

Jodi Then
Boston Green Academy
Pat Cooke Fellowship Application
January 2025

Inclusive Sustainability - Part II

Continuing to support students with disabilities access environmental sciences and green programming

As a current recipient of the Pat Cooke Fellowship, I have spent the last several months doing a deep dive into the world of Executive Functioning. My fellowship experience has had 2 major components: 1) taking graduate-level classes in Executive Functioning through Landmark College, and 2) applying my knowledge immediately to students. I have been lucky to collaborate with our Career and Technical Education (CTE) teacher, Christopher Donnelly, and work with his 9th grade students exclusively on developing their executive functioning skills. It was clear - very early on - that students of all abilities need Executive Functioning supports in class, and that students are quite interested in learning about how their brain works. Through this experience, I have a much deeper appreciation of bringing explicit Executive Function skill development to a class of potential scientists. In the CTE classroom, EF skills and their connection to career development are more apparent than in, let's say, a Humanities class. "Strategy instruction should address students' motivation and effort"—It is critically important for students to (a) understand their own strengths and weaknesses, and (b) see that these strategies will lead to improved grades. Without either component, they are unlikely to use them" (Greenstone, 2011). This strategy implies that students are motivated by grades, but when they leave school and enter the workforce, they will still need to understand their strengths and weaknesses, and how EF strategies lead to success. CTE programs are a wonderfully controlled environment for students to practice this, and then be able to articulate it to a potential employer.

While my initial goals for the fellowship have almost all been met (I have been delivering weekly Executive Functioning lessons to the 9th grade CTE class, and I have been designing lessons and curriculum as part of my final course projects to students), I now have new ones that are loftier and more robust. I plan to use this CTE course project as a best practice model for Boston Green Academy (and possibly the district) to create a sustainable model for teaching executive functioning skills across all disciplines, particularly science. By having a deeper understanding of cognitive load and working memory, and the ability to practice strategies, more of our high-need students will be able to access jobs in competitive STEM fields.

The work of developing Executive Functioning skills is truly supporting all students, not just those who have an Executive Functioning goal on their IEP. In fact I have learned that many of our students who currently do not have an (IEP) have either been recommended for one OR had one in the past that is no longer in effect. If I were to consider those students who did or could have an IEP or 504 Plan, the number increases to almost 50% our population. There are

students in our school who need supports, despite the formality of being diagnosed with a disability. I want to help these students to see themselves as capable, successful learners. It is for these reasons that I seek to continue the fellowship and finish the last classes in the Landmark College Certificate in Learning Differences and Neurodiversity with a Specialization in Executive Function program. At the end of this grant cycle, I also hope to attend a capstone experience at Landmark College, the Summer Institute.

My first measurable goal for this fellowship is to ensure that an Executive Functioning Curriculum Map is created for BGA educators, including a calendar, timeline, lesson plans and materials. This will ensure that students for decades to come will be able to receive this information, regardless of who is in the role of teacher and counselor.

My second measurable goal is to train several teachers, particularly science teachers, on delivering the curriculum and lessons, and to help them expand this experience to their classrooms.

My third measurable goal will be to attend the Summer Institute in Vermont, and to report back to staff the valuable lessons learned around supporting students with disabilities.

General Timeline:

April -June 2025: LDN640:

Leveraging Universal Design & Learning Technologies for Student Success

June-August 2025: LDN 645:

Capstone Project

Summer Institute @ Landmark College

June 26-28

August 2025

Curriculum Map Finalized

Teachers trained

September-November 2025

Implementation of Curriculum Map Term 1