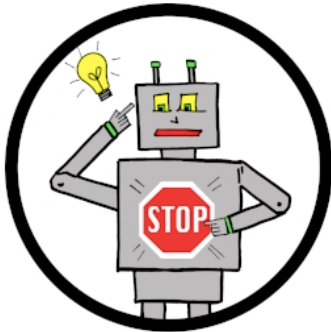


Executive Function Character Introductions

Stop-A-Tron: Response Inhibition

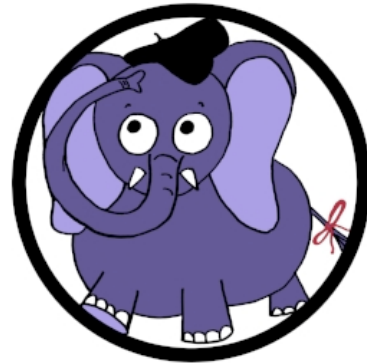
Stop-A-Tron is an amazing Inhibition Robot, and his best power is that he stops before he gets his best ideas. We often joked that in our classrooms Stop-A-Tron was the most overworked of all the executive



function characters. We'd tell our students that he often got tired and had to step out for a coffee break or to take a nap. It was in these moments that students were more likely to forget about him and all of the strategies he had helped them learn. The most important feature of Stop-A-Tron is the giant stop sign on his chest. If students can remember to stop, no matter what the situation, then they are on the right track. Ideally, they will independently choose a strategy at this point. If students still require teacher coaching in order to try strategies, stopping gives them the opportunity to ask for help before a situation gets too difficult for them to manage on their own.

ReME: Working Memory

ReME (REtain, Manipulate, Engage) is an elephant, and as the saying goes "elephants never forget!". ReME's name helps younger children get the gist of this skill alliteratively: ReME Remembers! But ReME represents a fairly complex concept. Working memory issues are difficult to pin down sometimes, and are hard to accurately observe in children. Having said that, the need to Retain information so that we can Manipulate it and Engage with it is essential for daily academic life, and as students get older, the acronym of ReME's name provides a useful prompt, and an avenue to discuss this concept with students and help them identify it within themselves.



Flexi Lexi: Flexibility

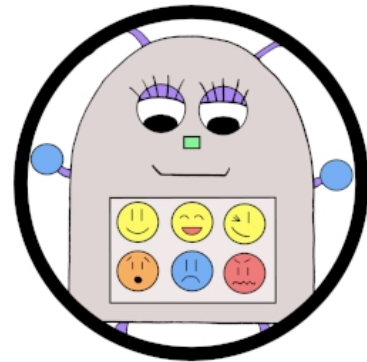
Flexi Lexi 'goes with the flow'. No matter what happens, this rubber band-like character can handle it. She stays calm in the face of conflict and is great at adapting to new situations. Flexi



Lexi was often among the first characters chosen when we would give students scenarios to role play, such as wanting to play a certain game at recess, but the rest of group wants to play something else. They knew that it was important to be flexible and hear both sides of a story before reacting. Not only is it important to be flexible with our thinking, it is also good for students to learn how to adapt to new or unexpected situations. If the schedule needs to change at the last minute, or if recess is cancelled due to the weather, we must prepare our children to be able to adapt and go with the flow.

Emotibot: Emotional Control

Emotibot is Stop-A-Tron's kid sister. Her screen displays six emoticons, representing some of the different emotions we may experience throughout the day. While it is perfectly natural to feel any and all of these emotions, we must teach strategies that help our students to manage them so that they can stay in control and not allow their feelings to have a negative impact on work or social interactions. When we feel angry, anxious, or excited, it can be challenging for us to think in a rational way. If we can teach our children to begin to identify their feelings so that they can have some control over their reactions to them, then we are empowering them in a big way!



Sustain-O, The Great!: Sustained Attention



"Hocus pocus, where's your focus?" This tagline works really well in our classrooms. Often just starting the tagline; "Hocus pocus..." would prompt students enough to fill in the rest. It is important to explain to your students what focus looks like and feels like, and practice this skill often. A timer can be helpful in breaking the skill down into manageable chunks of time so that students can be successful. It is also important for the children to become aware of when paying attention is hardest for them and when they find it easy. That way, they can begin to feel ownership over when and how to use the strategies that help them best.

Get Up & Go: Task Initiation

Get Up & Go are twins, twin arrows to be exact. People often say that to be successful, you've got to have that "get up and go!", so these characters are designed to illustrate that idea. After all, getting started is often half the battle, so if we can help our students to take that first step, then we, and they, are on the right track. Any teacher writing report cards knows all too well how many adults, as well as children, could use a little help from the Get Up & Go dream team!



Susie Shifter: Shifting and Time Management

"From this to that, in no time flat!" This is Susie Shifter's motto. She carries with her a Time Timer, one of our favorite classroom tools, so that she always knows when to shift. Shifting is often physical (i.e. from one classroom to another, or back to the classroom after a break); however, shifting can also refer to mental shifting (i.e. from math to writing, or receptive to active listening), or being able to shift one's thinking in order to work in a group or resolve a conflict. When we discussed shifting, it was often in reference to students making a physical shift (lining up, walking to another class, etc.). Time management is often an issue for students who have difficulty shifting. They may require extra coaching for how to tell time, how to determine the passage of time, and how to use a timer effectively.



Plan Man: Planning & Organization

Plan Man is the most super hero-like of all the characters. We imagine his name always being spoken in a booming voice. His tagline: He can organize anything! Plan Man makes an appearance numerous times during the day because, let's face it, school is all about being organized. It doesn't seem to matter the grade you are teaching, planning and organization skills are always important. Plan Man also steps in with more regularity than one would first anticipate on the playground. Many students reported him being an essential presence when using social skills to negotiate teams, follow the rules of tag, and figuring out which games to play.





Gracie Goal Getter: Goal-Directed Persistence

Gracie the Goal-Getter has a clear goal, to climb to the top of that mountain! However, if you look closely, you will see many smaller goals along the way that Gracie must meet in order to attain her big goal. This is by far the most important message to convey to our students. Achieving a goal takes time, and there are many steps along the way, but like Gracie the Goal-Getter, you must never give up! Those big goals are attainable if we chunk them into smaller goals.

Aware Bear: Meta-Cognition

Aware Bear is a very thoughtful bear. He thinks a lot about how he thinks. He wears a hat to keep his brain safe, and he gets some extra special boosts of power from his awesome brain t-shirt which reminds him to think about his thinking. Metacognition is the skill that is needed in order to create strategies. Without Aware Bear, all of the other characters would have had a much harder time developing strategies to make them so good at their executive skill. When we are helping students develop strategies for any of their executive skills, we are scaffolding their metacognition. As they get older, it is the practice of metacognition that will help students become self-sufficient and independent in their own work with executive function skills.



The Characters and descriptions are all from EFs 2 the Rescue at:

<http://efs2therescue.com/executive-functions>. You can order your own Resource Kit from this Canadian Company for approximately \$68 US dollars. This includes the shipping costs.

EFs 2 The Rescue

Executive Functions Made Accessible

www.EFs2theRescue.com

[@EFs2theRescue](https://twitter.com/EFs2theRescue)

The creators, Mara Berzins, Nicola Baykin, and Laurie Faith, wrote two chapters in *Executive Skills in Children and Adolescents: A Practical Guide to Assessment and Intervention, 3rd Edition*, by Peg Dawson and Richard Guare. Guilford Press: New York, 2018. You can find more detailed information about implementation, accessibility, and pedagogy of their program as part this book.

Lori Henderson, henderson.lori@sycamoreschool.org
Sycamore School
Indianapolis, IN 46260