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Teaching Time Management at School

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Teachers often hear, “My child... never finishes his/ her homework before bedtime... lives in the moment... puts things off until the last minute... is always late getting ready for school... never gets to practice on time... completes one assignment and doesn’t finish any others. Why?” There may be several reasons. Some students are able to come home, finish homework, complete school projects, or practice piano lessons, and pack their book bags for the next school day – unassisted. Then, there are others, especially those who have weaknesses in processing or executive functioning skills, whose lack of time-management skills affects their success both in and out of school.



Children spend as many as seven hours a day at school and some as many as four more hours in after-school care and/or participating in after-school activities. Once arriving at home for the evening, there may be projects and homework to complete, more lessons to practice, etc. Should teachers teach time-management skills? Yes! Even if some students manage their time well, teachers should incorporate, directly and indirectly, simple time management strategies in the daily curriculum. Then, parents should help their children follow through with those strategies at home.

Classroom Time Management Ideas

In the classroom, teachers can incorporate time management skills by:



- **Beginning and ending class periods/ instruction on time.** Structure class periods in short increments: 1-2 minutes for materials prep, 15 minutes for instruction, 15 minutes for follow-up activities, etc. Students will learn to follow a routine at home once they get “a feel” for the amount of time it takes to complete similar tasks.



- **Using a timer or clock as a visual for students (and teachers), and sticking by the time designated for tasks.** Teachers must take into consideration the work habits and needs of all students when allotting time. Have other tasks ready for those that finish before time is up. Ask parents to provide a visual timer/clock for homework assignments as well.



- **Having students predict time needed to complete certain tasks.** Record predictions and compare to the actual time spent. Students will see that their predictions may be longer or shorter than they needed and will learn to adjust their time on similar assignments. If students are “wasting” time daydreaming, etc., seeing that others are working diligently may help them stay focused and complete tasks in a timely manner.

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- **Having students use an assignment book or planner that presents each week at a glance.** Subject blocks should have room and lines to write assignments or short notes for each class period. Many schools provide planners or “agendas” to students (in grades 3-5) to help them learn time management and organization. Teachers should model and monitor daily use of the planner/agenda and coordinate assignments with other teachers (in upper grades) as to not overwhelm students with homework or test prep. Companies producing planners/agendas provide large poster size representations to post in front of the classroom so teachers may model writing assignments correctly and jot down reminders of other important dates.



- **Assigning projects in stages.** For example, have Vocabulary due on Monday, Introduction on Tuesday, Drawings on Thursday, etc.



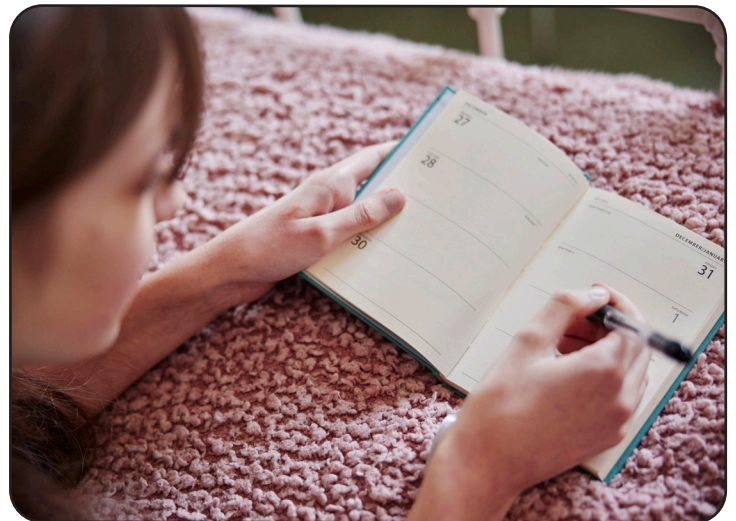
- **Using the planner/agenda to keep open communication with parents.** For students struggling with time management, sign your initials on planners/agendas at the end of the day to confirm assignments have been written correctly and add comments or suggestions. Have parents review and initial the planner/agenda upon assignment completion. Homework is the student’s responsibility; however, parents are instrumental in monitoring the student’s time management at home.



- **Reviewing the planner/agenda, helping students prioritize time within each subject.** For example, study math facts for *five minutes* before completing the problems; read your chapter book for *10 minutes*, etc.



- **Insisting students “check off” completed assignments and reset the timer for the next one.**



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