

HOW TO HELP STUDENTS PLAN THEIR WEEK

Background:

Executive Function: Executive function (EF) is a broad term used to describe the complex processes that people use to accomplish their goals. EF processes include: organizing, prioritizing, shifting flexibly (cognitive flexibility), accessing working memory, and self-monitoring. Success depends on students' ability to plan, organize and prioritize tasks, materials, and information, separate main ideas from details, think flexibly, memorize content and monitor their progress. It is important to help students to understand how they think and learn, and to teach them to use strategies to break down challenging tasks in school and in their daily lives. You can help your students learn to use EF strategies by modeling how to use strategies successfully and helping students reflect on their strategy use.

HOW TO TEACH STUDENTS TO ORGANIZE THEIR TIME

Time management is a critical component of successful organization. Students who do not organize their time often find themselves rushing to complete projects at the last minute, so that they feel overwhelmed. A key to teaching students about organizing their time is to instruct them about systems, such as planners, that they can use to help organize their time. Despite the fact that many schools require students to use planners, students are not taught explicitly how to use them to manage their time effectively. For **weekly planning** consider the following:

- **Production time**—Production time is defined as a pre-specified chunk of time during which all distractions are removed and work is the priority. Production time can be challenging for many students who struggle to maintain focus, have difficulty turning off their phones or the internet, or have very busy schedules. Students should be encouraged to start small by allotting 20-30 minutes for production time per night, and then slowly work up to an hour or more.
- **Using planners and agendas**—Agenda books and planners are a great way for students to review both their monthly schedules and their weekly schedules. Discuss with students how their monthly and detailed day-to-day schedules are critically important for managing time.
- **Personalize calendars**—Students should personalize their weekly calendars. Although teachers may prefer that their students use a paper-and-pencil calendar, students should be encouraged to use the calendar that is most useful for them (e.g., electronic Google calendar, a calendar app).

In the following activities, students employ these strategies to practice short-term planning and then apply them for use in their own planners/calendars.

Note: If pressed for time, skip the discussion in the Metacognitive Activator and go straight to the Guided Instruction and Independent Practice.

DIRECTED LESSON SEQUENCE



METACOGNITIVE ACTIVATOR

1. Begin by having a conversation on how your student plans their work now. Try listing a few assignments. For each assignment, ask them whether it took more or less time than expected, where they completed the work, whether they felt distracted, etc.



GUIDED INSTRUCTION

1. Review the essential components of weekly planning: production time, use of planners and calendar personalization (definitions can be found on the first page).
2. Using the "Hypothetical Weekly Planning" handout and "Week of Nov 17th" calendar, have students practice weekly planning principles.
3. Once students are done, ask them to use a highlighter or colored writing utensil to highlight the production time for this hypothetical student. Where did they place the production time? Why do they think that is the best time to get work done?



INDEPENDENT PRACTICE

1. Students can now use the "Blank Weekly Calendar" handout to sketch out their week.
2. Students should highlight their production time in a different color. (Optional: Students can use different colors for different subjects, have-to's vs. want-to's etc.)
3. Ask students to explain their rationale behind their scheduling. What time of day do they think they can be most productive? How will they address potential distractions?



STRATEGY REFLECTION

1. Don't forget to circle back and reflect on how this strategy went, marking on their calendar what went well and what was different than they expected. Was the student's plan for production time successful? Are some times of day more productive? Are some work environments more productive?
2. Have students create a new weekly calendar, tweaking their production time planning accordingly.
3. As students become more independent with their planning, think of ways they can make their calendar their own (e.g., using their preferred online calendar program or developing their own weekly planning template)

HYPOTHETICAL WEEKLY PLANNING

Your potential commitments for the week of November 17th:

Ultimate Frisbee practice every day after school from 2:30-4:00

Dentist appointment Monday 4:30

Jazz band rehearsal Tuesday 7-9 p.m.

About 30 min. of math homework every night

English - read novel

History - work on paper

Math test Friday

Get together with group for French project - 2 hours

Go skateboarding with friends

Sell old toys on e-bay to make money to buy new video game

WEEK OF NOVEMBER 17TH CALENDAR

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BLANK WEEKLY CALENDAR

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