



CENTRE COUNTY PREVENTION COALITION
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One of the challenges I often hear from parents is that their children struggle with being organized. Our children, just like us, have multiple thoughts going through their brains all the time (e.g. what to wear, who to sit by in class, how to beat the next video game level, etc.). Therefore, organization needs to become not just a “thing” such as a folder or list, but an action. Performing the same action will help to make it automatic and less likely to be forgotten. First, students should have an established routine for after school (e.g. snack, homework, TV, dinner, practice). Then, they should pack their materials after they finish homework so they do not feel rushed in the morning. Parents can become part of the routine by asking about homework assignments and looking at completed work. Parents should not be expected to watch over their child’s shoulders, but to be there for support.

How would you feel if your “in box” was constantly being added to with little or not break in sight. Most people would answer: stressed. When middle school students become stressed, they often do the opposite of most adults. Adults generally work faster to get the job done, but they often will shut down and the result is a decline in work completion. I regularly hear students say that they are overwhelmed. This becomes more of a problem if they are absent or not turning in assignments consistently. To help your child feels less overwhelmed, talk to them about one specific way to organize their material. Some students like to have folders, notebooks, or binders for each subject; others like to have a specific homework folder that they carry to every class. Some students color code their materials so they are easy to locate in their lockers. Some students write lists to remind them what they need for each class.

In addition, students should have a system for keeping or dispensing papers not currently needed in class. For example, students may need to keep all their science packets and a lab notebook for the marking period, but not the year. Many students and parents are not sure what can be discarded, so they keep everything. Keeping papers that are currently not being used for lessons in one location (e.g. large folder at home) may be a more efficient than throwing everything into the locker between books and gym bags. If something is needed as the marking period or semester concludes, it can be located easily. Books, notebooks, and other materials could be set up in the locker by class and time of class. For example, if science is first period then that book could be on the left with the second period class next to it and so on.

Getting through the preteen and teen years is difficult for parents and children. It is important to identify and utilize ways to make these years lead to success. Being organized is helpful in all areas of life.

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