

Individual Matters

Discover.
Act.
Grow.

Newsletter – January 2024 Issue

**Registration is now open for the 2024
Learning About Learning Symposium!**

Building Executive Function (EF) Skills for Successful Learning

What Can We Do as Parents?

for Parents of K-12 Students

Co-Facilitated by Individual Matters
and [Essentials in Learning](#)

Saturday, February 24, 2024

9:00 am - 2:00 pm

An In-Person Event at Individual Matters

Registration Fee \$75

Limited to 30 seats

Register [HERE](#)

This interactive workshop will include simulations, panel discussions, small group practice, reflection, and application of new skills.

- [What are EF skills?](#)

- Why are EF skills key to successful learning?
- Why do some kids struggle with EF?
- What can we do as parents?
- How do I help my child get organized and take ownership over their schoolwork?

Learning about Learning Symposium Facilitators



Josh Guddat, M.B.A.

Over his 20+ years of teaching, Josh has taught everything from high school Advanced Placement courses to intervention courses for low-skilled learners and everything in between. He has coached alternative learners finding their way at R-5 High School, mainstream learners trying to get into top colleges at Grand Junction High School, and students whose 2nd or 3rd language was English at an international school in Dongguan, China. Josh has coached students with ADHD, executive skills deficits, and other barriers to success in hundreds of coaching sessions.



Dionne Guddat, B.A.

Dionne is currently a 2nd grade teacher in District 51. She has spent the last 24 years as an educator in a variety of roles including classroom teacher (2nd and 4th grades), an involved parent of four children (2 now graduates of D51 schools), coach and tutor. She and her family spent 2 years overseas living in China, where she taught culturally and linguistically diverse students in an international school setting. Dionne has received training through District 51 in early literacy and the Science of Reading, as well as Advantage Math Recovery (AVMR). She is currently pursuing her Masters of Education in curriculum and instruction with an emphasis in English language learning.



Katrina Katen, Psy.D.

Dr. Katrina Katen is a licensed clinical psychologist and owner of Individual Matters, a boutique private practice that provides comprehensive neurodevelopmental evaluations, therapy, and coaching. Her areas of expertise include gifted and twice exceptional, ADHD, learning disorders, anxiety, professional development, relationships, and parenting. In addition to her clinical work, Dr. Katen is a published author, professional mentor, and college instructor.



Andrew Katen, M.S.

Andrew oversees administration, programs, and strategy at Individual Matters. His background includes teaching middle school and college, emergency/risk management, novel writing, blogging and podcasting. As a lifelong learner, Andrew's mission at Individual Matters is to help others discover and reach their potential.

What is Executive Function?

[from the Individual Matters Blog](#)

Is your child struggling in school?

“Refusing” to complete chores at home?

Is homework an epic battle every night?

Does your child complete the homework but forget to turn it in?

Does your child’s desk, bag, and room look like they were hit by a tornado?

Are their emotions intense and unpredictable?

Do you find yourself referring to them as “lazy”?

Perhaps the reason is a weakness in executive functioning.

If a child were an airplane, executive function (EF) would be the pilot. While many parts and processes of a plane may be in good working order, only the pilot can set a destination, take off, steer the plane where it needs to go, address any issues along the way, and land safely. Without a skilled pilot, the plane is nothing more than a complex assembly of hi-tech parts and equipment sitting idly in a hangar.



By Andrew C. Katen
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Similarly, our brains are powerful and complex mechanisms. But without efficient EF, individuals may find it difficult to

achieve even the simplest goals. From fixing a lunch, to cleaning a room, to learning math, to organizing a school project... EF are needed to set and reach objectives of all dimensions. ***Without strong EF skills, a child is essentially a plane without a pilot.***

Though the term EF is often described as a singular brain function, it is in fact comprised of multiple, interconnected, complex skills and abilities—so much so that even the experts cannot not agree on a single EF model.

One example of a clear and straightforward way to categorize skills, understand strengths and weaknesses, develop interventions, and scaffold success is the [model offered by Dr. Brown](#). He divides EF into 6 “clusters”:

- Activation (getting started, organizing, prioritizing)
- Focus (sustaining and shifting attention)
- Effort (regulating attention, sustaining effort, processing speed)
- Emotion (moderating frustration, excitement, anger)
- Memory (juggling and recalling information)
- Action (controlling pace of action and impulsivity)

The key to any successful intervention is to correctly identify the specific area of struggle. Dr. Brown’s model provides a framework for identifying and understanding which area(s) of EF your child might be struggling with – so that intervention may be tailored accordingly.

“Children do not wake up in the morning and choose to “fail” at life or in school. So why, then, is life so challenging at times? If you answered “yes” to any of the questions at the beginning of this post, it is possible that the culprit is a weakness in executive functioning.” – Dr. Katrina Katen, Psy.D.

Happy New Year!
Wishing you a happy, healthy, prosperous 2024.



Dr. Katrina Katen
Clinical Psychologist



Andrew Katen
Executive Director



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