

**Discussion Questions for
Building Executive Function: The Missing Link to Student Achievement***

Imagine you come home with your hands full of groceries and you fling the door open so hard it hits the wall and punches a hole in your wall. You decide you want to fix it yourself. How can you find out how to spackle a wall? Google it! You'll find how-to sheets with printed directions and pictures to follow; you'll find videos demonstrating the skill. But no matter how great these lessons are, if you don't have the skills of focus, persisting in a task, following multi-step directions, and catching correcting errors, you won't succeed at spackling the wall. These are the steps of executive function: they are the foundational skills to all learning.

For years in schools, we've looked at executive function in terms of dysfunction, relegating it to the special education educators. However, executive function includes the skills of problem-solving, higher-order thinking, and creativity. Executive function is everyone's business: all students can benefit from increased executive function.

The good news is, you can build executive function through activities, structures, and teacher facilitation. We owe it to our students to embed an emphasis on executive function into the classroom experience.

Thanks for reading this book. Below are some discussion questions you might want to consider as you read. I hope you enjoy it.

- Nancy Sulla

Book Chapters	Discussion Questions
Chapter 1: The Power, Promise, and Pitfalls of Executive Function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was your exposure to building executive function skills prior to beginning this book? • How should schools leverage executive function skills to raise student achievement? • What are your biggest take-aways from this chapter?
Chapter 2: Attaining Conscious Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How might we miss an opportunity to build executive function skills in students who may have neurological or behavior problems? • What specific classroom experiences will foster the executive function skills of conscious control? • Given the executive function skills addressed in this chapter how might you focus specifically on them while addressing content?

<p>Chapter 3: Moving from Compliance to Engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways will engaged learners be more beneficial in your classroom than just having compliant ones? • How do you ensure your students are engaging with an activity vs just getting it done? • Given the executive function skills addressed in this chapter how might you focus specifically on them while addressing content?
<p>Chapter 4: Mastering the Art of Collaboration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In this fast paced, digital, 21st century world, why is the ability to collaborate so important? • How can you rework some of your classroom activities to include a collaborative component? • Given the executive function skills addressed in this chapter how might you focus specifically on them while addressing content?
<p>Chapter 5: Embracing Empowerment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What goals can be achieved by empowering students? • What ideas do you have for empowering students while still maintaining control over curriculum and pacing? • Given the executive function skills addressed in this chapter how might you focus specifically on them while addressing content?
<p>Chapter 6: Developing Efficacy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you develop a classroom culture that embraces creativity and problem solving? • What classroom experiences will lead to building an efficacious student? • Given the executive function skills addressed in this chapter how might you focus specifically on them while addressing content?
<p>Chapter 7: Demonstrating Leadership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why is it important for schools to build the super-skills of leadership? • What kind of opportunities will be created in your classroom for your students to become leaders? • Given the executive function skills addressed in this chapter how might you focus specifically on them while addressing content?

<p>Chapter 8: Building Executive Function Through Teacher Facilitation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can facilitation be used to ensure student achievement? • During facilitation, how can you ensure you are embracing opportunities to develop executive function skills? • What strategies for EF-focused facilitation can you implement immediately in your classroom?
<p>Chapter 9: Not a Course, But a Culture</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will you create this culture of executive function in your classroom as opposed to relegating it to a specific time or day? • Why should schools be concerned with building students' executive function skills? • What are your biggest take-aways from this chapter?