



Executive Functions in the Classroom

INITIATE

START

Initiation is more than just getting started. Effective initiation means getting started with a plan and the resources to get the job done.

Initiate is measured with items such as “Needs to be told to begin a task even when willing” and “Has trouble getting started on work.”

How to help students who struggle...

It is easy to identify the students with poor initiation. Ask the class to start an assignment, wait five minutes, and then check to see who is still fumbling around in their backpack or searching for the perfect pencil. Why are they so slow to begin? The answer is complicated, but rest assured that they are not avoiding work to be difficult. Perhaps they are feeling anxiety about the quality of their work. Perhaps they need something they don't have. Perhaps they're not sure why they procrastinate. You can help them identify their needs and provide (a) a plan that shows the steps, (b) all necessary resources and tools, and (c) some work strategies for starting.

Clarity. Many students will avoid starting tasks because they are unsure of their abilities to complete tasks. Provide students with clear, step-by-step instructions on how to complete the task. Walk students through each step of the task. Be available to provide on-going assistance

Help students break up tasks: For larger tasks, help the student break the task up into manageable steps so the task is not overwhelming. Provide shorter deadlines for each component of the assignment (every week they submit another section of their assignment).

Get students started: Once you know the student understands the task, ask them to start and let them know that you will be back to check in with them shortly (e.g., “try number one, I'll come back in five minutes to see how things are going”).

Cues: With the student, create *discrete* cues and prompts you can use to remind the student to focus on a task. For example, if you see that a student is off task, cue the student with an agreed upon hand gesture (e.g., clapping your hands, touching your chin with one finger).



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