

School Organizing

What are the organization traits and habits of the successful students? Based on discussions with long serving teachers, here are their answers:

Start Habits Early

When you start the “being organized habit” in 6th grade, it takes the student all the way through high school and into life. Lay the foundation now.

School Organizing is a Family Activity

Parents and youth need to work together. It is the parent’s responsibility to support the youth in building these habits by having a routine and checking in daily.

The checking in with the calendar and homework and supplies could become a daily ritual that takes place in a very focused way. So when students get home from school, or at a given time, everyone sits around the table and checks in. Then everyone goes off and does homework/play, etc.

This is a mini family meeting. If everyone is involved and a part of it, then the students will see that it’s an important issue that is valued not just another thing Mom and Dad are making them do. The meeting doesn’t need to be long and drawn out, it just needs to happen regularly and with consistent content.

Calendar

Youth need a calendar – some kind of calendar – usually the schools will provide one. The calendar needs to have enough space for the youth to write down homework.

They need to fill it in everyday, even if they have no homework. If they have no homework, they need to write in “NONE”.

Until they get in the habit of doing this every day, Mom and Dad need to check it every night to see they’ve written it in there.

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For youth that have severe disorganization, have her/him take the calendar to the teacher everyday and get teacher to initial the calendar confirming that the accurate homework is written down. Parents create a penalty for not getting initialed (no TV, no playing outside, no friends over for a week, whatever is motivating.) Clearly explain the direct connection of inaction to consequence. Alternately, create a reward for doing it consistently (stay up extra late, help mom cook, etc.)

Paper Holder

Youth need some kind of paper holder. A 3 ring binder doesn't necessarily do it for all youth.

Mom and Dad should take their children to the office supply store and ask what's going to work for them. Some youth are good with file folder for each class, or accordion folder, or 3 ring, or pocket for each class.

Each class folder/area must have two clearly labeled sections for papers that: 1) need to be done, 2) are done that need to be turned in.

Mom and Dad need to check papers are all in their places until the habit sticks. (This can be done at the same time as checking the calendar.)

Supplies Case

Have a case for supplies. Unsuccessful students can't find their pencils and supplies (ruler/gluestick/colored pencils).

It can be a section in the backpack or it can be a bag, whatever. Mom and Dad need to check that children have all supplies in case until the youth get in the habit of replenishing it when it's empty. This can be done at the same time as the show me your calendar and homework pockets.

Periodic Purge

Do the same thing adults have to do and ask these questions: what are the papers I need to have for the current unit I'm working on until I take the test?

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Remove any older papers and keep them in a file folder at home until the midterm or until the end of the year.

Have the youth ask the teacher what they need to keep and get rid of – make them write it down in their calendar.

This will keep the backpacks lighter and better organized.

Color Coding

Use color coding for the different subjects. For example:

- Social Studies – ALL RED (File folders, pockets, etc.)
- Math - ALL GREEN (file folders, pockets, etc.)
- Ask the student to define what colors go with what subject.

Use Highlighters

Successful Students highlight the things they need to turn in on their calendar.

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