



**MacKenzi Lowry**  
Academic Attendance Coach  
WES/NLES  
[mlowry@jgsc.k12.in.us](mailto:mlowry@jgsc.k12.in.us)



As the academic attendance coach, I provide supplemental executive function lessons to 5th and 6th grade students who did not pass I-STEP the prior school year, as well as meet with students who have frequent absences.

## What are Executive Functions?

“Executive functions are the mental processes that enable us to plan, focus attention, remember instructions, and juggle multiple tasks successfully. The brain needs these skill sets to filter distractions, prioritize tasks, set and achieve goals, and control impulses.” We most commonly refer to these skills as life skills. Executive function skills help you manage/accomplish everyday tasks such as getting dressed in the morning, arriving to school/work on time, and even how you address people/situations.

There are three core executive functions: **inhibitory control** (a cognitive process used to control impulses, thoughts, and behaviors to stimuli through attention and reasoning), **working memory** (ability to hold information in our minds for a short amount of time in order to accomplish something) , and **cognitive flexibility** ( the ability to adapt behaviors to changing demands, priorities or perspectives). From these core executive functions come higher order executive functions which include:

**Reasoning**  
**Goal setting**  
**Sustained attention**  
**Self-monitoring/ Evaluating**

**Planning/Time Management**  
**Metacognition**  
**Study Strategies/Test taking skills**  
**Initiation**

**Organization**  
**Perseverance**

# Summer Activities to Improve Executive Function Skills

## **Cooking**

Planning and preparing a meal requires important executive functioning skills. Have your child find a recipe they want to make and then make a list of ingredients, amount of each ingredient, and kitchen tools they will need to prepare it. (Planning) The preparation of the meal will engage your child in time managements skills, since they will have to properly time the cooking of the meal.

## **Board games**

Board games are a great way to build executive function skills such as planning, working memory, and cognitive flexibility. Some games that promote these skills include Monopoly, Clue, Chess, puzzles, Chinese Checkers, Mindtrap, Mastermind, and Rush hour.

## **Plan a Family Outing**

Having your child plan a family outing within your parameters is a great way to build executive function skills such as planning, organization, and time management. Remember to set parameters such as mileage, amount of days for the trip, amount of money budgeted for food, money budgeted for attractions, and if it is overnight trip where you might stay/ budget. Once you have set parameters, have your child research, plan, and create an itinerary for the trip.

## **Legos and Blocks**

Building blocks are a great way to promote executive function skills such as sustained attention, cognitive flexibility, and planning.

## **Plant a garden**

Having your child plant a garden is a wonderful way to encourage executive function skills such as planning, organization, and time management. When planting the garden, have your child research the different types of plants so they know how long they need to grow (time management), when they need to be planted (time management), have them draw how they want the garden (planning/organization), and how much water/ sunlight each type of plant needs (planning).