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Teachers' Perceptions of Executive Function Difficulties and Instruction in Digital Citizenship Education for Children with Developmental Disabilities.

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Abstract

Digital citizenship (DC) education, designed to cultivate critical thinking and responsible engagement with digital information among children, is gaining increasing attention. However, children with developmental disabilities encounter significant challenges in consciously regulating their thoughts and actions to solve problems and achieve goals, which makes it more difficult for them to acquire these skills. This study aims to generate foundational insights for the effective implementation of DC education for children with developmental disabilities. It explores the relationship between anticipated areas of difficulty for these children and teachers' instructional considerations to address such challenges, viewed through the lens of executive function. One author and three teachers experienced in teaching children with developmental disabilities individually reviewed lesson plans and classroom videos of DC instruction. The author predicted, based on the lesson plans, the content likely to pose difficulties for children with developmental disabilities. Through written responses, the teachers outlined key considerations for conducting this lesson. The study was approved by the research institution's ethics review board. Fifteen areas of difficulty were identified, 13 (86.7%) of which were related to executive function, 5 (33.3%) involved planning, and 8 (53.3%) involved carrying out goal-directed plans. Totally, 26 instructional considerations were noted, 19 (73.1%) linked to executive function, including 1 (5.3%) on goal setting and 15 (78.9%) on carrying out goal-directed plans. A discrepancy emerged between the anticipated difficulties and the points teachers emphasized, including the absence of planning-related considerations. Incorporating executive function-based strategies may strengthen the effectiveness of DC education for children with developmental disabilities.

Keywords: Developmental Disabilities, Digital Citizenship, Executive Function