



## FAMILY ENGAGEMENT NEWSLETTER

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### Executive Functioning and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD): Helping Your Child Build Everyday Skills

By Wendy Overturf

If you are a parent with a child with ADHD, you may notice challenges that go beyond attention. These challenges may include things such as forgetting homework, struggling to start tasks, or becoming overwhelmed by simple routines. These difficulties are often linked to executive functioning. Understanding executive functioning can help shift the way that you support your child.

#### What Is Executive Functioning?

Executive functioning works like the brain's "management system." It helps children:

- Start and complete tasks
- Stay organized
- Manage time
- Control impulses
- Shift between activities
- Regulate emotions

For children with ADHD, these skills don't come naturally. This difficulty is not due to laziness or lack of effort. Instead, their brains are wired to need more support, practice, and external structure.

#### What It Looks Like at Home

Executive functioning challenges can show up in everyday situations:

- A child knows they have homework but can't or doesn't know how to get started
- Their backpack is constantly disorganized and they have trouble finding papers or other things they need
- They forget instructions, especially those with multiple steps even when they were just told what and how to do something
- Simple tasks (like getting ready for school) take much longer than we as parents might expect
- They become easily frustrated or overwhelmed

These behaviors can be confusing for parents, especially when a child *seems* capable but struggles to follow through.

#### Why Traditional Approaches Don't Always Work

Telling a child to "just focus," "try harder," or "be more responsible" assumes they already have the skills to do what we have asked them to do. For children with ADHD, executive functioning skills need to be explicitly taught, supported, and repeated, not just expected. It is this situation where parents can make a big impact.

#### Some Practical Ways to Support Executive Functioning

### **Break tasks into smaller steps**

Instead of “clean your room,” try:

- Pick up your clothes
- Put toys in the assigned bin
- Make the bed

### **Use visual supports**

Checklists, calendars, and visual schedules can help your child “see” what they need to do instead of being asked to hold everything in their head. Trying to remember multiple steps can increase the cognitive load and make a task more difficult and frustrating.

### **Create consistent routines**

Predictable routines reduce the need for constant decision-making and help build independence over time.

### **Externalize time**

Many children with ADHD struggle with time awareness. Use timers, alarms, or countdowns to make time more concrete and build your child’s time sense.

### **Start tasks together**

Getting started on a task is often the hardest part. Sitting with and supporting your child for the first few minutes can help them build momentum.

### **Focus on progress, not perfection**

Celebrate small wins—starting a task, completing one step, or remembering part of a routine. These are meaningful improvements and can help increase your child’s engagement and satisfaction in completing the task.

### **Model use of executive function skills**

Another way for your child to learn and access executive functioning skills is by demonstrating how you approach various tasks, using “talk aloud” to explain what you are doing. When you model a task, it provides your child with a visual input. When you are talking aloud through the steps of a task, it gives your child auditory input. This increases the likelihood of your child understanding and eventually performing the task.

Executive functioning skills develop over time, and children with ADHD often need more time to build them. With patience, structure, modeling, and encouragement, your child can learn strategies that help them succeed—not just at home, but in school and beyond. As a parent you can guide, support, and gradually help them build the skills they need to manage life more independently.

### **Additional Resources**

- [Helping Kids Who Struggle with Executive Functions](#)
- [Executive Functioning: Helping Children Learn Skills for Life](#)
- [Executive Functioning Skills for Kids and Teens \(video\)](#)
- [Executive Function Strategies for Your Child](#)

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## **WI FACETS Endless Possibilities Conference**

[Registration is Open! - 2026 WI FACETS Endless Possibilities Conference](#)

**Focus on: *Advocacy in Education and Beyond!***

**Date:** August 7, 2026, 8:30 - 3:00

**Location:** Waukesha County Technical College ([AJN Center](#)), Pewaukee, WI

Registration fee is \$50 per person [PARTICIPANT REGISTRATION](#)

Exhibitor options available: [EXHIBITOR REGISTRATION](#)

**Are you ready to advocate for a future without limits? This conference brings together a powerful collective of voices to provide you with the tools for success at every stage of the journey. A great opportunity for families and professionals who support students with disabilities to learn and grow together.**

## Featured Highlights:

- Keynote: Young Adult self-advocates on "Advocating into Adulthood"
- Address from [Dr. Jill Underly](#) - State Superintendent of Public Instruction
- Raising Adults: A parent panel on life after school
- Student Voice Matters! Unlocking Opportunities with Self-Advocacy Skills
- Voices of the Future: A teen-led session on "Getting the Care You Need"
- The Power of Parent Advocacy with Learn in My Shoes
- Rightful Presence: Creating a Sense of True Belonging and Inherent Value in our Schools

\*\*Complete with youth-led entertainment to power up the atmosphere, this event is a testament to the power of self-advocacy.

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## HOME LEARNING



### Father's Day - June 21, 2026

On Father's Day, we honor not just men who have children, but those who father —who protect, mentor, uplift, and love. To those fathers and father-figures: thank you for showing us that fatherhood, when embraced with heart and conviction, is one of life's greatest callings.

#### **Create an "All About My Dad" Booklet**

A fun, personal project where kids can share their favorite memories, facts, and feelings about their dad in a mini-book format. It's a great way to celebrate family bonds and can be kept as a keepsake.

- Use a **ring binder** or **staple/ribbon-bound notebook** for easy assembly.
- Decide on **pages**: 4–8 pages works well for a mini-book.
- Each page can have a title like "My Dad's Favorite Food," "My Dad Makes Me Laugh When...", or "My Dad's Special Talent."



### Celebrate Summer - June 21, 2026

**Water Party** – Turn a tarp into a slide, hang water balloons like a piñata, and give out water-squirting toys.

**First Day of Summer Box** – Fill a box with sand toys, art supplies, games, and books for inspiration.

**Unplug Pact** – Designate tech-free times for meals or activities to encourage family bonding.

**Bonfire or Light-Up Ritual** – Inspired by historical Midsummer traditions, light a small bonfire or string lights to mark the day.

Choose activities that match your family's interests — from hands-on crafts to outdoor adventures — and make it a tradition so kids associate the first day of summer with joy, creativity, and connection to nature.

#### **Read Summer-Themed Books Together**

These picture books are great family reads for the summer solstice. Plus they all explore the height of summer with wonderful sensory details and energy.



## How to Practice Math During the Summer

Practicing math during the summer can be fun when it's connected to games, everyday activities, and real-life situations. This helps children practice their math skills without feeling like they are doing schoolwork.

### **Play Math Games**

Games make math practice exciting. Try:

- Board games that involve counting or strategy
- Card games like Uno or War (adding numbers)
- Math bingo or number puzzles

These help your child practice addition, subtraction, and problem-solving.

### **Use Everyday Activities**

Daily tasks are great opportunities for math practice:

- Cooking – measuring ingredients and doubling recipes
- Shopping – adding prices or comparing costs
- Traveling – calculating distance or time

This helps children learn how math is used in real life.

### **Try Math Challenges**

Create simple daily math challenges such as:

- Solve 5 math problems a day
- Practice multiplication tables
- Count objects around the house

Short challenges help build confidence.

### **Practice with Outdoor Activities**

Math can happen outside too:

- Count steps while walking
- Measure how far a ball is thrown
- Use chalk to write and solve math problems on the sidewalk

### **Set a Short Daily Routine**

Just 10–15 minutes of math practice each day can help your child maintain their skills during the summer.

### **Celebrate Progress**

Encourage your child by celebrating their efforts with:

- Stickers or small rewards
- Praise for solving problems
- Fun activities after completing math practice

The key is to keep math fun, practical, and consistent so your child stays confident and ready for the next school year.



## Importance of Reading During the Summer

### Prevents Learning Loss

When children read during the summer, they maintain and strengthen their reading abilities. Regular reading helps prevent the loss of vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency that can occur when children don't have academic practice for several months.

### Builds Stronger Literacy Skills

Summer reading allows children to expand their vocabulary, improve reading comprehension, and develop better writing and communication skills. The more children read, the more comfortable and confident they become.

### Encourages a Love of Reading

Summer is a great time for children to explore books they choose themselves instead of only school-assigned texts. This freedom can make reading feel fun instead of like homework, helping children develop a lifelong love of books.

### Boosts Imagination and Creativity

Books introduce children to new ideas, places, and characters. Reading stories encourages imagination and creative thinking, which supports overall cognitive development.

### Improves Focus and Academic Readiness

Children who read during the summer often return to school better prepared for the next grade level. When school starts in the fall, they can adjust more quickly to classroom learning.

### Supports Emotional and Social Growth

Stories help children understand different perspectives and emotions. Through reading, children can learn empathy and problem-solving skills by relating to characters and situations.



## Encouraging Reading During the Summer

### Let Your Child Choose Their Books

Allow children to pick books that interest them, such as:

- Adventure stories
- Comics or graphic novels
- Sports or animal books
- Mysteries or fantasy

When children choose what they read, they become more excited about reading.

### Create a Daily Reading Routine

Set aside a regular time each day for reading, even if it's only 15–20 minutes. Reading before bed, after lunch, or during quiet time can help make reading a habit.

### Visit the Library

Libraries often offer summer reading programs, book clubs, and prizes that motivate children to read more. Regular library visits also give children access to new books.

### Make Reading Interactive

You can make reading more engaging by:

- Asking questions about the story
- Letting your child act out scenes
- Drawing pictures of their favorite characters

This helps children connect more deeply with what they read.

### Use a Reading Challenge

Create a fun reading challenge with goals like:

- Read 5 books in a month
- Read 20 minutes a day
- Try a different type of book (mystery, science fiction, non-fiction, etc.) each week

Small rewards or recognition can be motivational.

### Be a Reading Role Model

When children see parents or adults reading, they understand that reading is important and enjoyable.

### Connect Reading to Real Life

If a child reads about animals, space, or cooking, you can follow up with related activities such as visiting a zoo, doing a science experiment, or cooking together. The key is to keep reading fun, flexible, and connected to their interests.

There are very limited number of webinars during the summer. However, be sure to check some of our online resources.

### [IEP Mini-Modules](#)

These 30 to 40-minute modules break down what you need to know about the IEP process. You can watch through the entire ten-part series or jump right in with the modules that are most interesting to you. Clicking on the module will direct you to a registration page. After filling out the required information, you will be able access the recorded video(s).

### [Training Webinar Recordings](#)

This link has many of our archived webinars in case you missed one or perhaps want to review it again. The webinars are all organized into categories. Just select the title of the webinar you would like to view. Please note: You will have to provide some basic registration information before you are able to access the recording. If there were slides that were used during the webinar, they are included as well.

### [Supporting Literacy at Home](#)

Check out these self-directed, interactive online literacy modules—"Literacy Training Series for Families" on the WI FACETS website. The purpose of this series is to help families better understand how to effectively support their children's literacy development at home and to increase communication with their children's teachers and school about literacy-related goals. While this information is beneficial to all families for supporting their children's literacy development, this series was specifically developed for families of students with special education needs.

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## ONLINE RESOURCES

### [Center for Parent Information and Resources \(CPIR\)](#)

The link connects to a webpage that provides brief, but detailed fact sheets on ADHD. The fact sheets give information about ADHD, describe its characteristics, offer tips for parents and teachers, and provide links to related information and organizations with special expertise relating to ADHD.

### [Information from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Website](#)

"Attention Deficit Disorder" (ADD) and "Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder" (ADHD) are conditions outlined in the federal definition of Other Health Impairment [34 C.F.R. § 300.8\(c\)\(9\)](#) as examples that may, but not necessarily, qualify a student as having an "Other Health Impairment." ADHD may also be a condition associated with other disability criteria.

### [Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder \(CHADD\)](#)

CHADD is a national non-profit organization providing education, advocacy, and support for individuals with ADHD. In addition, the informative website publishes a variety of printed materials to keep members and professionals current on research advances, medications, and treatments affecting individuals with ADHD.

### [Local CHADD Affiliates](#)

This link can be used to find affiliates in other states. Currently, Wisconsin has no local CHADD affiliates.

### [ADHD and School](#)

This toolkit was developed by CHADD for parents. It has strategies to help children with school success. The toolkit includes resources tailored to ADHD struggles such as how to create routines, how to set up a homework station, and how to structure home-school communication.

### [Understood](#)

This site provides resources and support so people who learn and think differently can thrive — in school, at work, and throughout life. The goal of this website is to empower parents to understand their children's learning and attention issues and relate to their experiences. With this knowledge, parents can make more effective choices for and with their children. The site also has some great suggestions for students such as [5 self-advocacy sentence starters for middle schoolers with ADHD](#).

### [ADDitude Magazine](#)

The website provides practical information about raising children with ADHD, including behavior and discipline strategies, helping in making and keeping friends, and organizing for success. There are a multitude of education and learning resources to help students (and the teachers who work with them) succeed at school. While the website also includes the option of a paid subscription to the magazine, most of the articles are free and accessible.

### [LD Online](#)

LD OnLine is a website that seeks to help children and adults reach their full potential by providing accurate and up-to-date information and advice about learning disabilities and ADHD.

### [WebMD](#)

This website has many resources and articles pertaining to the diagnosis and treatment of ADHD. The website also includes an overview of some of the more common medications that are used in the treatment of ADHD.

### [Office of Civil Rights \(OCR\) Resource Guide on Students with ADHD and Section 504](#)

The U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights issued guidance in 2016 clarifying the obligation of schools to provide students with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) with equal educational opportunity under [Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973](#).

### [Free Webinar Replay: How ADHD Affects Executive Function in Adults and Kids](#)

In this hour-long webinar-on-demand by Russell Barkley, Ph.D., participants will learn how to identify executive function deficit disorder, the seven major types of executive function, treatment strategies for managing executive function deficits, and more.

### [American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry \(AACAP\)](#)

AACAP's "Facts for Families" provides concise up-to-date information on issues related to ADHD that may affect children, teenagers, and their families.

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## FOR YOUR INFORMATION

### **Resource Reminder: Individualized Education Program (IEP), Evaluation, and Parent Resources**

DPI has a number of resources that may be helpful for educators and families supporting the College and Career Ready (CCR) IEP and comprehensive special education evaluation processes. Some of the key resources are listed below.

- IEP and Evaluation timeline graphics and text can be found on the [Special Education Laws, Procedures, and Bulletins webpage](#).
- CCR IEP steps at a glance and step chart examples can be found on the [CCR IEP 5 Step Process webpage](#).
- The framework for a comprehensive special education evaluation, six areas of academic and functional skills, and more can be found on the [Comprehensive Special Education Evaluation webpage](#).
- Information for parents can be found on the [Special Education Information for Families webpage](#) including pages dedicated to resources explaining parent and student rights, resources for parents and families, family support and advocacy organizations, family and educator capacity building, and information about the Indicator 8 Family Engagement Survey.

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## RESEARCH

## Effects of Physical Activity on Executive Function of Children with ADHD

Hart, J. L., & Phillips, D. (2020). Effects of Physical Activity on Executive Function of Children with ADHD. Journal of the American Academy of Special Education Professionals, 59, 76.

### [Read Full Article](#)

Children with ADHD often have problems with executive function. Two important areas are inhibition (being able to stop themselves from acting impulsively) and updating (being able to adjust their thinking when new information comes in). This paper brings together research showing that moderate to vigorous physical activity (like running or active play) may help improve executive function in children with ADHD. Brain studies suggest that this level of exercise can increase attention and help children respond more quickly. Intervention studies also show that exercise can improve executive functioning skills. The benefits of exercise may be explained by better brain stimulation and improved dopamine regulation. For teachers, this means that moderate to vigorous physical activity could be a quick and effective way to help students with ADHD improve focus and self-control in the classroom.

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## CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEWSLETTER

### Upcoming Newsletter Topics

**July: Speech and Language**

**August: Other Health Impairment**

**September: Cognitive Learning Skills**

To submit contributions of articles, events, or resources you may use the [Word document](#). Send submissions to [Wendy Overturf](#). If you are unable to access the form, you may send the information in an email.

Material appropriate for the monthly newsletter include web links to family involvement/parent leadership resources, advertisements for statewide trainings for parents, youth or parent/educator audiences, information about statewide parent agencies, recent research pertaining to family engagement, and family engagement success articles.

This monthly update is provided by Wisconsin Family Assistance Center for Education, Training & Support (WI FACETS) to share statewide information regarding parent leadership and family involvement. If you would like to receive this monthly update or if you would like to have your name removed from the distribution list, please email [WI FACETS](#).

The WI FACETS Family Engagement E-Newsletter can be found online: [www.servingongroups.org/newsletter](http://www.servingongroups.org/newsletter)



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