

Introductory spark*EL Lesson

You already sent gave out Newsletter #1 at the information session. **Now it's time to send home Newsletter #2** which describes what we're doing in this lesson.

The goal in this lesson is to help the child learn about their brain and about the frontal lobes that house the executive functions and how they can learn to help their brain work better.

Area of self-regulation: Introduction

Area of focus: Brain, frontal lobes, and executive functions

Task structuring:

Present the information in this lesson with great mystery and awe. Have any props ready but hidden until you have the children's attention.

Objectives:

The child will be able to label the brain and the frontal lobes and identify five key functions of the frontal lobes.

Materials:

- model brain, preferably inside a skull
- brain jelly mold
- drawing of a brain for each child to label (see Resource files)
- mirror
- self-righting car or video of one
- storage box
- organizer
- executive function checklist (see Resource files)

Language of **spark*EL** to use in this lesson:

Key words & phrases:

We, we're ...

Let's ...

Vocabulary & concepts:

Self-regulation

Storage box

Brain

Organizer

Frontal lobes

Boss

Brakes

Super car

Introduction:

"Over the next while, we're going to work on something called self-regulation. Self-regulation means that you learn how to control your body and your brain so they do the things you want them to."

"When we work on self-regulation, we help that wonderful thing inside our heads. That's the special thing that helps us think and move and control our bodies. Does anyone know what's inside their heads?"

"We have hard bony heads that protect our brain. In a minute, I'm going to show you one so we can see it better. Really, our brains are about the size of our two fists put together, like this. You try it. See, it's pretty small but it does some amazing things."

"Now, let's look at that brain model. Each part of our brains helps us do different things. This (occipital lobe) helps us see. This part (motor cortex) helps our bodies move. This part (temporal lobe) helps us hear and talk. The important part we want to help is here (frontal lobes). These are called the frontal lobes because they're at the front, right behind your forehead. Have look in the mirror. We can't see our brains but we can see where the parts are on our heads." Let the children inspect the brain model and check out their own heads.

"In the frontal lobes, there are 5 (hold up your hand to show 5) really important things that can happen. In there we have (point to each on the Executive Function checklist as you describe it):

- some brakes that help us stop our bodies and our thinking.
- an organizer that helps us make a plan and keep things from getting messed up.
- a storage box that helps remember important things
- a boss that checks our work to see how we did
- a super car that just keeps going and trying new paths even if it runs into something. Like this (demonstrate self-righting car or show a video of one, pointing out how it doesn't let barriers stop it – it just chooses a new route)

These are the things we're going to work on so they get stronger and work really well."

Practice:

Let the children try or watch the 'super car' pointing out how it doesn't let anything stop it.

Have the children draw their brains or give them outlines of a brain if drawing is too challenging. Have them name the five main executive functions of the frontal lobes.

Prompting:

“What part do you want to work on – your brakes, organizer, storage box, boss or super car? I need to work on all of them. Sometimes I forget to put on my brakes and I run up and down stairs instead of walking. I could trip and fall. How about you? Do you need stronger brakes?”

Sometimes I need my organizer to work better because I can make a big mess. How about you?

Sometimes, I forget what I'm supposed to do so my storage box needs some help. Sometimes, I can't remember people's names. How about you?

My boss needs to get better at making sure I do all my work carefully. Sometimes I make mistakes and don't even notice. How about you?

My super car needs to get better at looking for new ways of doing things. I get stuck and keep doing the same thing over and over. How about you?”

Self-monitoring:

Ask the child, “How can you help yourself remember the five important things your frontal lobes do?” Help them think of ways they can remind themselves (e.g. the boss drives the super car, they put the storage box in the back seat along with the organizer and they use the brakes when they need to).

Solidifying:

Help the child review (a) what they learned in the lesson, (b) why it's important to know about our brains, and (c) what is at least one thing in the frontal lobe that they want to work on. Some children won't be able to put this into words but try to prompt responses from them. Clarify and add information as needed.

Highlighting:

“Look at how you used your ____ (brakes, organizer, storage box, boss, super car). You really know how to use your self-regulation.”

Additional Comments:

Now you can **move on to the Behavioral Self-regulation unit.**