

Organization and Time-Management Aids

Let's Get Organized... the Bottom Lines

- The first time-management tools that come to mind are a wrist watch, an alarm clock, and other readily accessible clocks at school and at home. Knowing what time it is makes a great starting point.
- Next, one or more time management and organizational tools such as computer-based or written calendars, task lists, planners, or personally designed to-do lists. More and more people are using iPhones or Blackberrys to send themselves reminders about tasks to complete and have programmed reminders of tasks and appointments on their computers.
- An assigned place for all school materials. Students should be able to determine where to keep their materials as long as they can find them when they need them or teachers ask them to use them. Should they not be able to organize their “stuff” in an efficient way, scaffold their organization with an eye to withdrawing that support as they gain skillfulness and confidence.

Helping Students Learn to Organize Themselves

- Work with them in identifying the component parts included in assignments and in establishing goals and timelines with appropriate checkpoints.
- In the beginning, establish interim checkpoints for what appears to be even straight forward and simple tasks. As students begin be able to handle those tasks, encourage their independence, and then gradually add to the complexity of the tasks while still providing support and scaffolding.
- Provide verbal prompts and cues to ensure the student is prepared to complete homework. For example, ask the student what needs to be done on the given night. If he answers math, ask what is needed to complete the math and what math needs to be done. It may be that the student even needs these questions in written or picture form.

Possibilities

It is counterproductive to require universal organizational systems without periodic analysis of what is working and is not working. It is possible to end up spending way too much time managing student organizational systems and far too little time planning and delivering solid instruction. We serve our students best if we offer and teach them a variety of ways to organize themselves and then have them access the effectiveness of the plan based on clearly established and public criteria. Some strategies to introduce are:

- Tables of contents for three-ring binders with assignments, dates assigned, date due, and date completed listed
- Color-coded folders
- Study logs listing starting and finishing times and tasks accomplished