

Executive Function in School Students with Learning Difficulties:

How can occupational therapy make a difference?

Expressions of Interest Sought

Semester 1, 2018, Brisbane/Melbourne

Executive function skills are the core set of cognitive skills required for planning, carrying out and evaluating the completion of tasks, as well as overseeing our communication exchanges. They include skills that typically control behaviour (ie response inhibition/emotional control, attention, task initiation and persistence); as well as the higher level cognitive skills (referred to as metacognition) that guide behaviour (ie planning, organising, monitoring, reasoning, problem solving and flexibility). Students with learning difficulties, are often challenged by deficits with regard to their executive function skills, that contribute to their performance across a variety of school-based occupations. These include:

- effective participation in their roles as learner, worker, self-carer, friend, community member or creative performer
- engagement in the occupations they need / want to do across academic, social and emotional domains
- the ability to effectively apply strategic approaches to occupational performance in the 'here and now' of everyday school routines

Occupational therapists working in strong partnership with teachers are able to maximise learning opportunities for these students through scaffolded and systematic instructional approaches.

Aims/Objectives

Using an occupational performance framework, and applying the Perceive Recall Plan and Perform (PRPP) System of Task Analysis, this practical workshop will

- enable occupational therapists to systematically and effectively address the functional needs of children who have difficulty with
 - academic skills
 - social skills for making and keeping friends
 - emotional skills for self-regulating feelings and being resilient
- address key principles of context based assessment
- provide a strategic intervention approach which supports engagement and provides tools for children to be strategic learners
- guide occupational therapists to design an intervention which builds executive function capacities
- support a collaborative approach for occupational therapists to work in authentic partnership with classroom teachers

NB- previous PRPP experience is not a pre-requisite for this workshop, as an overview of the framework theory and approach relative to this population will be provided to assist participants to utilise the concepts in practice. For those interested, pre-reading can be provided to assist development of these foundation skills prior to the workshop.

Arrival tea/coffee, morning tea, afternoon tea and lunch provided. This workshop is open to occupational therapists.

About the Presenter

Dr Susan (Su) Lowe PhD, MAppSc(OT) GradCertHlthSc(OT) is the successful owner and Principal Occupational Therapist at *Skills for Kids*. Su has extensive experience in the area of paediatric occupational therapy having worked within clinic and school settings for 25 years. She is passionate about establishing strong partnerships between teachers, parents and therapists, increasing children's readiness for learning through ecological assessment, cognitive task analysis and intervention strategies (across academic, social and emotional domains); as well as developing resilience in vulnerable young people.

Susan has completed a PhD focusing on 'Cognitive Strategies and School Participation for Students with Learning Difficulties' and co-authored the PRPP@SCHOOL Teacher Questionnaire and PRPP@HOME Parent Questionnaire. She is a highly qualified conference presenter, combining her practical experience with extensive research; and provision of practical strategies through lived experience. Susan regularly teaches internationally and domestically; as well as providing mentoring support for therapists.

Within her private practice/mentoring, Su aims to provide leadership which builds a positive culture, enables team members to embrace constant and forward moving change and guides team members to maintain satisfaction in their workplace within their professional practice, clinical education and personal well-being. Her areas of clinical interest include mentoring and learning partnerships for occupational therapists enabling therapists to work in challenging contexts; build strong partnerships with industry/community (families); and develop clinical reasoning and problem-solving skills.

Expressions of Interest for this workshop are now being sought. Please register your interest to Zi Mei Events at info@zimei.com.au or (07) 3358 3689.