



When Extra Accompaniment or Curricular Adaptations are Needed

Some children who suffered adverse situations at an early age may later present difficulties in executive functions, particularly affecting sustained attention, organisation, and planning. Issues such as writing down tasks in a diary or carrying them out according to specific guidelines can be hard work that requires accompaniment and methodological adaptations by teachers.

School assignments, both in and out of school hours, can significantly impact children's emotional well-being. They are often one of the triggers that generate the most apprehension in pupils. This anxiety is often related to the fear of making mistakes, not finishing on time, or disappointing an adult. Ultimately, performing tasks autonomously and achieving the proposed objectives can sometimes be unfeasible. This is especially true if we add the possibility of there having been an impairment to the development of a child's executive functions.



Executive functions are a set of complex, self-directed cognitive skills necessary to achieve a goal. Therefore, they have an enormous influence on the organisation of everyday actions and our behaviour. There is a proven relationship between socioemotional and cognitive development and executive functions. Adopted and fostered pupils may have particular difficulties in these aspects. When teachers are unaware of these circumstances, they can misinterpret many daily life situations in the classroom.

Some of these skills, related to school tasks, are decision-making, problem-solving, planning, working memory, cognitive flexibility, and the monitoring or inhibiting of one's own behaviours. They affect daily routines in the classroom, such as pupils writing down tasks in their diaries systematically, remembering everything they have to do, and executing tasks as prescribed, among others. For these children and adolescents, it can be an arduous task that requires accompaniment and minor methodological adaptations that will entail major changes.

Some general daily models to follow in the classroom include flexibility in classroom routines, peer tutoring, project work in which children are the architects of learning, or implementing manipulative activities. Some of the specific adaptations that show significant changes can be:

- **Simple and clear instructions**

When planning a task, set out instructions in a way that helps learners to structure and carry out the assignment, making it easier to go step by step. In the case of older pupils, the same guideline can be helpful in exams, using short questions and clear wording. It can be essential to both the process and the final result.

- **Writing down homework**

Writing down homework to be done in all subjects — in a space in the classroom that remains visible throughout the school day — will help students significantly.

- **Set aside time**

Before recess or dismissal, remember to give those who need it a few minutes to write down their homework, then check they have done so.

- **Written guidelines**

Explain how and when assignments must be completed, especially if you require a particular format or content. Use visual diagrams or simple charts to assist. If any forgetfulness occurs, analyse what went wrong in the process and provide strategies to improve it on future occasions.

- **Providing strategies**

For study and homework, consider pupils' time and spatial organisation skills and the order and way they carry out tasks. Work on these strategies together with their families. Process and results

Bear in mind that in some cases, the final product (homework) is as costly as the process (how to do the assignment). This may mean an increase in the time needed to complete the task. Decrease quantity, if necessary, in favour of quality and procedures.

Recommendations for families and teachers

A critical factor to consider is the help families provide in carrying out homework at home. The availability and support they can provide have a decisive influence on the entire educational process. Some recommendations for working with pupils include:

- **Flexibility in assessing the work done**

The final result required of each child in a task may differ. Some children require much more effort than others to achieve specific goals, which is an element to consider.

- **Stagger assignments**

Coordinate homework, assignments, and exam timetables between teachers to ensure tasks are distributed throughout the week. Making the workload visible in classrooms is a great help for teachers and students alike.

- **Reading aloud**

Read aloud the wording for tests and tasks and ensure that each child knows what is being asked of them.

- **Individualised assessment**

Some simple measures can make it easier for teachers to provide individualised assessments that are particularly favourable to learners with more significant difficulties. These measures include: replacing written tests with oral tests, removing the pressure of written examinations, the possibility of choosing between different models or the use of tailor-made statements adapted to their needs.

- **Adaptation of methodologies**

Flexible methodologies, group work or the use of flexible and meaningful didactic proposals facilitate both learning and students' emotional and social development. These make it much easier for teachers to adapt to every student's rhythm.

- **Establish agreements with families**

Establish times for completing tasks, agreeing with families on what will be required of each child according to their challenges.