

programs, extracurricular events, and organizations that would benefit him/her.

The tools in this module will help you get the most information possible out of a parent-teacher conference, learn how to identify your student's academic needs, and recognize your student's "developmental assets."

MODULE 2: BASIC ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS (ACTIVITIES 62-69)

The second module contains tools designed to teach students the basic organizational skills necessary for academic success. Colleges report that two of the main causes of poor academic performance among freshmen are inadequate organizational ability and lack of self-discipline. This module targets these two basic needs.

Your job here is to teach your student the first principles of time management. Successful students are able to manage their time so that they can have fun and do well in school. This module contains a few key concepts that will make homework and studying much easier for your student. If you can convince your student to create and follow a weekly schedule, you will greatly increase the chances that she or he will do better in school.

MODULE 3: IMPROVING ACADEMIC SKILLS (ACTIVITIES 70-82)

The third module focuses upon students' academic skills. These tools are simple exercises that will enable students to learn how to take notes, prepare for tests, get help with homework, and locate resources to assist them in specific subject areas.

As a mentor, you should focus mainly upon motivating your student to use the tools provided in this module. Students who can take good notes, create effective outlines, and who know how to study for tests will usually do much better in school than those who do not. The tools provided in this section will help students develop these all-important skills.

Building Academic Success Skills

As an advocate, you can help your student academically in many ways. First and foremost, you can motivate him/her to try harder. The importance of your ability to motivate a young person cannot be overstated. More young people fail for lack of encouragement than for any other reason. The best academic tools and skills are wasted if a young person does not have the desire and the drive to succeed. You can motivate your student best by praising even the smallest accomplishments on a regular basis.

You can also support your student academically by working on specific skills by using the tools in the second and third modules. One of the amazing facts about skill development is that even the smallest changes in a student's behavior can have a tremendous impact on his/her performance. Students who learn to create effective study guides may come to the startling realization that their memories and test scores have dramatically improved!

Finally, you provide support by constantly monitoring your student's progress. Checking students' grades, speaking with teachers periodically, attending parent-teacher conferences, and encouraging students to get involved in extracurricular activities are just a few of the ways mentors can promote a positive connection between students and their schools.

MODULE 1: GETTING HELP FOR STUDENTS

Activity #59: A Plan for Parent-Teacher Conferences

1. Mentors are urged to attend parent-teacher conferences in order to monitor their students' progress and learn new ways to help them.
2. At these meetings, try to learn about after-school programs offered by the school.
3. Here are some guidelines for using the parent-teacher conference to build a team to help your student.
4. The average parent-teacher conference lasts 30 minutes. If there are teachers, parents, a student advocate, and counselors present, you may have little time to ask questions.
5. Therefore you should prepare your questions prior to the meeting.

A Planning Guide for a Parent-Teacher Conference

Your Goals:

1. **Identify** the Nature and Extent of the Performance Problem
2. **Determine** Possible Solutions to the Problem
3. **Assign** Responsibility for Implementing Solutions

1. **Identify the problem.**

- Do we know why the student is not performing up to par?
- Does the student have a problem with conduct or attendance?
- Is he/she prepared for class?
- Does he/she do her homework?
- Does he/she have good study skills and habits?
- Does he/she pay attention in class?
- Is he/she motivated to learn?
- Have any changes occurred in the student's life recently?

Goal: The first objective of the meeting should be to reach a consensus about the types and causes of your student's performance problems.

2. **Determine possible solutions.**

- What resources can be used to address the source of the problem?
- What is the student's attitude about accepting help?
- Will the student follow through?
- How will these resources help the student's performance?

• **Goal:** The second objective of the meeting should be to determine the best ways to resolve the problems.

Activity #77: How To Construct an Outline

1. Creating an outline is one of the best ways to study.
2. Try to demonstrate to your student on a piece of blank paper how to construct an outline using this form.

Basic Outline Form

The basic form of an outline has main ideas listed on the left side.

Main Ideas  **Supporting Information**

- I.
 - A.
 - I.
 - a.
 - (1)
 - (a)
 - (b)
 - (2)
 - b.

Example of a Traditional Outline

- I. Main Idea: Causes of the Great Depression
 - A. Type: Economic
 - 1. Stock market speculation
 - 2. Margin buying
 - 3. Lack of regulation
 - 4. No checks and balances
 - B. Type: Agricultural
 - 1. Drought
 - 2. Poor land management
 - 3. Poor planning
- II. Main Idea: Effects of the Great Depression
 - A. Type: Economic
 - B. Type: Social
 - 1. Starvation
 - 2. Dislocation

Activity #59: A Plan for Parent-Teacher Conferences (continued)

3. Assign responsibilities.

- What do each of us need to do to implement these solutions?
- What things do I need to do to help solve the problem?
- When should we start doing these things?
- What is the best way to do them?

Goal: The third goal of the meeting should be to make certain that the parties responsible for carrying out the solutions are identified.

Benefits of a Parent-Teacher Conference

- The meeting is a good opportunity to offer to establish regular communication with the parents and the school. Ask the parents and the school liaison: "Is there a way I can contact you to tell you what I'm doing?"
- The meeting can determine what steps the student has to take to raise his/her performance.
- The conference may help resolve any conflicts between the teachers and the student.

Activity #60: Identifying Your Student's Needs

Here are a few things you can do to identify your student's specific needs or problems.

1. **Carefully Review Your Student's Report Cards.** You can get a fairly clear picture of your student's school performance by reviewing his/her report cards, both present and past. (These can be obtained from the guidance office.) These reports will tell you about absences, tardies, unexcused absences, suspensions, and grades. Many reports also include specific comments and recommendations by teachers, the most important of which is "student achieving below apparent ability." **Progress reports and report cards are essential for assessing the needs of your student.**
2. **Look For "Red Flags."** As you look over the report, ask yourself a few questions: Is there a problem with *attendance or conduct*? Is the student always *prepared* for class? Is adequate progress being made? Most important of all, are my student's grades what they should be? If you notice any "red flags," you may want to address these issues. Grades are the key performance indicators for your student. A "C" grade point average is considered "satisfactory," but is it sufficient for a college-bound student? "B" students may also be underachieving simply because they could be getting higher grades. **Strictly speaking, students who have below a 2.0 grade point average are underachieving, but this interpretation could be extended to "C" and "B" students as well. We want our students to perform at the highest possible level in order to be prepared to succeed in college.**
3. **Consult With Your Student Advocate and School Liaison.** You have reviewed your student's report card and have noticed a marked drop in his/her grades. The first thing you should do is share your concern with your Take Stock in Children Student Advocate. Your Student Advocate may then recommend that you ask for a Teacher Conference to address the question of your student's needs.
4. **Preparing For The Parent-Teacher Conference.** The parent-teacher conference is intended to inform parents about their child's progress and to address concerns about poor performance, but it can accomplish a great many other things with proper leadership. It is important that both the parents and the student attend this conference. Students need to hear that their performance might jeopardize their chances of receiving a scholarship or succeeding at the college level. Parents should be told what they can do to help their child succeed in school. (For more information about Parent-Teacher Conferences, see Activity #59.)

Activity #6 I: Developing Your Student's Assets

1. The Search Institute has identified 40 "developmental assets" that promote student success. These assets are great guideposts for mentors.
2. These assets are building blocks that support student success in a variety of ways, both directly and indirectly.
3. As you look over this list, you will see that, in nearly every case, an asset is developed through some type of connection among people.
4. For example, you can encourage your student to join a club at school; this enhances a "constructive use of time" asset.
5. The more ideas you have for promoting these assets, the more you will be able to help your student.

KEY DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS

<p>SUPPORT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family Support Good Family Communication Other Adult Relationships Caring School Climate Parental Involvement in School <p>EMPOWERMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Involvement in the Community Service Opportunities for Youth Perception of Safety Family Boundaries Neighborhood Boundaries Adult Role Models Positive Peer Influence <p>CONSTRUCTIVE USE OF TIME</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creative Activities Youth Programs Religious Community Participation Family Time Likes to Read for Pleasure 	<p>COMMITMENT TO LEARNING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achievement Motivation Homework Completion Bonding to School Likes to Read for Pleasure <p>POSITIVE VALUES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concern for Others Integrity Honesty Responsibility Restraint <p>SOCIAL COMPETENCIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning and Decision-Making Skills Resistance Skills Conflict Resolution Skills <p>POSITIVE IDENTITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self Esteem Positive View of the Future Sense of Purpose
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MODULE 2: GETTING STUDENTS ORGANIZED

Activity #62: 10 Time Management Tips

1. Quickly go over the material in this module with your student.
2. Your goal here is to help your mentee identify time-wasters and the best times to study by creating a personalized schedule.

10 Time Management Tips

1. **Make a "to do" list every day**

- Use a planner to keep your daily lists together
- Put the most important things at the top of the list and do them first
- Check off the tasks as you complete them

2. **Use spare minutes wisely**

- Identify all the spare time you have—riding the bus, waiting for dinner
- Plan to use this "downtime" to finish short, easy tasks
- Use downtime as a cushion to get ahead of schedule

3. **Know that it's okay to say "no"**

- If your boss asks you to work the night before the SAT, realize that it's okay to decline
- If you want to go to a party the night before a big test, ask yourself which is more important

4. **Get more bang for your buck**

- Determine when you do your best work
- Schedule your homework accordingly
- Avoid studying late at night when you're tired

5. **Review your notes after each class**

- Use downtime to review notes
- Use frequent reviews to avoid cramming
- Prepare for pop quizzes

6. **Nutrition and Sleep**

- Eat a good breakfast
- Eat the right foods

Activity #62: 10 Time Management Tips (continued)**7. Communicate your schedule to others**

- Ask your parents to cooperate with your schedule
- Tell your friends not to call when you are working
- Turn off the television!

8. Become a taskmaster

- Determine your work schedule first
- Allot times to each activity
- Schedule your recreational activities second
- Eliminate recreational activities that are not important to you

9. Don't waste time agonizing

- Do the hard/unpleasant tasks first so you don't have to dread or worry about them all evening
- Try to train yourself not to like or dislike any specific task—just do them

10. Keep things in perspective

- Set realistic daily goals
- Schedule breaks when you need them
- Adjust your schedule if it isn't working
- Stick to your schedule if it works for you

Activity #63: Time Management Assessment

Help your student fill out this sheet and decide how best to budget his/her time.

1. Decide how much time you need to study.

On the following lines, list your present courses, the grade you wish to attain, and the number of hours you will need to study each week to earn that grade.

COURSE	GRADE I WANT	WEEKLY STUDY HOURS

2. Determine how much time you have to study.

How much time do you spend doing the following?

___ Studying at school ___ Free time activities ___ Studying at home ___ Family activities

_____ Total hours studying per week

Do I need more time to study? Yes ___ No ___

3. Do I need to budget my time?

Do I have a quiet place to study? Yes ___ No ___

What is the best time for me to study? _____

Do I need to set up a schedule? Yes ___ No ___

4. What are the main distractions that I can eliminate?

Activity #64: Identify Your Time Wasters

1. Here is a simple activity sheet designed to help your student recognize "time wasters."
2. Time wasters are those activities that can be eliminated in order to give students more time for important tasks, like homework or studying.
3. You and your student can work on this exercise together.
4. As he/she writes down the five or ten main time wasters, you can do the same.
5. Students who eliminate just one time waster will gain more time in their day.

Time Wasters:**Things I Don't Need to Do Every Day**

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

Activity #65: Using a Daily Planner

1. Students in most schools are provided with planners that enable them to record assignments.
2. You might want to ask your student if he/she has a planner and if you could see it.
3. Here are some questions to think about when you look over your student's planner.
 1. **Has your student written down assignments for all his/her courses?**

Students who do not write assignments in their planner will probably forget about them. Try to make certain there is an assignment for every course the student is taking.
 2. **Do you understand the assignments?**

If you cannot make sense of the assignment, it is reasonable to assume the student's parents won't either.
 3. **Ask your student to explain assignments that appear confusing to you.**

If your student cannot explain the assignment to you, you can reasonably assume he/she does not understand it.
 4. **Ask your student how she/he will be graded on the assignment.**

Knowing how the assignment is weighted will give students a good way to estimate how much time they should spend on it.
 5. **Ask your student to identify the most difficult assignments.**

Have your student put a check next to the ones he/she may need help with.
 6. **Offer to help your student with the difficult assignments.**

Sometimes students are reluctant to ask for help with assignments. By offering your assistance, you are showing that you care and that you think the assignment is important.
 7. **Ask your student to write down the times when he/she will complete specific assignments.**

Use the worksheet in Activity #63 to record your student's homework schedule.
 8. **Use the planner to monitor your student's progress.**

Set up a reward system as an incentive for completing homework assignments.

Activity #66: How Much Time Should Homework Take?

1. Is your student spending enough time on homework?
2. How much time should students devote to homework?
3. We often fail to realize that completing homework assignments properly and on time requires a number of skills that most of us take for granted.
4. It is also important to note that parents and teachers can play a vital role in ensuring that students successfully complete their homework assignments.
5. The table below gives you ballpark estimates for the amount of time that students should spend on their homework.
6. The specific amount and frequency of assigned homework should be based on student needs, interests, abilities, and the content of the instructional program.
7. Mentors can consult with guidance counselors or teachers to get a more accurate figure for their particular students.
8. Ask your student how much time he/she spends per day on homework and compare this number with the appropriate figure given below.

AVERAGE HOMEWORK TIMES	
Grade Level	Approximate Homework Time (Minutes Per Day)
Kindergarten	15
Grades 1, 2, 3	30
Grades 4, 5, 6	45
Grades 7, 8	90
Grade 9	120
Grade 10	130
Grade 11	140
Grade 12	150

Activity #67: 10 Homework Tips for Students

1. Read over these tips with your student.
2. Encourage your student to do as many of them as possible.

10 Basic Homework Tips for Students

1. **Locate a Regular Study Area**

- Create a good study area with all the materials (dictionary, pens, papers, rulers) that you need to do your work.
- Make sure the area is quiet.
- Find a comfortable chair (hard chairs make studying less enjoyable).

2. **List Activities in Order**

- Make a prioritized list of everything you need to do.
- Don't use "I don't know where to start" as an excuse.
- Do the hard stuff first when you have more energy.

3. **Establish Your Study Time**

- Reserving a regular study time is very important.
- Students who work at the same time every day do their work everyday!
- Late night studying can be less productive because you have less energy.

4. **Use Free Time During School**

- If you have free periods during school, use them to get your homework done.
- If you have a long bus ride, try to do some homework on the way home.

5. **Avoid Procrastination**

- If you only do homework when you "feel" like doing it, it will never get done.
- Get homework done ahead of time in order to prepare for tests.

6. **Take Your Time and Do It Right**

- Don't rush just to get finished.
- Try to understand how the material relates to future tests.

7. **Write Down Instructions Carefully**

- Write down instructions in a step-by-step manner, if possible.
- Make certain you understand what the teacher wants.
- Ask questions of the teacher if you don't understand.

Activity #67: 10 Homework Tips for Students (continued)**8. Celebrate Your Achievements**

- Successfully completing homework assignments for a week deserves some type of recognition or award.
- Reward yourself on weekends for achieving this goal.
- Take pride in completing your assignments.

9. Plan Your Week

- Students who can plan their homework schedule will find it much easier to keep on track.
- Planning your homework a week in advance allows you time to enjoy special activities during the week.

10. Organize Your Information

- Keep things in perspective—how much weight does each assignment have?
- Try to recognize why the homework material is important—will it be covered on tests?