

Resource Guide

Supporting Affective Executive Functioning Skills

Emotional control is essential for students to thrive academically, helping them manage stress, stay motivated, and meet course demands. Developing these skills fosters an awareness of their strengths, goals, and reactions, which can enhance engagement in the classroom. This guide offers strategies for supporting affective executive functioning skills.

- **Define expectations for engagement:** Your expectations for engagement may differ from other instructors, so specify your expectations for each type of activity. For example, if technology is restricted during lectures but allowed for group work, make this clear. Consider including these expectations in your syllabus for easy reference.
- **Encourage individual and group reflection:** Create opportunities for students to reflect on their progress, using specific prompts for individual and group reflection. Incorporate charts or templates to help students track their learning, fostering motivation and a supportive environment for shared and individual achievements.
- **Build a community of care:** Create community agreements so students take ownership in how they interact with others in the classroom. You can also use activities that have students listen to diverse perspectives, practice communication skills, and represent a variety of lived experiences to expand learners' empathy for one another.
- **Normalize challenges to promote a growth mindset:** Academic challenges and setbacks can trigger strong emotions for students. Normalize mistakes and imperfect work as part of the learning process to help students see that frustration or doubt is natural and not judgment of their ability. Consider providing students structured opportunities to reflect on their challenges and choose actionable next steps.

Resources

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Wijbenga, L., van der Velde, J., Korevaar, E. L., Reijneveld, S. A., Hofstra, J., & de Winter, A. F. (2024). *Emotional problems and academic performance: The role of executive functioning skills in undergraduate students*. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 48(2), 196–207.

For more information or to discuss how you might incorporate these ideas into your courses, contact the Reinert Center by email at cttl@slu.edu.