

School District #53 – Okanagan Similkameen

Enhancing Student Learning – YouLearn.ca Staff Inquiry

2025-26

QUESTION – How do we effectively teach executive functioning strategies across grade levels?

SCAN - What is going on for our learners?

YouLearn.ca is School District #53's Online Learning (OL) and Continuing Education (CE) School. We provide online learning options to school age and adult learners. We offer distinct K-6, 7-9, 10-12, adult, and Inclusion programs. We pride ourselves in personalizing programs for our students in partnership with our parents/guardians and local brick-and-mortar schools. We also provide graduation and upgrade programs for the Okanagan Correctional Centre (OCC).

As of September 30, 2025, we have 72 local, school-age, school of record students: 7 K-6s, 14 7-9s, 51 10-12s. In addition, we have 41 local, adult school of record students: 31 non-graduated adults, and 10 upgrading graduated adults. Our school also supports 69 dually enrolled school-age students. At OCC, we have 33 students: 31 non-graduated adults and 2 graduated upgrading adults.

Five years ago, we started an Inclusion Program to support our district's most complex and vulnerable students. Currently, we support 41 Inclusion students: 39 school-age and 2 recent adult non-graduates on the adult graduation program. This represents 57% of our school-age students.

Inside YouLearn, we have 39 self-identified Indigenous students: 9 non-graduated adults, 1 upgrading graduate, and 29 school-age students, which represents roughly 40% of our total school-age students currently being tracked and supported. At OCC, 14/33, or 42% self-identify as Indigenous.

Adapting to meet the needs of our diverse learners has been challenging. For the past few years, staff have been exploring ways to increase student engagement through a variety of initiatives from implementing a teacher mentorship program to designing blended and synchronous learning opportunities to complement our online and home learning programs. Each has improved student engagement; however, a common observation across our school was uncovered last year: lagging executive functioning skills appear to be interfering with student engagement and success more than any other single issue.

Building on this idea and last year's inquiry, teachers intend to return to scanning to learn more about the role executive functioning plays in student success and how best to intervene with instruction to improve students' executive functioning skills.

Specifically, staff will:

- Collect insights from student, parents, and interagency workers on the need for, and role of, executive functioning skills for YouLearn students and online/home learners.
- Review Communication Logs for signs/clues related to executive functioning.
- Review Rounds Notes and quantify incidents where executive functioning skills are mentioned.
- Review IEPs for language, goals, and strategies directly related to executive functioning skills such as time management, and task initiation.
- Review results of the new Online Student Learning Survey.
- Conduct a new round of empathy interviews this year focused on Executive Functioning/Core Competency development that might uncover equity issues.

FOCUS - What will have the biggest impact?

Staff believe that directly teaching executive functioning and related Core Competency skills are areas where they will be most able to positively impact student learning. If students can be effectively exposed to meaningful strategies and be given the time to self-reflect on their learning: engagement, focus, course completion, and student success will increase.

Staff Preliminary Executive Functioning Focus Ideas
We need to directly teach executive functioning.
Time management for K-6's is extremely important.
We need to consider tying EF into our Career Education courses along with the requirement of goal setting and Core Competency self-assessments.
We need to continue to use EF strategies to help students self-assess and evaluate their progress; as well, we need to improve how we inventory and manage students' efforts in these areas.
We need to improve the direct teaching of EF.
Integrate our focus into what is needed; don't waste time doing what we don't need to do.

A key conversation staff had centred around the need to execute supporting students with goal setting and self-assessing using the following process:

- Don't start with a goal
- Inventory skills first

- Then the strategies students use
- Then goal set

HUNCH - What is leading to this situation?

Often, particularly with older students, we assume they have executive function skills. This assumption is like teachers assuming older students know how to read and comprehend. In online learning environments, knowing where students' skills are at is even harder to discern, as online teachers do not have day-to-day, or face-to-face interactions with students like their brick-and-mortar colleagues. At YouLearn, we have become aware not only of the importance of executive functioning skills to online learning but our role in neglecting promoting executive functioning skills.

Hunch: If we teach executive functioning strategies systematically across our school in the following two areas and help students learn to goal set and self-assess meaningfully, student engagement, productivity, and success will improve.

- Task Initiation
- Emotional Regulation

LEARNING – How can I learn more of what to do? Questions we are starting with . . .

- How do we effectively teach EF?
- How do we make inventory strengths and stretches engaging for students?
- How do we support students with the processes of goal setting and reflecting?
- How do we improve our management of the new goal setting and reflecting requirements?

OUR INDIGENOUS LEARNERS – How are we there for our Indigenous learners?

CHECKING – Have we made enough of a difference?

From staff conversations about making enough of an impact, the following ideas and thoughts were captured:

- Some of the EF skills are easier to teach than others.
- Time management and sustained attention and task initiation.
- Doing too many makes it difficult to dig deeper into.
- Moving forward maybe it's a focus on the first 3 which will lead into the gains in Impulse Control and Emotional Regulation:
- Conversations and role modelling can occur in the final 2 groups.
- First 2 EF topics lay the foundation for the next 3.

- Noticing that our “teaching” is more often modelling. Would like to name the what and why we are modelling the behaviour. For example, “We asked you to put the computer away because it relates to sustained attention and impulse control.”

Moving through the Inquiry process, we will be using the following Checking strategies:

- Student voice
- Student survey
- Staff conversations
- Data collection
- Course completion rates