



EF Pilot Study Shows Great Potential!

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This past January, Morrissey-Compton Educational Center conducted a pilot study at **Redeemer Lutheran School** in Redwood City teaching an executive function (EF) course to sixth through eighth graders.

Over the eight weeks of the course, students learned about the six main areas of EF, including: goal setting, planning, prioritizing, flexibility, organizing, and reflection. In addition to studying the overall concepts involved in EF, we aided students 1:1 with their individual challenges. We spent class time learning about types of memory, study strategies, and focus techniques, as well as organizing binders, cleaning out lockers, and looking at how to keep track of assignments.

Before the course began, we administered questionnaires to the eight students enrolled in the class

so they could rate themselves in several areas of EF. In addition, each student had a parent and a teacher fill out the same questionnaire, indicating strengths and challenges for the individual student. After the course was complete, the students and the same parents and teachers filled out the questionnaire again to determine the effectiveness of the intervention.



Practical Methodology

An integral component of the class was the EF resource binder that each student built throughout the course. The binder was divided into the different areas of EF. It was the student's responsibility to organize their handouts and projects into the different categories and to keep the binder organized. It served as a practical application for the skills they were being taught. At the end of the course, they were given the binders to keep in hopes that they will reference them as they continue their academic careers.

Positive Response

The students in our class were hardworking and open to learning new skills. We were impressed with their growth over the course. Several students exhibited some noteworthy "ah ha" moments that we wish we could have caught on tape! For example, after organizing his binder, one student exclaimed, "My binder has never looked this good! I'm never going to let it get messy again!" The students were great candidates for this class because it was evident that they wanted to be there. They asked relevant questions and were engaged in the class activities. And of course, it didn't hurt when we brought in treats!

Promising Results

Between the small group setting, supportive environment, and individualized mentoring, the students were successful in bolstering their EF skills. The data from the before and after questionnaires illustrated that the students were able to generalize many of the skills that they learned. While there were still some discrepancies between the student, parent, and teacher ratings, a noteworthy trend we observed is that students rated themselves as improving over time and having more self-confidence after the course was finished. When the students were asked if they would recommend this course to a friend, all of them replied yes. One student elaborated, "Yes, [this class] is helpful for kids who have problems organizing, [being] flexible, starting homework, and turning in work on time."

Our plan for the future is to continue teaching these types of courses in local Bay Area schools, using grant funding where possible.