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SPECIAL
POINTS OF
INTEREST:

- Learning how to prioritize.
- Classroom communication.
- Homework excuses.
- Organizing learning in the classroom.
- Critical elements of effective learning.
- Managing time.

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Helping Students Organize Efficiently and Effectively

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It's a Matter of Time

While organization comes easier to some than to others, everyone seems to recognize the benefit of perfecting organizational skills. By maximizing productivity, we make the best use of our time which enables us to meet deadlines and allows us to achieve more.

Students who learn the value of organization are more likely to meet assignments with success while sculpting their individual style of work and enjoyment with time management. "We do not have control over time and the number of hours per day is limited, but the tasks that have to be done are numerous and there arises a need

for organizing things and timing oneself" (Organizational



Time is limited.

Skills Facts, 2009).

There are many ways for students to organize within their classroom. Keep in mind that "kids with learning disabilities often have an even harder time learning how to get and stay organized and

meet deadlines" (Great Schools, 2009). By modeling the dynamics of organization, students begin to operate in smaller, manageable segments instead of the "last minute" chaos that often comes when organizational skills are not instilled.

Younger students benefit from weekly calendar events as they comprehend what is expected for the entire week. Some instruction will be repeated weekly or bi-weekly like computer class, library time or visiting the science lab. When students understand the expectations for the week, they are less likely to fall off balance.

(continued on page 2)

Serious Space

For some students, a permanent homework spot is crucial for successful learning at home. When you sit down in this space, the brain should click on *learning*. You want to be comfortable but not too comfortable. Some students need solitude when they study while others like background noise. Regardless, students need "to keep dis-

tractions to a manageable level by steering clear of family thoroughfares" (Scholastic, 2009).

Brainstorm with students as you discuss "must haves" of an inspiring work area.

- Seating (what's comfortable?)
- Lighting (darker or lighter?)
- Space (can you spread out?)

- Supplies (what's needed?)
- Organization (get organized!)
- Decoration (personalize it!)
- Eliminations (destroy distractions!)

Students have different tolerances for learning but each style should include levels of relaxation coupled with an ability to focus.

It's a Matter of Time (continued)



“There seems to be so many demands on everyone’s time and energy these days.”
(Great Schools, 2009)

Keep updates
short and simple.

“Dogs do not eat homework!”
(Romain, 2009)



Older students benefit from a monthly calendar, detailing classroom assignments and deadlines. When book reports, science projects and subject assessments are clearly articulated, students are encouraged to begin working towards goals and mastery of expectations.

When educators make classroom expectations available to parents on-line or through take-home correspondence, both parties are

readily able to monitor progress and accountability. Early on, students need to understand that “arranging things in the order of priority is also an important task; otherwise what has been done after the given deadlines might not be of any use” (Organizational Skills Facts, 2009).

By looking at the “big picture,” students learn to work in smaller units of time, visibly reducing stress.

“Effective organization skills create lifetime habits and set the stage for success in high school, college and on the job” (Family Matters, 2009). Every job has assignments and requests that often seem too huge to conquer in the beginning. By learning to tackle things in small chunks, students learn that anything can be obtainable with time, dedication and determination.

Just Say It!

During the holidays, we often receive pages of updates from friends and relatives. How often have you glanced at a letter and thought, “I don’t have time to read this right now!” We live in an information-packed society and at times the information is overwhelming.

When corresponding with parents, say what needs to be said. In other words, keep it short and simple. Think of

home information like an invitation. Student pictures, field trips and classroom activities can be summed up briefly. When information is broken down into simple, short sentences parents are more likely to review the information as it “appears” to be simplistic in nature. At the end of the day, parents will most likely set aside something that is perceived as time consuming or complicated. Be succinct. From the beginning, choose a

color or code for correspondence that announces to the parent, “*This is from my child’s teacher.*” This separates random classroom work from important information.

If classroom information is delivered electronically, make sure to use a general program found on most computers. Attachments that cannot be opened frustrate the parent and only add to your work.

Hated Homework!

Let’s face it. Students enjoy hearing the numerous excuses you’ve heard about homework. Trevor Romain’s book, *How To Do Homework Without Throwing Up* is a humorous view of homework truths and skills.

Ask students to list the “Top 10” Homework Tips. Tips may include finding a quiet place, turning off the cell phone and television, eating a healthy snack, or creative ways to manage time.

If your goal is to add an element of entertainment to homework discussions,

ask students to think of the worst homework excuse (the dog ate it!). After all excuses have been recorded, take a class vote on the “World’s Worst Homework Excuse.”

When students know that you’re aware of “excuses,” they’re less likely to create one.

Small Steps



Organization in its infant stages actually takes work and time. Just as we prioritize our calendar, we must also prioritize

what is organized first. When we evaluate classroom expectations consideration must also be given to space and organizational elements.

- Where can students store supplies, text books and other

“New habits take time to learn.” (Great Schools, 2009)

items? Some students have lockers while others have cubbies. Encourage students to organize their personal storage area. You may ask that loose papers be placed in an accordion file folder or three-ring binder, divided by subject. Pencils and pens may be placed in a container or box.

- Students need at least 5 to 10 minutes allotted to daily prepara-

tion. This includes turning in homework assignments and writing down assignments for the following week or day.

- Classroom expectations need to be clearly stated. Students should know what you expect them to have on hand at all times (paper, pencils, etc.).

- If students work in small groups, have “mini” pails available for trash. The benefit is two-fold: students will clean as they work while there will also be less traffic to and from the classroom trashcan.

“Take a good look at your schedule.” (Scholastic, 2009)

Staying on Task

Many parents juggle multiple activities throughout the school week. Sports and other extra-curricular activities often keep parents moving. Add in meal preparation and homework completion and it’s no wonder the school year is hectic!

While the distractions may be numerous, students need a place dedicated at home to

“learning” as each academic school year will require more and more personal responsibility.

Ask students to describe their “homework station.” Where do you work on homework? What is the lighting like? Do you like it quiet or do you need background noise? Do you like to work on the floor or at a table?

Where do you keep supplies?

By asking students to focus on homework, they are more likely to answer critical questions as to how they like to learn. “When kids talk about how they do homework, the tips and tricks for doing it efficiently and effectively, they help one another” (Bella Online, 2009).

Find Your Style!

Many schools are now equipped with computer labs. After discussing time management with your students, ask each student to log onto www.scholastic.com and take the “Find Your Time-Management Style!” quiz.

The quiz contains 15 questions about homework, school assignment preparation, summer

vacation, routines, motivations and weekend plans. Students are asked to choose from four answer choices which range from highly organized to procrastination.

At the end of the quiz, students discover how well they manage their time.

Ask students to identify their

level of time management. Create a chart to determine how many students are organized and how many tend to procrastinate. Discuss questions like, “Is it possible to be overly organized” or “How can a procrastinator change?”

Ask students to write at least one goal as they move forward with organization.



What’s your work motto?

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fitness for kids.**

Daphne Morris, M.Ed., met Trevor Romain in 1992 when he visited a school as a guest speaker. Impressed by Trevor's profound and meaningful impact on students and educators, Daphne joined The Trevor Romain Company in 2006. A former elementary school principal, Daphne holds two Master's degrees in education.



Resources:

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