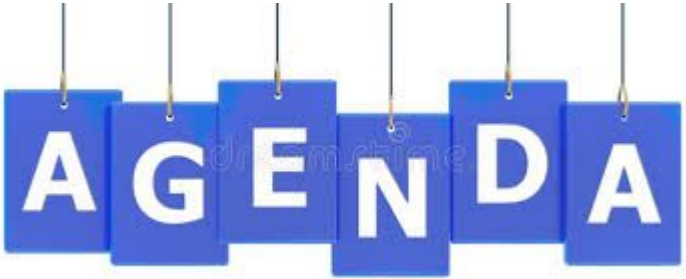
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Ending Homework Battles

Smart Kids with Learning Disabilities Presentation • 10.29.2026

Presented by: Marci Forsland, JD, MSEd & Daniela Rosenblatt, MA

Overview



What we hope you leave with:

- A clearer understanding of what makes homework hard
- Practical ways to reduce friction and get started
- Language that supports confidence instead of conflict
- A plan for gradually handing more responsibility over to your student

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What can a homework battle look like?

- Shut down
- Arguments
- Repeat reminders
- The assignment going missing
- The student doesn't understand the instructions.
- Getting started takes longer than doing the work.
- A five-minute task becomes a 45-minute conflict
- The work gets done, but it's never submitted.



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Behavior is a clue

What we see…	What *may* be underneath…	How to respond…
• Avoidance • Arguments • Tears • Missing Work • Frustration	• Fatigue • Overload • Anxiety • A missing skill • Fear of mistake	• Identify the barrier • Make steps accessible • Teach a skill

Ask: “What is getting in the way?”

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Executive Functioning

- Mental processes that help us manage our actions and work toward goals
- Includes skills for planning, organizing, getting started, sustaining attention, shifting focus and following through with tasks.
- These skills are developed over time
- Can vary across tasks and contexts.
- Executive Functioning Skills can be harder to access when we are feeling tired, anxious or overwhelmed.
- Greater impact for students with LBLD and ADHD



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What Executive Functioning needs may look like

Organization ● Messy backpacks ● Loses papers ● Cannot find assignments or supplies	Planning & Prioritizing ● Difficulty getting started ● Does not know what comes first	Time Management ● Underestimates time ● Gets stuck
Task Initiation & Completion ● Cannot start, finish and/or hand in assignments	Attention ● Daydreams ● Loses place ● Difficulty following directions	Flexibility ● Difficulty moving forward when faced with a challenge

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One assignment requires many EF skills:

- Remember the assignment
- Understand the directions
- Gather any necessary materials
- Remember directions
- Identify the starting point
- Estimate the amount of time
- Sustain effort
- Manage frustration
- Track completion
- Check
- Submit



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The Pinnacle School model - why EF Skills matter

- The Pinnacle School is an CT state approved private special education program.
- Serve students with learning differences and related learning needs
- Students may have the academic knowledge to complete a task but struggle to manage it independently
- Executive functioning is not separate from academic learning, it is essential to the academic process
- Our approach recognizes that students need explicit instruction, individualized supports, consistent practice and opportunities to build independence.

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The Pinnacle School model - why EF Skills matter

Explicit Instruction	Shared Language & Consistency	Embedded Support & Practice
• Directly teach and model EF strategies • Provide guided practice and feedback • Break larger assignments into smaller tasks	• Common vocabulary across classrooms • Students recognize and name the skills they are using	• Integrate EF Instruction into classes and daily routines • Use planners, visual supports & prompting • Gradually reduce adult support

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What Executive Functioning support looks like in school

Expectations are visible ● Clear directions ● models	Planning support ● Visual schedules ● Checklists ● Organizers ● planners	Time Management ● Chunking ● Timers ● Breaks ● check-ins
Task Initiation & Completion ● Prompting ● Countdowns ● Work contracts	Attention ● Movement breaks ● Visuals ● fidgets	Flexibility ● Previewing ● reviewing

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Bring the Principles Home

- Predictable routines
- Prepared spaces
- Visible plans
- Manageable steps
- Parent-child collaboration



The goal is not to recreate school at home but to provide consistent support while gradually building independence

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Why do we assign homework?

Practice ● Revisit or strengthen a skill already taught	Feedback ● Demonstrate what is understood and what may need to be retaught
Habits ● Practice planning and responsibility	Connection ● Gives families insight into the learning occurring at school

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Build a routine together

- Agree on a place to complete homework
- Prepare supplies, water, snack and timer
- Identify a realistic starttime - account for downtime, meals and after school activities
- Make the routine visible - create a calendar or checklist
- Write in explicit breaks and a clear stopping point
- Include the student in the planning process



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Break down tasks and set clear time limits



- Break an assignment into concrete steps
- Estimate how long each step will take
- Use a timer for information
- Alternate work time with planned movement breaks or rest
- Help your student identify a first step to begin

Example: “Finish Science Project” → open directions → list materials → complete questions 1-3 → check in →

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Use tools



- Planners, calendar, other digital system
- Class folders and a consistent place to find materials
- Checklists for checking, completing and submitting work
- Routines for accessing school platforms and teacher communication

A tool is only helpful when a student learns when and how to use it.

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Reduce Conflict: Change the Language

Instead of: “Why haven’t you started?”	Instead of: “You know how to do this!”	Instead of: “Go ask your teacher!”
Try: “I notice getting started feels hard today.”	Try: “I wonder which part is feeling tricky.”	Try: “I’m thinking your teacher might help clarify this.”

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Listen and Collaborate → Problem Solve Together

- Notice the challenge without blame
- Ask what feels hard from your student's perspective
- Share your concern without taking over the conversation
- Brainstorm possible solutions together
- Try an approach and reflect without judgement



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The Parent's role

Create conditions ● Develop routines ● Create the space ● Set clear expectations	Teach Strategies ● Model planning ● Chunking ● Checking ● Asking for help
Provide Support ● Prompting only as needed ● Step away and pause where you can	Protect your Connection ● Seperate the child from the "homework problem"

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Transfer responsibility over time

Adult Models: Show and name the strategy: “Let’s look at the assignment”	Do it together Coach while the student participates: “What is the first step?”	Fade Support Let the student take the lead and you check. “Show me the plan you made”	Student Reflects What worked? What might you change next time? Student asks for help when necessary.

Support is not the opposite of independence.

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What responsibilities can your student do independently?

- Checking the assignment
- Choosing the order of the tasks
- Estimating how long a task may take
- Using a checklist and tracking completion
- Communicating with teachers to ask questions



Independence includes asking for help - The goal is not to remove support. It is to help students to understand which supports work and how to access them.

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Take home reflection

- The hardest moment in our routine is …
- The skill or barrier we want to understand is …
- One support we want to try is …
- The part my student will take on independently is …
- We will check in again on …



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When to ask the school for help



- Homework routinely takes longer than expected.
- Your student cannot identify what is assigned.
- Your student doesn't understand what they need to do.
- Homework consistently created intense distress or family conflict.
- The same barrier persists despite appropriate supports in place.

Ask: What is essential? What is the purpose? What can be adjusted?

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Questions?

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