

Social and Emotional Learning

Lesson Title: Organizing: Design the System

Grade Level: High School

Essential Question

Why is it important to be and stay organized and how do we do it?

Potential Discussion/Teaching Moments

How does one design a system for organizing...

- School papers
- Lockers
- Backpacks
- Other school 'equipment' or areas of study

Materials

1. Five signs/pieces of paper, one with each rating:

- 5-Extremely Organized
- 4-Very Organized
- 3-Generally Organized
- 2-Sort of Organized
- 1-Not Organized AT ALL

2. Articles:

- "Organization as the Key to Academic Success" by Christopher Ford
- "6 Ways to Help Your High School Student Get Organized" by Sue Kay
- "Tips to Help Students Organize Their Papers" by Susan Kruger, M.Ed.

Teacher

1. Post the five ratings around the room and tell students that you will read a statement and they are to stand under/near the sign that best describes their response.
2. Read the following statements and ask students to move to the rating and to think about the evidence they could provide immediately to support their choice.
 - a. This sign describes the organization level of my school papers.
 - b. This sign describes the organization level of my locker.
 - c. This sign describes the organization level of my backpack.
 - d. This sign describes the organization level of my study area.
 - e. This statement describes me in general.

3. Ask students to discuss any one of the statements and their responses with one person who is in close physical proximity.
4. Ask students to turn to that same discussion partner again and talk about the best advice/structure/ tip they have ever received or learned for keeping organized. When did they learn it? What does it require of them? What are the steps they need to take? How often do they follow this practice? If they continue this practice today, why? If they do not continue this practice today, why not?
5. Gather back as a group and assure them you will not seek evidence of their self-ratings—yet. Today's session is about designing organizational structures and systems for high school students. Explain that you have the task of grading them on their organization at points during the school year, and their input as to how to do that best will determine how and when this will happen.
6. Explain that for this project, students may work alone or in pairs.
7. They will design and present an organizational plan that you, as their teacher, will be able to implement in this class. The plan must include the following:
 - a. The task: what is to be organized?
 - b. The timeframe: How often and when will you check on the organizational task?
 - c. Example of excellence: what does a model example look like?
 - d. A rating system or rubric: using a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being “Extremely Organized” and 1 being “Not Organized AT ALL;” write a statement that clearly defines each rating.
8. To support their plan, they will read three short articles about advice for helping high school students keep organized, one written by a student for other students, one written by a parent for other parents, and one written by a study skills expert to parents. In addition to the articles provided, students may use whatever technology is available to research as well as prepare their presentations. Students may use visual representations (photographs, diagrams, etc.), music (jingles, raps, etc.), poetry, or other supports in their presentation.
9. When their plans are ready, students will present their plans.

Conclusion

When all plans have been presented, work with the group to determine how you will use their plans to help them remain organized throughout your time in the class.

End with a discussion of why it is important to stay organized.

Notes

Article 1: Organization as the Key to Academic Success

By: Christopher Ford



The question I am asked most frequently is *What is the key to academic success in university?* This is a very difficult question to answer, since academic success not only requires good study habits and academic skills, but also a drive to learn.

However, the one thing that has been the key to academic success for myself and many others that I have encountered in academia, is something that is often overlooked and taken for granted. **That thing is Organization, and it is one skill that, in my opinion, must be practiced and built upon in order to succeed at school.**

Ask yourself for a moment: *Am I organized?* By organized, I do not mean whether you have your whole life planned out by the minute — I mean, do you know when your assignments are due? Do you know what things you have to get done this week? Have you found some way to make sure you're not spending too much money, or that you're not spending too much time partying?

Ask yourself again: Am I organized?

For me, the answer was a definite **NO** when I entered first year. I was a procrastinator, a forgetful student, and an over-spender... and I may have spent more time socializing than I probably should have. Although I was getting good marks, I loved learning, and I always went to class, school started becoming more challenging than ever before, especially around exam time, and I was worried that if I continued along that path, it would start to have a negative effect on my marks.

After trying a number of different methods – some being more effective than others – I finally found a few practices that helped me to stay organized (or, at least, significantly more organized than I had been before). Making the decision to try to become more organized, both in my schooling and in my personal life, changed my life. Not only did I become a better student (my study habits improved, my marks improved, and I was finding it easier to complete assignments on time), but I also noticed a number of positive changes in my personal life (less stress being the most noticeable of all).

Overall, being organized, I believe, is the key to academic success – and to being successful in all areas of life. And so, without further adieu, here are the things that I did that helped me to practice staying organized.

1. Buy a Calendar

This will probably be one of the best investments you can ever make. Having a calendar is a great way to visually see what you have to do that day, that week, or even that month! If you have a smartphone or tablet that has a calendar application, you can use this as well – many applications can sync with your e-mail, to send you alerts of appointments, or with your other devices, so you can stay organized on your computer, your tablet, and your phone.

2. **Agendas** are a great way to be on the ball – keep it on hand during classes or club meetings, and anytime you are given an assignment or a date to remember, *write it down right away!*

3. **Write it Down**

Even if you don't have an agenda, *WRITE EVERYTHING DOWN*. Whenever you're given an assignment, an appointment, a deadline, or anything important that you need to remember, record it right away — you can write it down, type it in on your computer, tablet or phone, or record a voice memo, but no matter the method, *RECORD THE IMPORTANT STUFF*.

4. **Get Some Sleep**

This practice may seem a little out of place on this list, but I promise you that it is not. The times that I felt the most organized and in control were also the times that I had been the most well-rested. Late-night partying or pulling all-nighters – although they may seem necessary, at times – can leave your brain scattered and disheveled, but getting sleep helps your body to recharge and reboot. As well, staying disciplined in your sleeping habits is great practice for staying disciplined in other aspects of your life!

5. **Pick a 'Reset' Day**

This, arguably, is the most important practice that I learned, and it has helped me the most in staying organized. Best of all: it's super easy to do! All it requires is one hour or so of your time for an allotted period of time (weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, etc).

Choose a day at the very beginning of a set time period to 'reset' yourself – by this, I mean choose a day that you can sit down for an hour and make a plan for the upcoming time period. For me, I try to sit down at least once every week, and I make a list of everything I have to do for that week. I try to set a plan – this plan usually includes a budget for the week, a list of all my assignments, a mini-calendar for the week that contains all of my meetings and commitments, and a list of personal goals that I have for the week (i.e. drink more water, learn something new, etc). I also reflect upon the previous week, and see whether I stuck to the plan that I created the week before, and got done what I wanted to accomplish for that week.

This usually takes me about an hour, and I cannot even begin to tell you how helpful it is to take the time to reboot and start fresh.

Sometimes, when you are swamped with work or when you have allowed yourself to become disorganized and scatter-brained, it is very easy to get down on yourself and to think that you will never catch up. Picking a 'reset' day can give you the opportunity to start fresh, and I have found it to be an incredible stress-relieving technique — not to mention that it will help you avoid those types of situations altogether!

I hope that you find these tips and tricks as helpful as I have found them. Remember — Stay Calm. **Stay Organized. And Have Fun!**

Notes

Article 2: Ways to Help Your High School Student Get Organized

By: Sue Kay (Updated 06/23/17)

By the time your child reaches high school, you may think it's too late to instill some basic organizational skills. It's not! It's more important than ever now especially if your child plans to attend college. Not to mention that being organized is an important work skill.

Use these tips to help your child get organized for high school.

Sit and Plan Their Week With Them

Gone are the days when your child comes home yelling "Guess what happened to me, Mom!" More likely, they'll walk in the door and head straight to their room without saying much.

If you're like most parents of high school students (especially boys), you probably find out about things either very last-minute or after the fact.

A weekly meeting can get you in the loop without smothering your child. Sunday evenings are a great family meeting time for you to go over things like:

Everyone should bring their planners or calendars. If they don't own one, be sure to get them one. Work your way through each day asking what everyone has scheduled like work, practices, games, and before and after school activities. Next, determine transportation needs. Does your child have a ride to each event on their calendar or will you need to provide transportation on one or more days?

The review school-related things. Are any projects due or big tests scheduled? Does your child have all the necessary tools or supplies?

Lastly, cover their social calendar. Do they want to go to the Friday night football game, go to the movies with friends or have a birthday party to attend?

If so, discuss the needs for each event like transportation, does your child need anything like a special outfit washed or dry cleaned, or a gift. Then fit the preparation items into your calendar.

While these weekly meetings will be important to you as you juggle both work and family responsibilities, their true value is teaching your child to think and plan ahead.

That's a skill that will come in handy for years to come.

Clean Out Your Bags Together

Your child lives out of their backpack all week, just like you do your purse. At the end of your weekly meeting take time to empty out both of your bags together. By doing so you're leading by example that's it good to start the week off with a fresh start.

Just like your purse has many compartments kids backpacks have them, too. Make it a point to clean out every little pocket. Dirty tissues and gum wrappers have a knack for getting stuck in small spaces.

Anticipate They Will Procrastinate

Many teenagers seem predisposed to procrastination. While this will drive some of you Type A parents crazy but resist the urge to micromanage. Here are some ways to encourage your child to stop procrastinating.

Don't try to have a rational conversation about procrastination with your child when they are in the middle of getting something done at the last minute. Tempers will flare and nothing productive will result.

Instead, discuss the situation at a later time. Ask your child to explain the circumstances that led to the last minute crunch. Looking back, is there anything they would have done differently? With that action plan, help them figure out how can they apply it to their next project or test so they'll avoid procrastinating again.

Many children never really learn how to study and it catches up with them in high school. Many schools and tutoring clubs offer study skills classes designed to teach your child how to study efficiently and effectively. Consider enrolling your child in one of these courses. It's an investment with long-term dividends.

Establish Expectations and Consequences

By high school, you should have a clear understanding of your child's capabilities. Clearly tell your child what you expect in terms of grades and test scores based on these capabilities. Some parents even put them in a written academic contract between them and the student.

Whether you communicate your expectations verbally or in writing, you should also include the consequences if expectations are not met. Decide with your children what the consequences will be like eliminating extracurricular activities, no weekend social events, or loss of phone or gaming privileges.

When it comes to time management and organization, one of the best lessons you can teach your child is personal responsibility and the understanding that there are consequences for every decision.

Don't Bail Your Child Out

It's 9 p.m. and your child comes running into your room holding a dirty uniform they need for tomorrow's big game. What do you do? If these situations rarely happen, you can wash it. But if they are a common occurrence, resist bailing out your kid.

If you do bail them out, you are reinforcing your child's disorganized habits. You are also sending the message that it doesn't matter if you are organized or not; it all works out in the end. You won't be there in college, and you certainly won't be there when they get their first post-college job.

That doesn't mean you need to be stern about this. Express sympathy for the predicament and show interest in your child's ideas for solving the problem. You may find that they can get out of the jam without your help. That's a great way to build confidence and life skills.

Introduce Them to Organizational Tools

They have a planner but what other organizational needs do they have? Having a different color folder for each subject can help them grab the right paperwork quickly. Sticky notes for quick messages, sticky tabs to mark important reference material in a book, or sticky dots to help prioritize their workload.

If they need to store notes for a long amount of time introduce them to three-ring binders, their own three hole puncher and tabs. Another option is finding an accordion files to organize loose paper.

Article 3: Tips To Help Students Organize Their School Papers

By: Susan Kruger, M.Ed., October 18, 2011

I've been helping students organize their school papers for years, The #1 roadblock for most students is not taking tests. It's getting organized! Students can get "better grades in less time" when they get organized.

Too many students are:

- Drowning in a sea of papers.
- Wasting precious after-school hours searching for lost homework.
- Doing homework, but losing it before they can turn it in.
- Getting lower grades due to missing assignments.

The good news is that solutions to help students organize their school papers are rather simple.

To get there, we must first understand the root of the problem.

Why Is It Such a Challenge to Organize? ¹

Most students have 14-18 different folders and notebooks. That would be like having 14-18 different email accounts to manage every day...it's very overwhelming for students!

There are many logical reasons why students have a hard time keeping their book bags and lockers in order.



First, they have too much "stuff" to organize. Most students have a separate folder and notebook for each class. For seven classes, that adds up to 14 different folders and notebooks! To make matters worse, students have to constantly move them between classes, their locker, home, and back to school.

To put this in perspective, this would be like adults having 14 different email accounts to maintain every day...while moving across several different work sites.

Secondly, all of that "stuff" looks alike. When students look in their book bag or locker, all of their folders and notebooks look the same. It is hard for them to find their green science notebook when all they can see are several silver spirals.

Finally, students are always in a rush when handling papers. In class, teachers often pass out homework at the very end, when the bell is ringing and students are rushing out the door. The same is true at the end of the day, when they are at their locker. Students are rushing to get to sports practice, catch the bus, or simply get away from school.

The last thing on the students mind is how to organize their school papers.

At home, doing homework, students would rather be doing anything else! Even when they are procrastinating, their subconscious mind is rushing them through their work. The moment they put the last period on a paper, something snaps in their brain that says "I'm done!"

They have no patience left to organize their school papers because it is a multi-step process: they have to look in the book bag, rifle through 14 folders and notebooks, find the right one, open it up, insert the homework, close it, and put it back in the bag...and lost forever.

How to Stop the Cycle

I have discovered three simple steps that have helped thousands of students organize their school papers easily:

- 1. Condense all folders and notebooks into ONE binder.** Replace two-pocket folders with binder folders. Replace spiral notebooks with loose-leaf paper and use the folders as subject dividers. (Caution: Only use a 1.0-1.5-inch binder.) Now, students have only ONE item to manage and it is easily portable. (Elementary students who have one main teacher should have ONE folder to carry back-and-forth between home and school.)
- 2. Minimize trash.** Book bags and lockers are trash magnets! Encourage your child to be proactive about emptying trash. As they leave their locker at the end of each day, they can grab trash and toss it on their way out of the building. The book bag should be cleaned out every evening, which leads to the third and final step...
- 3. "Take Two."** This is my catch-phrase for a simple organizing routine. When students sit down to do their homework, they take the first TWO MINUTES to organize their school papers in their binder and clean trash out of the book bag.

I have personally seen these three steps (especially the binder) transform hundreds of students' lives from paper chaos to paper calm. The difference a few simple steps can make cannot be overstated!

Notes
