Guide for Observing and Individualizing Self-Regulation

3–5 Years

**Self-Regulation: Executive Function**

**WHEN INTRODUCED AND EMPHASIZED:** Weeks 8–9, 12–13, 15–16, 18–19, 21–22, 24–25, 27–28, 30–31, 33–34, and 36

**BEHAVIORS TO OBSERVE**
- Paying Attention and Flexibly Shifting Focus
- Holding Onto and Using Information
- Inhibiting Thoughts and Responses Inappropriate to Situation

**OBSERVATION OPPORTUNITIES**

**Paying Attention and Flexibly Shifting Focus**
In what ways does the child pay attention and shift his/her focus as he/she:
- stops focusing on a current task or activity and shifts attention to a new task or activity; attends to new information from the teacher (any transition after Week 8, Day 1)?
- plays a game by listening to and following directions (Week 9, Day 1 group activity)?
- readily stops “sleeping” and pretends to be an animal in *Sleeping, Sleeping, All the Children are Sleeping* (Week 12, Day 1 center activity)?

**Holding Onto and Using Information**
In what ways does the child hold onto and use information as he/she:
- remembers single requests and multi-step requests to successfully transition to the next activity (any transition after Week 16, Day 2)?
- remembers the multi-step requests of the toothbrushing routine (any toothbrushing after Week 16, Day 2)?
- plays *Drum Beats* (Week 18, Day 1 group activity)?

**Inhibiting Thoughts and Responses Inappropriate to Situation**
In what ways does the child inhibit thoughts and responses as he/she:
- resists temptations to continue playing or behave inappropriately when it is time to finish an activity (any cleanup period after Week 19, Day 1)?
- resists distractions and temptations during rest time (any rest time after Week 19, Day 1)?
- switches to new silly face or movement as requested (Week 22, Day 1 group activity)?
FOllow-Up Learning Supports

Reinforce

The following activities are designed to support the ongoing development of executive functioning.

Paying Attention and Flexibly Shifting Focus

- Encourage children to describe how they listen to and follow requests, maintain their focus on a task, and/or switch attention when needed.
- Invite children to play games that involve following the requests of a leader, such as Mother, May I? or Red Light, Green Light.
- Comment on children’s positive actions in shifting the focus of their attention.

Holding Onto and Using Information

- Verbally acknowledge children's appropriate behaviors when they have used working memory.
- Provide multi-step requests at cleanup time or a transition time to support children's skills in remembering and following the order of requests.

Using Inhibiting Thoughts and Responses Inappropriate to Situation

- When children play The Freeze game, invite them to describe how easy or difficult it is to “freeze” when they hear the word “freeze.”
- Switch the color rules for Red Light, Green Light.

Reintroduce

The following activities are designed to support the development of executive functioning among children who find it challenging to pay attention, flexibly shift focus, hold onto and use information, and/or inhibit thoughts and responses inappropriate to situation. The activities are also appropriate for all children.

Paying Attention and Flexibly Shifting Focus

- Repeat the Week 8, Day 1 group activity. Remind children what it means to focus.
- Repeat the Week 9, Day 1 group activity. Remind children that this game helps us focus on what we are expected to do.
- Provide explicit guidance on what to do when we hear that a transition is about to occur, such as a five-minute warning.
**Holding Onto and Using Information**

- Repeat the Week 18, Day 1 group activity. Discuss the requests in *Drum Beats* before or during the activity.
- Invite each child in a small group to say one thing he/she would like to bring on a pretend trip and to remember what other children want to bring. Examples:
  - Person one—“I am going to Grandma’s house and I am bringing a teddy bear”;
  - Person two—“I am going to Grandma’s house and I am bringing a teddy bear and a pillow”;
  - Person three—“I am going to Grandma’s house and I am bringing a teddy bear, a pillow, and a blanket.”

**Inhibiting Thoughts and Responses Inappropriate to Situation**

- Repeat the Week 19, Day 2 group activity. Remind children to take turns.
- Play games that involve stopping one action and starting a new action, such as *Drum Beats* or “Silly Faces Song.”
- Support children in playing *Hide and Seek.*