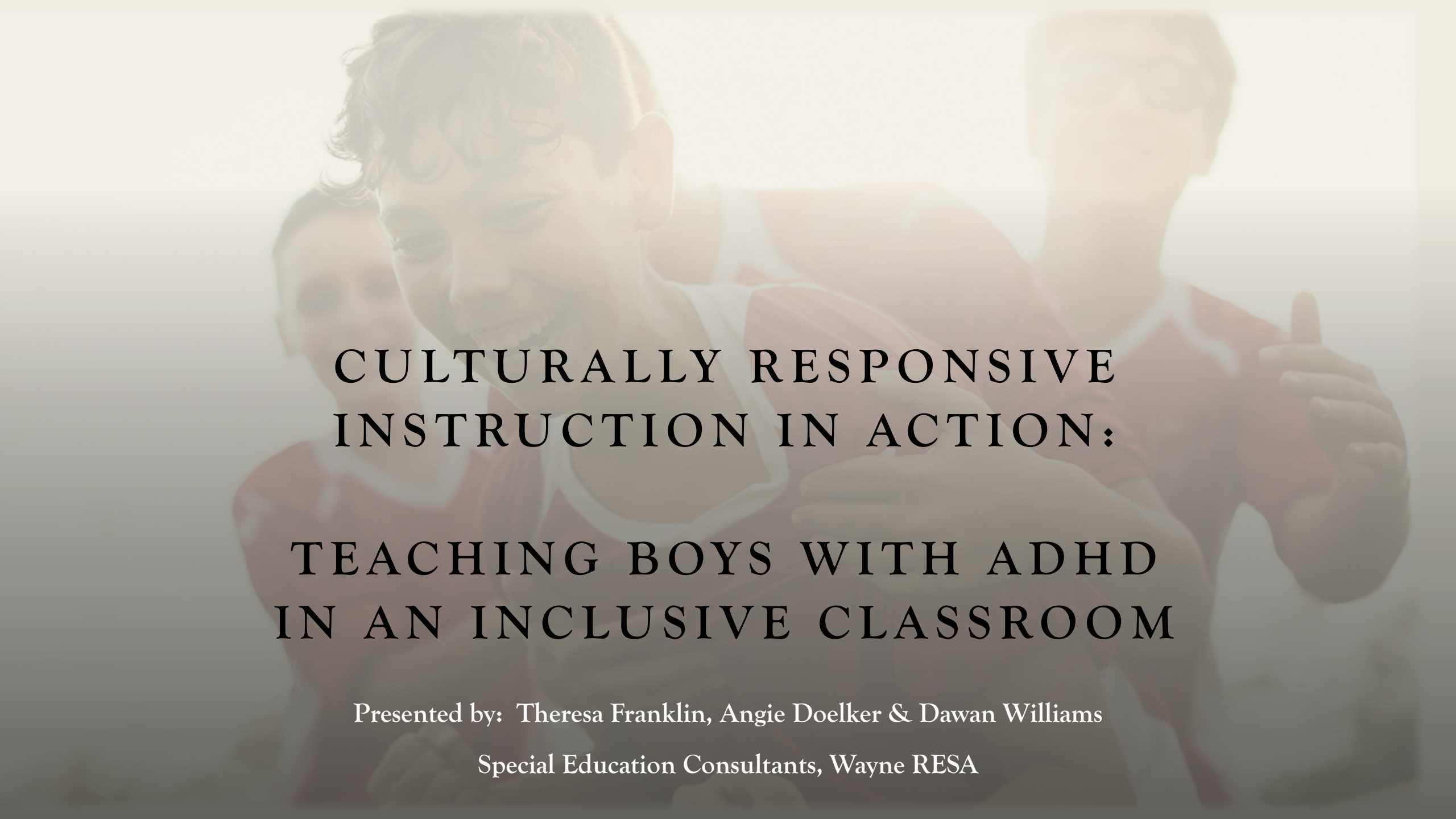


A background image of three young boys in red and white soccer uniforms. The boy in the foreground is smiling and looking down, while the two boys behind him are also smiling and looking towards the camera. The image is slightly faded to allow the text to be prominent.

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE INSTRUCTION IN ACTION: TEACHING BOYS WITH ADHD IN AN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM

Presented by: Theresa Franklin, Angie Doelker & Dawan Williams

Special Education Consultants, Wayne RESA

Your Presenters for Today...



Theresa Franklin



Angie Doelker



Dawan Williams

Every child deserves
someone who sees
their potential
and fights for their
success.

OBJECTIVES

What we are
covering in today's
presentation...

- Statistics regarding suspensions
- ADHD Identity and challenges
- Culturally responsive teaching
- Addressing behavior from a cultural lens
- Quick tips and strategies

STATISTICS...

Preschool boys represented 54% of the 1.2 million students enrolled in public preschool.

However, preschool boys accounted for 81% of preschool children who received one or more out-of-school suspensions and 85% of preschool children who were expelled.

Both Black and White preschool boys attending public preschools received out-of-school suspensions and were expelled at a rate higher than their rate of enrollment.

Overall: Boys are approximately 2.5 times more likely to be suspended or expelled than girls.

Discipline and School Climate in U.S. Public Schools

BOYS & GIRLS

“IT’S IMPORTANT THAT WE DON’T TREAT OUR BOYS AS IF THEY ARE MALFUNCTIONING GIRLS.” –RICHARD REEVES



- Boys mature later than girls—brain development takes longer
- In boys, the area of the brain responsible for spatial and mechanical functioning is larger
- Boys have less serotonin and oxytocin (hormones that promote a sense of calm)

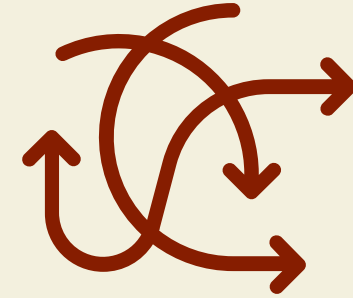
- The area of the cerebral cortex in girls (develops faster) and is more vast: responsible for memory, attention, verbal abilities and language
- Girls have a better ability to sit still and listen to lectures from teachers
- Generally, girls tend to be able to focus better in class



“My favorite class is recess!” - A boy

WHAT IS ADHD?

Boys are more likely to be diagnosed with ADHD...



According to the Cleveland Clinic, ADHD (attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder) is a condition that affects how the brain works. Despite its name, ADHD doesn't mean that the person lacks attention. It means that it's harder for the person to control their attention or direct it to certain tasks. ADHD causes symptoms like difficulty focusing, trouble sitting still and impulsive behaviors. But it also allows a person to “get in the zone” and hyper focus on things they really enjoy.

ADHD is sometimes treated with medication and/or therapy.

IDENTITY

When we teach boys with ADHD, we must recognize the multiple identities they hold:

- **Gender:** Boys may face different behavioral expectations and stereotypes
- **Disability (ADHD):** Executive function challenges, impulse control, attention regulation
- **Cultural Background:** Values, communication styles, learning preferences shaped by culture
- **Individual Variations:** No two students are identical; ADHD presents differently

Culturally responsive instruction addresses ALL these dimensions simultaneously, not one at a time.



KEY FACTS AND CORE CHALLENGES



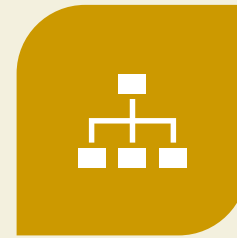
INATTENTION: DIFFICULTY
SUSTAINING FOCUS,
EASILY DISTRACTED,
FORGETFULNESS



HYPERACTIVITY: RESTLESS-
NESS, DIFFICULTY SITTING
STILL, EXCESSIVE TALKING



IMPULSIVITY: ACTING
WITHOUT THINKING,
DIFFICULTY WAITING
TURNS, INTERRUPTING



**EXECUTIVE
FUNCTION:** PLANNING,
ORGANIZING, TIME
MANAGEMENT,
EMOTIONAL REGULATION



IMPORTANT DISTINCTION:
ADHD IS A
NEUROLOGICAL
DIFFERENCE, NOT A
BEHAVIOR PROBLEM OR
LACK OF INTELLIGENCE

HELP BUILD POSITIVE IDENTITY

Incorporate strategies to support a positive identity:

Reframe ADHD:

"You have an active mind that sees connections others miss" or "Your energy is a gift."

Highlight Cultural Strengths:

Connect students' cultural backgrounds to success (e.g., "You're a great collaborator.")

Growth Mindset:

Teach that brains can grow and change through effort

Visible Representation:

Share stories of successful people with ADHD or neurodivergent people from students' cultures

Opportunities to Lead:

Give students with ADHD roles where they can contribute and feel valued

ADDRESSING BIAS

Research shows that boys of color with ADHD face disproportionate discipline and lower expectations.

Self-Reflection Questions:

- How do I ensure that I hold high behavioral expectations for all students and not lower them for others?
- What families have I called with positive news? Whose families do I only contact about problems?
- Have I assumed malice or deficit in students of color while assuming good intentions in white students?
- What stereotypes about masculinity, race, and disability might influence how I interpret student behavior?



What challenges are you currently facing working with a child or children with ADHD?





WHAT CAN WE DO TO MAKE A
DIFFERENCE?





Simon, age 12.

Current 7th grader in a middle school setting.

Disliked school until he had the right teacher in 5th grade.



CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE INSTRUCTION

- **Cultural Awareness:** Understanding students' cultural backgrounds and how these shape learning
- **Student Empowerment:** Helping students see themselves as capable and valued
- **Inclusive Curriculum:** Representing diverse voices, histories, and perspectives
- **Supportive Relationships:** Building trust and positive connections with and between students
- **Family and Community Partnership:** Engaging families as partners in education

An approach that recognizes students' cultural identities and incorporates their cultural backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives into the curriculum and classroom environment.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND TRUST

Culturally responsive teaching depends on strong relationships.
This is especially critical for boys with ADHD:

- **Learn About Students' Lives:** Know their families, communities, interests, and strengths
- **Value Their Perspectives:** Invite and respect their ideas, even when unconventional
- **Consistent Positive Attention:** Give specific praise tied to effort and values, not just behavior
- **Cultural Responsiveness to Conflict:** Understand how cultural backgrounds influence communication and conflict resolution
- **Advocacy:** Show you believe in the student and will fight for their success



CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

Cultural Considerations:

- **Language Access:** Provide communication in families' home languages when possible
- **Multiple Ways to Connect:** Not all families can attend evening meetings; offer flexible options
- **Understand Perspectives:** Some cultures may have different views on disability or different educational goals
- **Shared Expertise:** Position families as experts on their child; listen to their knowledge
- **Strength-Based Framing:** Begin conversations with what's working and strengths, not deficits



CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE STRATEGIES: THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

Physical Space:

- Include visual representations of diverse cultures and families in the classroom
- Create quiet spaces for students who need to regulate stimulation
- Use flexible seating that allows movement and appropriate positioning for focus
- Provide visual schedules and clear organizational systems that reduce anxiety

Classroom Culture:

- Establish rituals that honor multiple cultural traditions and communication styles
- Use positive language about differences and neurodiversity
- Create opportunities for peer collaboration that celebrates varied strengths
- Build in movement and kinesthetic learning experiences

CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT *WITHOUT STIGMA*

Universal Design for Learning (UDL): Build flexibility into instruction for ALL students so supports aren't obviously individual

Normalize Differences: Talk openly about how different brains work differently, using affirming language

Student Self-Advocacy: Help students understand their needs and advocate for themselves appropriately

Strengths-Based Focus: Highlight what students CAN do and how their differences are assets

Peer Education: Help classmates understand ADHD so peers can support rather than judge



MAKE CONTENT RELEVANT

Mirror Representation: Include authors, mathematicians, scientists, and leaders from students' cultural backgrounds

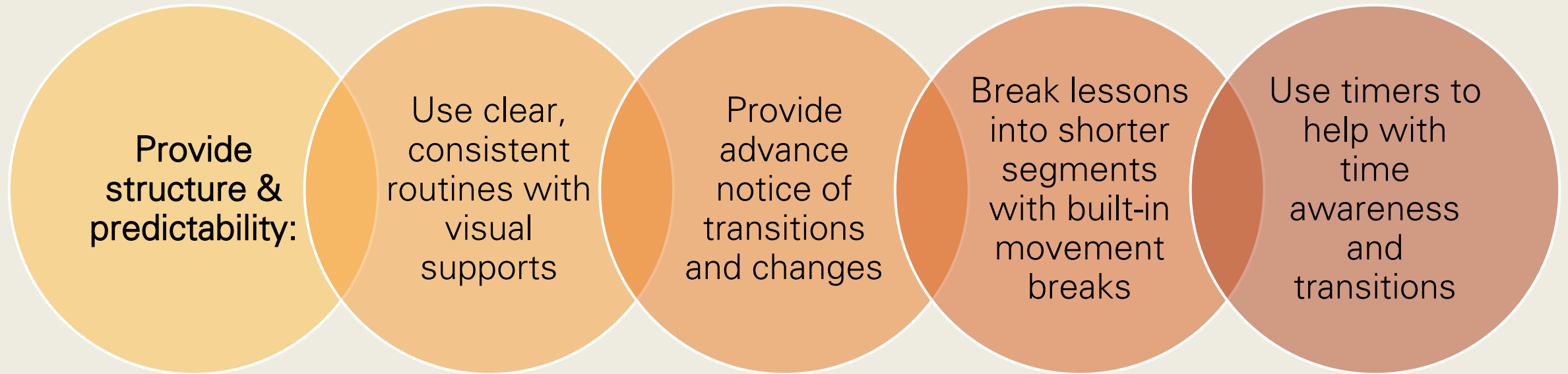
Thematic Connections: Connect learning to students' lives, communities, and interests

Varied Modalities: Use visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and interactive methods to maintain engagement

Storytelling: Use narrative-based instruction that appeals to different learning preferences

Intentional Reading Selection: Boys *tend* to enjoy reading non-fiction.

INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY





With a partner,
discuss something you
can do to enhance the
environment or make
a task/lesson
more relevant?

RELATIONSHIPS MATTER

TRUSTED ADULT

CARE AND COMPASSION

BUILD RESILIENCE



ADDRESSING BEHAVIOR THROUGH A CULTURAL LENS

Boys with ADHD are often labeled as "troublemakers" when their behaviors stem from neurological differences. This is compounded by racial and cultural biases in discipline.

Culturally Responsive Behavior Support Includes:

- **Teach, Don't Just Punish:** Explicitly teach skills like self-monitoring, impulse control, and emotional regulation
- **Examine Biases:** Are you enforcing rules equally? Research shows boys of color with ADHD face harsher discipline
- **Restorative Practices:** Use approaches that build understanding and repair relationships



EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING

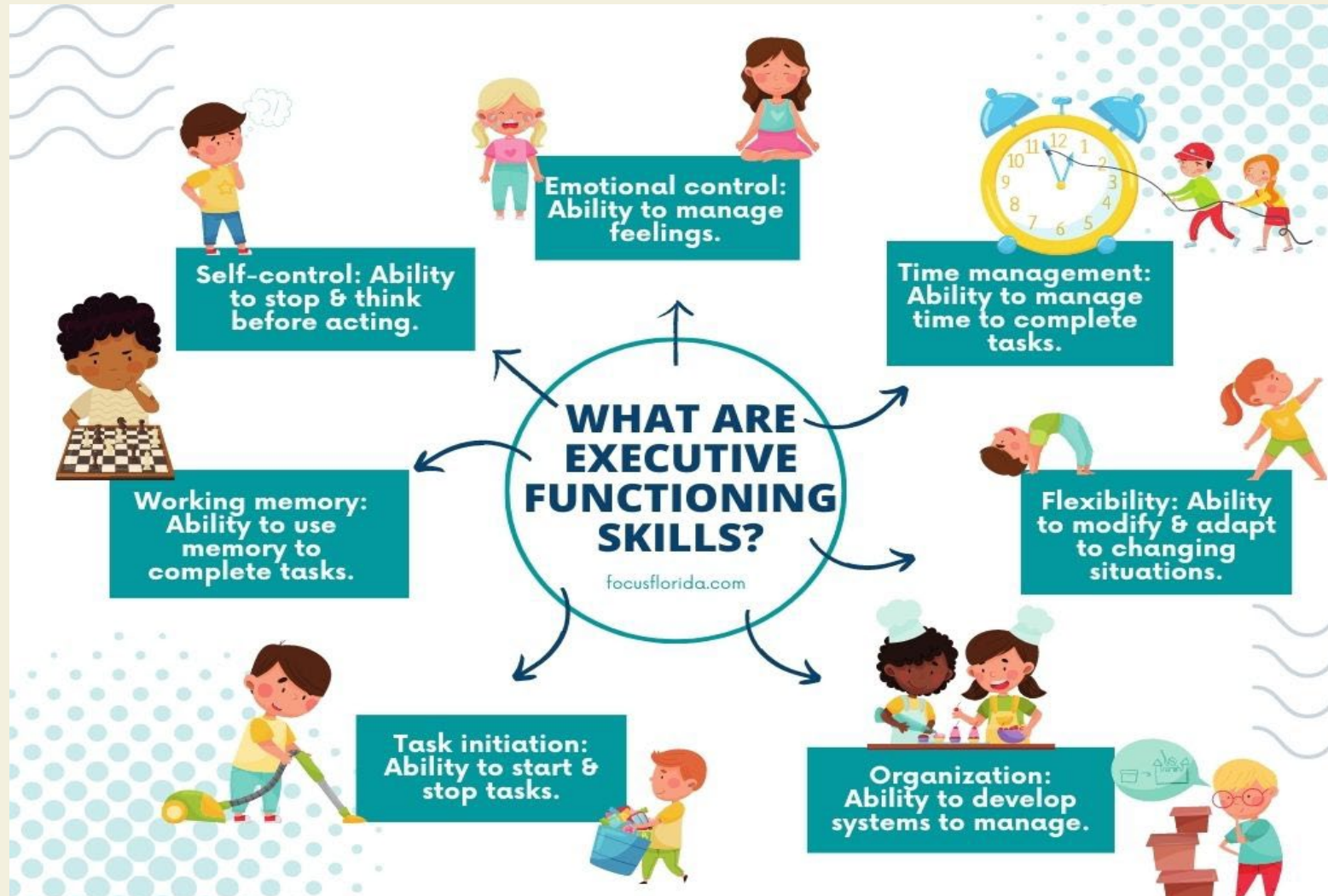


Definition: a set of cognitive processes that help us self-regulate so we can start, effectively plan, prioritize, and sustain effort toward our goals.

- Children are not born with executive functioning skills, but they can develop them.
- People with deficits in executive functioning may struggle with working memory, cognitive flexibility and self-control.
- Executive functioning skills develop in the prefrontal cortex—the last part of the brain to fully develop (age 25) or longer with those with ADHD!

Note: It's not that the person doesn't want to get the task done, they struggle with HOW to get it done.

How Are Your Executive Functioning Skills?



SUPPORT STRATEGIES FOR EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING

Organizing and Planning



- Color-coded systems
- Checklists with visuals
- Assignment notebooks
- Digital reminders
- Build in time for practice

Time Management



- Visual timers
- Breaking down a deadline
- Scaffolded planning
- Frequent check-ins

SELF-REGULATION AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Boys with ADHD often struggle with emotional regulation. Teaching coping strategies is a form of culturally responsive care:

Strategies to Teach:

- **Breathing Techniques:** Deep breathing, box breathing, or belly breathing (some cultures have traditional practices)
- **Breaks & Spaces:** Help students recognize when they need a break and have a safe place to go
- **Movement:** Exercise, dancing, stretching to release energy and anxiety
- **Mindfulness:** Adapted for neurodivergent learners (not all students respond to traditional meditation)
- **Social Skills:** Explicitly teach perspective-taking, emotion recognition, and conflict resolution
- **Naming Emotions:** Build vocabulary for emotions; help students identify what they're feeling

ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Active Participation: Incorporate movement, gestures, and multi-sensory activities

Choice & Autonomy: Allow choices in topics, formats, or presentation methods

Interest-Based Learning: Connect to students' interests and strengths

Novelty & Variety: Change activities frequently; use unexpected elements strategically

INCORPORATE TECHNOLOGY



Used thoughtfully, technology can support students with ADHD while honoring diverse learning preferences:

Helpful Tools:

- **Organizational Apps:** Google Calendar, To Do lists for planning and tracking
- **Timers & Reminders:** Outlook, phone alarms, or specialized apps for time awareness
- **Note-Taking Tools:** Speech-to-text, video recording, or graphic organizers
- **Engagement Platforms:** Interactive tools that provide movement and multisensory input
- **Communication Tools:** Email or messaging for students who struggle with verbal interaction

WHEN THINGS DON'T GO WELL... HOW YOU RESPOND MATTERS!

In the Moment:

- Stay calm; your regulation helps regulate them
- Use few words; their brains may be flooded
- Ensure safety, but avoid shame-based consequences
- Offer choices when possible

After Calm Returns:

- Have a conversation about what happened (not immediately, when both are regulated)
- Help them understand their part without blame
- Problem-solve together: "What could help next time?"
- Repair relationships that may have been damaged
- Reaffirm that you still believe in them





Turn and Talk:
Identify 3 ways that you can
support students in
developing their executive
functioning skills?

QUICK STRATEGIES FOR THE CLASSROOM



Quick Strategies to Implement:

- **Proximity:** Sit near students who need support; your presence is regulating
- **Frequent Feedback:** Provide specific, immediate feedback to help students stay on track
- **Movement Breaks:** Build in movement (stretching, dancing, running) to help regulate arousal
- **Fidgets & Tools:** Allow appropriate fidgets; they help many students concentrate
- **Preferential Seating:** Seat students away from distractions and peer conflicts
- **Advance Organizers:** Give outlines or graphic organizers so students know what to expect
- **Novelty:** Change up routines strategically to maintain engagement
- **Interest Inventories:** Know what motivates each student and use it strategically

QUICK TIPS FOR IEPS & 504 PLANS

Understand the Plan: Know the student's strengths and what accommodations and modifications are in place and **WHY**

Consistent Implementation: Accommodations only work if implemented with fidelity across all settings

Data Sharing: Provide specific observations about what strategies work or don't work

Problem-Solving: Collaboration is crucial when planning or adjust strategies when needed

Progress Monitoring: Track progress to determine growth or needed changes

KEY TAKEAWAYS



Core Principles of Culturally Responsive Instruction for Boys with ADHD:

- **See the Whole Child:** Recognize the intersection of gender, disability, culture, and individual strengths
- **Build on Strengths:** Focus on what students can do and their cultural assets, not deficits
- **Explicitly Teach Skills:** Don't assume; teach executive function, emotional regulation, and social skills
- **Examine Your Biases:** Continuously reflect on how race, gender, and disability affect your expectations and responses
- **Include Families:** Partner with families as experts on their child; honor their culture and values
- **Create Belonging:** Make sure every student knows they are valued, capable, and belong in your classroom

NEXT STEPS FOR ACTION PLANNING

Take a moment to reflect on these questions:

- What is one strength I see in boys with ADHD that our system often overlooks?
- How might my own cultural background influence how I perceive ADHD symptoms in students?
- Which strategy from this presentation will I implement first in my classroom or at home?
- What barriers might I face, and how can I address them?
- Who can I partner with to support this work?



Closing Tips from Kendall, Theresa's Son



Thank you for attending our session!

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Dawan Williams

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RESOURCES

DISCIPLINE AND SCHOOL CLIMATE IN U.S. PUBLIC SCHOOLS

TED TALK: RICHARD REEVES

DUNCAN, E. (2024). AVOIDING THE TALK: A CLOSER LOOK AT EDUCATOR INFLUENCE ON RACIAL DISPARITIES IN SCHOOL DISCIPLINE. [HTTPS://EDTRUST.ORG/BLOG/EDUCATOR-INFLUENCE-RACIAL-DISPARITIES-SCHOOL-DISCIPLINE](https://edtrust.org/blog/educator-influence-racial-disparities-school-discipline)

HAMMOND, Z. (2014). *CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE LEARNING AND THE BRAIN*. CORWIN PRESS.

ZAMOSKY, L. (2011). HOW BOYS AND GIRLS LEARN DIFFERENTLY. [HTTPS://WWW.WEBMD.COM/PARENTING/FEATURES/HOW-BOYS-AND-GIRLS-LEARN-DIFFERENTLY](https://www.webmd.com/parenting/features/how-boys-and-girls-learn-differently)