District Information

Assistive Technology Newsletter

Tech Talk

Helping children learn to their full potential

Help Your Child Become Organized

Using AT at Home

Color Coding

Use color coding aides to highlight important information!

Planners

Your child can use a planner to help organize homework, tests, and life in general.

Note Taking Aid

There are many assistive apps to aide your child. Evernote is one of them!

Foster the Development of Organizational Independence Using Assistive Technology

Lack of organization can be a barrier to a student completing work successfully both at school and at home. While it is not taught itself as a subject in school, organization can have a significant impact on student achievement in all subjects. Students may not show their full potential in school because poor organizational skills may limit their ability to track assignments and turn in completed work on time. Organizational skills are necessary to ensure long-term success in future educational and work environments.

Some students need additional supports to build organizational skills. In fact, most of us use tools of one kind or another to stay organized! Parents can help their children who have organizational difficulties by encouraging the use of assistive technology tools (AT) for organization. Organizational AT tools help students do the work! Over time, these assistive tools may be used by students to develop independent strategies for organizing tasks and information, time and materials.

Low-Tech Tools!

AT tools for organization come in many forms. Some tools are simple low tech supports we can buy locally at low-cost or even make at home! For example, elementary students benefit from *Homework Folders* that provide a 'home' for placing unfinished work. Secondary students benefit from *Homework View Binders* that include divider tabs for each of their classes. Homework pages, chapter references or reading stop points can be marked with *Color Flags. Color-coded Visuals* provide maps, schedules, required materials and task expectations for daily classes using pictures or words. Similarly, *Visual Mini Schedules* provide the sequence of steps or requirements for individual work activities. *Timers* set for defined work periods focus students to get work done. As a backdrop, *music or masking noise* can be used to block out distractions. Lastly, we all know how often parents remind children not to walk out the door in the mornings without needed items. A visual *High-Five* posted by the back door that shows or lists the essential five items to be taken each morning puts the child in the 'responsible' driver's seat. Don't forget the 'special' slot for those unusual items such as signed permission slips!

High-Tech Tools!

A wide gamut of organizational tools is made available through computers and electronics devices. New high-tech assistive tools and applications are coming out on the market almost by the day. There are thousands of organizational apps for tablet devices alone! This wide variety of available tools can make deciding on the right solutions for your child difficult and, sometimes, overwhelming. Talking to your child's IEP team will help you determine effective AT solutions for building your child's organizational skills set. A SETT may be suggested as an AT evaluation tool to gain information about your child's skill sets and the tasks required of him/her across environments in order to recommend 'best-fit' tools.

AT Tools Support Organization

- *Microsoft Outlook/GoBinder (Agilix):* Color code calendar categories by subject, set reminders and priority levels
- *Take photos of posted assignments:* Use cell phone/iPod Touch/iPad
- *Google Drive:* Facilitate home-school writing assignments on-line (autosaves!)
- *Livescribe Pen:* Take/record notes in manageable segments for review
- *Video model multiple-step tasks*
- *Time Timer, Pocket Timer, Invisible Clock:* Timers
- *Watch Minder:* Set to vibrate or use different tones for different tasks or reminders, add memos
- *Free on-line graphic organizers:* https://bubbl.us/ http://www.mindmeister.com/ http://freemind.sourceforge.net/wiki/index.php/Main_Page
- *Mark-My-Time:* Digital book light and bookmark
- *Electronic Checklists:* Use an electronic 'to do' list generator http://www.scholastic.com/kids/homework/organizer.htm
- *Boardmaker, Writing With Symbols:* Create picture schedules

Apps Support Organization

- *iPad /GoogleCalendars:* Synch multiple phone and on-line calendars
- *My Homework:* Organize by class
- *Schoolbook:* Launch timetable of classes with teachers and locations
- *Astrid, YadaHome:* Create prioritized task list using speech recognition
- *Picture Planner:* Create event planner
- *First/Then:* Create picture supports
- *iPrompts:* Create timers or visual schedules
- *Pictello* Model step of task w/video
- *Soundnote:* Record a note!
- *Noteability!* Take notes that include webclips and drawings
- *Audio Note:* Record/organize notes
- *Evernote:* Store notes on-line for 'everywhere' access
- *Jotnot:* Scan, record the page
- *Lannotate: Write on scanned document*
- *Genius Scan:* Scan from your pocket
- *DocScan:* Take a pic of homework, bring into Adobe app
- *iCloud:* Create on-line storage for documents and pictures
- *DropBox:* Share documents/pics between school and home using on-line storage box
- *TimeTimer:* Create a visual timer

Parent Questions:

How can I help my child organize her time better and stay on top of assignments?

- Establish a system for doing homework and a time to do it
- Use daily paper/electronic "to do" lists; check-off when complete
- Check assignments and grades weekly to help students avoid getting behind. Many districts provide a web based tool your child can use to find this information.
- Plan long assignments by mapping backwards from the due date
- Use an **Assignment Calculator** to break down tasks and set short-term goals: https://rpc.elm4you.org/
- Plan time required for completing an assignment and set a timer to stay focused and get it done.

My son has trouble finding and focusing on the right information when he needs it! How can I help?

- Help set up a single folder system with homework due on one side and homework completed on the other side
- Use **Dana** all-in-one word processor, note taker and organizer; keep notes, assignments and schedule together
- For efficiency, use the 'Touch it Once' policy. Put papers and assignments in the right spot the first time sorted.
- Use highlighters, highlighting tabs/tape, and colored flags to identify specific information and assignments
- Use reading windows and pocket magnifiers to increase focus on specific information or problems on a page
- Work on a clean desk. Store supplies separately.

How can I help my child keep track of materials at school? Things get lost in the locker!

- Set up a supply container for art supplies and daily work tools
- Use color coded notebooks and plastic pockets to identify specific materials
- Keep a running list of items to be taken home on phone or planner
- Establish a locker management routine:
  - Organize materials from top to bottom based on class schedule
  - Place materials to be taken home on top shelf
  - Post a locker cleaning check-off schedule on door