Executive Function Programming for Avery Coonley Schools Summary

Contracted consultation by Imagination Therapy PLLC (Katie Wilkie) & rEFocus Executive Function Coaching and Consultation(Robin Speizman) October 2023 - April 2024





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Analysis

ACS is a school for gifted learners, and very often co-morbid deficits, gap skills, and relative strengths/weaknesses may cause learning differences among peers making classrooms behaviorally atypical and differentiation challenges for teachers. Reports across both schools, LS and MS, include attention deficits and impulsivity, self-regulation struggles, social-pragmatic gaps, and problem solving delays including initiation and persistence with assigned tasks. Independent functioning is hampered by dependency on external instruction, reassurance, and redirection. Student needs for 1:1 (tier 3) and small group (tier 2) support for independent functioning impacts teachers' ability to teach a larger classroom (tier 1) as the significant needs of a few students often siphon attention from the rest of the class, the intended lesson plans, and the prep and planning time of the teachers.

Some hypotheses regarding the reason for increased student needs for individual and small group interventions included societal shifts in the use of technology, cultural shifts in expectations of adult support at home versus at school, and post-covid effects regarding the lost years of in-school experience, subsequent gap skills, and socio-emotional impact due to pandemic quarantine experiences. For example, the 5th group was in 2nd grade during the majority of the e-learning time, and they were not in school for learning about school structures and routines (e.g. how to be excused for the bathroom), social skills development (e.g. 6–8 year olds), and content of 2nd grade curriculum.

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The teachers largely expressed competence and awareness of executive function skills for students and classrooms, but also interest in support to make their days more efficient and effective. They all noted an increase in need with the current student populations, particularly with impulsivity, distractibility, initiation of tasks, and self-regulation of emotions (for persisting during difficulty or discomfort). Teachers tend to want increased support from parents and administration, but do not feel they have the capacity to simply add more demands on their plate. As such, there needs to be a relief of demands (e.g. things that are no longer functional, relevant, or high priority to ACS), increase of access to support (e.g. professionals who can guide tier 3 needs) and agency to accept or reject requests for their classrooms and time. Teachers need to be heard and validated by administration, but also desire actionable steps.

Finally, it seems as though there is a disconnect between the 2 schools (LS and MS), and that a cultural shift disrupts a transition between 4th and 5th grade. Unification of

the schools would benefit ACS teachers, as well as ACS students and their families/homes. The goal of the LS regarding EF instruction should be considered foundation building for the MS, pre-literacy for EF comprehension, assessment and documentation of student needs as they approach the increased challenges of pre-puberty (e.g. testing limits, challenging authority) and independent learning (e.g. learning to read → reading to learn). The role of the MS is to support students with the same language and support established in the LS by explicitly guiding them from the need for external support to increasingly self-supported and independent learning.

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Recommendations

- Foundational explicit instruction for Executive Function:
 - Organize activities that target attention & inhibition
 - Teach & model self-talk
 - Build perspective taking for uniqueness of ACS students
 - Model and encourage positive self-talk: emphasize and reward effort versus outcomes
 - Practice tolerance and self-talk for discomfort and perseverance
 - Demonstrate how to break tasks into steps
- Administrative support for teachers and students
 - Support and create agency to accept or reject requests for their classrooms and time, and to "leave work at work"
 - During problem solving meetings, have an agenda for the discussion, and actionable steps with measurable outcomes prior to ending the meeting.
 - Ensure you follow up on action steps, and adjust goals systematically
 - Minimize interruptions to the classroom from visitors
- Consider a staff role/employee to be dedicated to managing 2e and 3e student files
 - Create and manage groups of students with similar executive function profiles.
 - With increasing tier 3 student needs, create a more formalized system for progress through Tier 1→ Tier 2→ outside referral or formal special ed dept. within ACS
 - Examine possible gap skills related to years during covid, and go back to teach those skills in small groups as needed (e.g. how to learn, social skills)
- Build a common culture between 2 schools (LS and MS)
 - Consider building a transition team of teachers/subcommittee for executive function including both LS and MS teachers as opposed to administration
 - LS may maintain both informal and formal assessment and documentation of student EF profiles from enrollment
 - MS can examine the needs and expectations of ACS students in grades 5-8

- LS would consult with MS administrators and teachers to best understand the executive function skills of their routines and curriculum
- MS would implement EF support as established by transition reps and LS to maintain continuity of care during transition years
- Delegate EF management: 1:1 teacher & student → community support
 - Define roles & expectations of adult support at home versus at school
 - Parents should direct their child's coping, reward, & consequences plan
 - Include and instruct parents re: self-regulation strategies, individualized interventions for their child
 - Promote social-pragmatic interaction among peers (build lifeline systems for problem solving)
 - Be mindful of increasing responsibility solely on classroom teachers:
 - If you add something to teacher responsibility, consider a balancing relief of demands
 - Increase support from parents and administration carefully and consider if there are actually additional demands of the teacher's time or cognitive capacity to engage this support system. (e.g. if there is a cumbersome system to ask for support, is it likely to be used?)
 - Provide tangible tools and reminders to replace teacher-dependent external instruction, reassurance, or redirection.
 - Seek mindfulness and awareness of the socio-emotional impact from the pandemic from professional sources (e.g. increase training with Zones of Regulation, or seek specific insights regarding pandemic effects).
 - Consider tapping into the public school resources (e.g. special ed support, case management, therapists, etc.) that students are entitled to from their local district.
- Make environmental adjustments to support the current student population
 - Provide low-tech tool options for impulsive students
 - More isn't more
 - Create open workspaces (desks, walls, white/smart boards, storage of materials, etc.) to highlight more important visual support
 - Dedicate a board/display area for important info such as time, date, schedules, and homework
 - Consider the flow and function of stations in each classroom with the progress of the day and arrange it sequentially.

• Students need storage in order to clear the space around their desks and chairs.



Helpful Tools

(Content created and compiled by Imagination Therapy PLLC)

Assessment Support:

Developmental timeline of executive function related skills Grade Level Expectations (based on approximate ages) Checklist derived from (Klinger, 2022): comorbid ADHD & 2e/3e





TimeDevelopmental timeline of executive function related skills

Grade Level Expectations (K-4, LS Proposal)

Grade level	EF Domain(s)	School requirements/expected skills	Temporal - spatial window
Kndgn (5-6)	Schema of object permanence (1 year) Inhibitory control (ages 3-5) Cause/effect Focused attention Basic emotions identification	Visual imagery Externalized self-talk (descriptive) Asking why (seeking cause) Evidence of self-soothing attempts Arguing or correcting behaviors Following the same direction for multiple items	5-20 minutes
1st (6-7)	Sustained attention Theory of mind	Reducing externalizations Thoughts in their head Attempts to deceive or keep private	Several hours
2nd (7-8)	Planning increasing steps and complexity	or surprise: knock knock jokes or lies. Reducing or more subtle "wiggles"	8-12 hours
3rd (8-9)	Manage a 1:1 modeled organizational system Make judgments about the objective remoteness of points in the future such as next week and next year (7–8 years). Category clustering (~8 years): Item-space memory reaches full adult	Digit span approx 7 digits (forward; ages 7+) Stroop test (reading mastery required) Telling time	
4th (9-10)	Category clustering: Item-time and item-item memory continue to develop Verbal inhibitory control	Ability to have fully private thoughts Sophisticated social messaging including sarcasm and humor developing	

Checklist Comorbid ADHD & 2e/3e (derived from Klinger, 2022):

<u>Typical presentations when comorbid ADHD and 2e</u> <u>Kling</u> er, 2022; ADHD and Executive Functioning: Clinical Considerations, Grace Malonai, PhD, LPCC, BC-TMH (thought SP Learning)				
 Easily bored Interest in metaphor and symbolism for learning Nonlinear learning Difficulty on multitasking or completing tasks Struggle to follow through on tasks (except high interests) Self-regulation difficulties Others parentifying the child 				
Difficulty with introspection – overthink and get stuck	Annotations, tangible tools, mirrors and videos.			
Self-esteem struggles	Emphasize strengths Language of effort vs achievement Give explanation of "gifted" Normalize mistakes and weaknesses Community support			
Sensory difficulties Imagination	Create a safe environment to discuss sensory needs Understand the "tells" to differentiate when a child is: -overstimulated -understimulated -fatigued -agitated PY, LLC -ill Have a place for regulation without removal from instructional time -or- Have a prepared and routine system to catch up when removal from instruction is needed.			
Curious & interest driven	Try to provide opportunities to tie in their high interests to content Provide opportunities for independent exploration and "rabbit hole" discoveries.			
Asynchronous development stands out more when ADHD is diagnosed in people that are 2e and 3e.	Intermittently check in and instruct the more basic foundations of a concept before moving to advanced topics.			

Helpful Tools Cont'd

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Intervention Support:

Flow chart for executive function specific domains & interventions Zone of Proximal Development Scaffolding & intensity of interventions Top-down & Bottom-Up Support SMART Goals Packet

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Intervention suggestions for executive function specific domains

Attention: • Focused attention	Emphasis on recall versus recognition	In and out of sight organizational tools: put important in the way
 target Sustained attention duration 	Explicit classroom goals	Self-written goals (SMART) visually available
 Alternating attention shifting Divided attention automation 	Provide multi-sensory options for diverse learning	"Repeat" or engage important materials up to 8 times, with particular care on the 1st and 2nd
 Impulse control/inhibition Improved with self-talk Ignoring (externally) Delayed gratification (internally) 	Have visual or real-life examples to build background knowledge	Practice & reward increasing intervals of inhibition
 Working memory Holding information in your mind to work 		
Task initiation:	Backwards planning (no surprises)	Emphasis on show versus tell
 Getting started (time) Knowing the first step Un-freezing anxiety Task Persistence Inhibiting distraction Managing fatigue Knowing the next steps Understanding the final product Inhibiting overwhelm 	Provide an example of the expected product	 Give a model, and then coach steps: Wait for struggle Have them describe and label the struggle Have them connect possible options for success Give praise for trying Have them describe outcomes If you think their language is inaccurate, ask them to define what they mean or show you. Remain as hands-off as possible. If they are not completing the task, they are not learning.

	Give relatable context to past assignments	Break tasks into very small steps	
	Emphasis on delayed recall	Explicit discussion of time: get ready, do, done	
	Build in natural breaks		
Time Developed instinct of 	Connection of the past, present and future for lessons/content	Explicit discussion of "feeling" time	
 Emotional impact of time Tools to measure, cue, or plan time-dependent actions 	Analog clocks	Make time visible (schedules)	
 Space/organization Functional access to materials (visual, tangible) Storage and retrieval of materials 	Tangible interactions	Put organizational demands in the common path —> Create symbolic meaning with colors, shapes, and nonverbal signals	
 materials Logical (for oneself) system to generalize across environments 	Keep references in field of view (reduce working memory demands)	Consistency of systems across rooms and grades; teach anything novel	
 Shifting/flexibility Prospective vision and memory Developed language of 	Normalize discussion of mistakes and insecurities-careful of invalidating fears.	Forecast both expected and unexpected events	
 Developed language of transitions Comfort with "unknown" 	Scripts for emergencies	Give adequate time/warnings	
Self-monitoring	Provide opportunities for mindfulness or self-regulation	Prospective memory (remembering to remember)	
 Ability to compare/contrast Data driven to drive 	Self-written goals (SMART)	Self-awareness of body	
 objective vs subjective judgements Clear outcomes Understanding of "do" versus "don't" for more 	Minimize visual and verbal "noise" (excess cuing and "fun")	Teach metacognitive awareness of language of organization and EF: Predictions of progress, build checkpoints mid-task	
clear success	Let students reflect on their performance.	Practice with correct form (don't practice poor habits)	
	Option to learn from mistakes through error analysis	Value growth versus achievement	

Social •	 Development of inner voice Understand the inner voice of others Relate to similar past experiences with appropriate labels 	Prospective visualization (envisioning the future) and role play	Tell students when to expect help (e.g. when you've marked up, when you've tried 2 times, etc).
•		Direct students to write on their own paper vs writing corrections/notes.	Practice delayed gratification
• • •	Self-talk to manage waiting Understanding of social rules and expectations Understanding that "unexpected" behaviors trigger fear in self/others Ability to anticipate likely vs unlikely social outcomes Assessment of function of behaviors	Make behavior expectations visible with future function as able (hidden agenda)	Practice and encourage reflective listening after conflict

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Zone of Proximal Development



(Vygotsky, 1978)

Discovery learning happens within the middle zone through instruction, observation, and collaborative projects.

Scaffolding	&	intensity of	of interventions
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Common terms	Common stages of scaffolding	Examples and notes:
Models/1:1	Doing for them	No instruction, full service provided "Write this down here (point to notebook)"; "Here is a list of what you need to do. (point to list)". Not possible in small or large groups.
Instructional (I do)	Teach/show how	Explore visual, verbal and tactile interactions. "Now we should write this note down because it will be on your quiz."; "I am showing you this video example because I want you to see what osmosis looks like." Initial levels for 2+ students.
Immediate recall (I do, you do)	Copying your exact actions immediately in the moment, less explicit.	Precision is expected; This may be a second opportunity immediately after instructional support (e.g. continuing to take notes similar to the model above). Interjections and simultaneous verbal instruction or gestures are expected during the student's attempt to pre-empt errors. Looks like a review from you, demonstration from them. "I think that's important- I will write it on the board!" Pause and look around.
Interactive- indirect	The student takes the lead, you may do something similar but not the same.	You are talking, and a student takes a note. "Nice! I like the way you're writing that down- you feel that's important!"
Observed & cued	You are not participating, but the student knows you are watching them perform and are there to help if needed/asked	Walking around the room, comment or encourage.
Observed & uncued	Literally watch, do not cue or interact. Take notes in secret, present them later to support problem solving" The student should ASK for help during this phase when needed, but not often or consistently. Self-management	Check in intermittently, but let them forget and mess up. Work on problem solving. E.g. On friday "I saw you remembered to turn in your work most of the time, but often forgot to turn in on Monday mornings this month. How can we make that easier to remember? I noticed you did better on days when" The above example would be 80% accuracy with no support. You need to decide if this is good enough to be functional, or continue to grow: you really need an alert to remind you (auditory cue) You could put complete worksheets on the left side of the folder (environmental modification)
Maintenance	100% independent, maintaining success at a high level (not 100%) with only incidental & natural supports	Checking in weekly, quarterly, etc. Allowing them to check in.
Autonomous/inde pendent	No checking in, or check ins are near perfect a vast majority of the time.	Remember that everyone makes a mistake sometimes- even us!It doesn't mean they aren't independent.

Top-Down & Bottom-Up Support



Compensatory Support		Cognitive Growth
Top-down support: External support & scaffolding	Targeted executive function skills & concepts	Bottom-up habilitation: Neural plasticity & internal self-management
Start with minimal cues and build ONLY if necessary.	Supported \rightarrow Independent	Direct & personal engagement when using new skills
Provide social scripts/rules		Reflect after social conflict
Withdraw support regularly to allow for independent attempts. Require a verbal teach-back	External → Internal	Goals explicitly written by self→ specific targets and scaled back to initial stages
Assist with reflections to connect similar past & future events	Build episodic buffer for library of "past" references	Allowance for mistakes with review/reflection procedure
Build stable routine(s) and language between grade levels	← Reduce load on working memory → Develop episodic memory	Provide varied experiences
Pre-teach or preview lessons	Forecasting & prospective memory	Practice backwards planning
Make time visible/tangible	Delayed gratification:	Use of analog clocks
Provide a visual schedule	See it \rightarrow Experience it	Explicit self-talk surrounding time/pacing
Provide guided note-taking sheets and writing as a commander for attention	Building perseverance and inhibition	Persevere through disrupted environments when able
Label skills with modeled self-talk	Visual imagery & self-talk:	Play games that challenge cognitive skills & be explicit
Show examples, don't just tell & teach the "why"	Explicit model → Natural	Use own descriptions and associations through self-talk



SMART Goals Packet (pg 26-32)

S.M.A.R.T. Goal Writing Packet

By Katherine M. Wilkie, M.S., CCC-SLP/L Owner of Imagination Therapy PLLC ImUpdated April 6, 2024LLC

<u>Index of worksheets:</u> Stop and Observe: SMART observation form26
S: First draft & word-choice27
Narrowing down to single-tasking an actionable first step28
M: Taking data29
A: Appropriate developmental expectations, attention & time concept
R: Motivational interviewing
T: Task persistence & letting them try

Goal and Benchmark Setting: S.M.A.R.T.

Before building a "SMART" goal, consider a "SMART" observation: you will need more space- write on the back or another sheet of paper! Stop and observe the "problem" situation. Consider video-taping, taking notes, or having someone else dedicated to observing.

S.M.A.R.T.	Ideal outcomes	Observation	Goal terms
S Situation	In your own words, what's the goal?	Tell the story of what happened (this time):	What specific action will you focus on:
M Measured [This must be tangible/ physical evidence]	What would prove success at this task?	Tally: how many times did the success happen?	How will you measure improvement:
A Ambiance/ Atmosphere	What's the setting for this goal? Time & place, materials needed (including support)?	Describe the setting of the observation:	What materials are needed;
R Ready/ Reactions	Why should the student want this? Imagination Why do their support team members want this?	Therapy, LLC	How much effort will this take:
T Time/ Sequence [Use a stopwatch or	What will prepare the student before the task, and how much prep time is needed: Timing and pace of the action:	Record prep/transition needs: Measure prep time Timing and pace of the action:	How long will it take (circle) No. Attempts Days/weeks etc
actual clock.]	Decompression and transition time after:	Decompression/closure needs:	Mins/hours CTime per task

Specific: First draft and word choice Re-write your goal (draft wording):

Ensure that your goal has/is:
Single-tasking: tackle <u>one</u> variable at a time
Only one subject
Only one verb
Avoid vague or "umbrella" categories for the subject
Use "do" actions versus "don't"
Pick 1 situation to complete this to start:
□ Time:
Place:
□ With whom:
Define (with words) the middle stages and reasonable level of outcomes
Example: "Good" and "Bad" Continuum
"Negative" extreme Goal or ideal condition "Positive" extreme
Imagination Therapy, LLC Terrible Awful Bad Poor Passing Fine Average Good Great Super Fabulous "Exceptional"
Fill in your specific goal descriptions below:

"Failing"		Goal or ideal condition		High Expectations				
Other su	bjective v	vords :						

Specific: Single-tasking, finding the first step **Remember "There's a hole in the bucket" and "If you give a mouse..."?**

There may be preparation levels, action levels, and closure levels to consider: you may have already achieved some preparation and baseline skills, but they are still important to consider. After you go backwards as far as you can, notice the foundational skill being used (first step of the skill) and then decide where the student is in the list of steps (first step of the goal).

The goal is to ____

0 =				
. Before that h	appens we w	vill need		
. To get the ne	ed we will ha	ave to		
in order to do.	that we will			
low keep going	g until you ca	an't anymore:		
	Imag	ination Th	herapy, LI	C
he actual first	step of the s	skill is:		
na the first st	ep of the goa	11 1S:		

Measurable: take objective data as much as you can...

Objectives + results	Date	Tallies/data
Example: J will remember to	Sat6	t yes more reminded me
charge his phone at night	Sun 4/7	X fell sleep on couch,
Sat 4/6/24 - 9th: ³ /4 times (75%)	Mon 8th	Yes plugged in after anner
charged in the afternoon once but not the goal.	Tue 9th	X2 to day!
Harder on weekends? (So maybe next week you will target a dinner routine per Monday data?)		
Use to take notes!		
Imaginatio	n Thera	
Inazinan	rii 1101a	ру, шшо

Age	Skills	Temporal-Spatial Window & Scaffolding
0-1	 □ Labeling □ Describing □ Noticing causal relationships → "why?" □ Visual Imagery developing □ Self-soothing 	 Now Immediate recall Mutual gaze, parallel play Models
3 4 5	 Develop self-talk (aloud) Delayed gratification (4 years old) Theory of Mind (ToM): they may be wrong, others have unique thoughts from them 	 5-10 Minutes Short term recall Joint attention, interactive play Imitation
6 7	 Can think without moving face/vocalizing Language creates motor activation in the brain Further develop humor 	 Several hours Long term recall Focused attention Instructional
8 9 10 11 12	 Fully private language and thoughts Academics go from learning how to learn into more skills applications "Learning to read→ reading to learn" 	 8-12 Hours Sustained Attention Observed and cued
13 14 15-23	 Brain undergoes a "remodelling" phase, peaking between 13-15 years old, called "competitive elimination" Increased interest in risk taking and sensation seeking Executive function development continues up through age 25 (maybe longer!) 	 □ 2-3 days □ Alternating Attention □ Unobserved □ 2-3 weeks □ Divided attention □ Unobserved→ Independent
23-35+	We can continue to develop and fine-tune the brain and neural connections due to "neural plasticity"	□ 3-5 weeks

Building goal and action oriented language:		
In your own words, what's the "problem"?		
Reasons to stay the same (list as many as you can):	Reasons to change (list as many as you can):	
What are the benefits of staying the same?	What are your concerns about staying the same?	
What are your concerns about change?	What are the benefits of change?	
What parts of your current daily routine would you like to stay the same?	What parts of your current daily routine would you like to change?	
What is your biggest hindrance	2/barrier to changing routines?	
What are the easier thi	ngs for you to change?	

Realistic: Is the student motivated to work on this?

Time: Set check in dates

Level	Task (Tell them what stage they are on)	Timing When will you complete each step?	Describe expectations:
SMART Observation, reflection: Re-write your goal/expectations, based on your packet work:			
Models/ intruct	Tell them to watch you do the task, start to finish, and tell you what they saw.	□ (date) □ (date)	
I do then you do	Break into steps, work side-by-side simultaneously	 (date) (date) initiating/ self-talk. 	
Observed & assisted	Give them the full task, encourage Consider : *Intensity of support (see scale above aka min-max) *Frequency of support) *Type or mode of support (visual, verbal, tactile, etc.)	(date) (date) (date) No reminders	Ensure you are consistent when measuring your cue types and levels.
Observed & unassisted	Be nearby, but don't jump in unless asked	(date) (date) (date) No lifeline	
Unobserved & check	Ask if they did the task, how it went	□ (date) □ (date)	
Let it go	You don't have to check in anymore- they've got it!	Tell them you're proud of them for learning that skill.	

Strive for decreasing multi-sensory support; Failure or pattern of limited success: increase support until stable.

Examples of Games for Executive Function Skills

Executive Function Skills	Game qualities	Specific example games: *Some games are in multiple categories
Attention	Waiting for one signal, holding one detail, having 1 job 1. Focused (1 target), inhibit distractions 2. Sustained (1, + time), endurance 3. Alternating (2+), multi-tasking	Slap Jack, Old Maid, Red light, green light, Simon Says, Voodoo,
Memory/ working memory	Barrier games, recall, hidden parts	Memory (classic), Simon, Go fish, Hanabi, Psychic Pizza Deliverers go to the Ghost Town, Wordle
Task Initiation/ Goal Setting	Games that give a specific, unique objective, games that have a shared goal but multiple paths to achieve it, Dungeon crawlers	Settlers of Catan, Haunting at House on the Hill (Scooby-doo version for kids), Hero Quest, Caper, Bites
Task Persistence & delayed gratification	Longer games, games with a ultimate winner, games where you wait for other players to take turns, hurdles to overcome	Monopoly, Risk, legacy games (many games have legacy options: Clank!, Pandemic, Ticket to Ride)
Time	Race-the-clock-games, sequencing (first-last),	5-Minute Series (5-minute dungeons, 5-minute mysteries), Magic Maze,
Space	Puzzles, using up space, estimating (distances, volume), sorting, sequencing (big-small)	Tetris, Jigsaws, Patchwork, Isle of Cats, Battleship, Mythic Mischief, Cascadia, Fstudenty Funner
Material Management	Resource management, building up supplies, earning/spending,	UNO, Settlers of Catan, Monopoly, King of Tokyo,
Associations	Word games, funny/witty games, hidden agenda games, categories/sorting	Taboo, Scattergories, Illiterati, Chameleon, Dixit
Flexible thinking	Goal shifting, mystery style, discovery	Clue, FLUXX series, Battleship,
Self monitoring	Competitive games, exciting/energetic games, physical games, gross motor games, deception	Twister, hide and seek, kick the can, The Thing, Clue Conspiracy
Social perspective taking	Cooperative games, competitive games with only one winner, hidden agenda games, mystery games, deception games, subjective-judge games	Apples-to-Apples, "Werewolf"/"Mafia"/"Among us", Code Names, Chameleon, Dixit, Hero Quest

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