

**“Do not train a child to learn by force or harshness, but direct them to it by what amuses their minds, so that you may be better able to discover with accuracy the peculiar bent of the genius of each.”  
-Plato**

In Mel Levine’s book **Ready or Not Here Life Comes**, he states that “A person may or may not be equipped to ride the next wave [of life]...” He goes on to explain how “today, society makes it hard for kids to grow into productive adults.” He warns that in some cases, our children are so programmed and structured with activities that they do not have to learn to “organize themselves or assemble their own routines, establish their own priorities or organize their own time.” We’re living in the information age and today’s students are feeling the effects more than any other generation before them. They deal with more paper volume and access to information than previous generations, and thus workloads have increased. This increase in volume makes a student’s ability to organize and store and retrieve information even more important than ever before. They are also competing with varying levels of technical competency by their peers.

Helping our students to create an effective study environment will significantly help them to be better students and be more prepared for the world of work beyond their school years. Creating a study environment that works for each child (depending on their learning preferences) will help reduce the stresses in home and school while enhancing their ability to retain learned information.

### **Philosophy of getting organized:**

**“This is my way.  
What is your way?  
THE way does not exist.”  
—Friedrich Nietzsche**

Fact #1.

Student disorganization leads to poor grades and poor self-esteem. Life is painful for students who don’t meet the expectations of their parents, teachers and peers. Some kids suffer from learning disabilities and others from disorganization. But, whatever the obstacle, the effects can be devastating to a child’s self-esteem. When children are constantly missing deadlines, constantly searching for school supplies and running late between classes, subsequently beginning to fail some of their subjects, a red flag needs to be raised. Teachers and parents need to become aware that their child is not lazy, but is suffering from a lack of organizational strategies. The root of the problem has nothing to do with the students’ intelligence or

motivation to do well in school; it has to do with their lack of basic organizational skills. As a professional student organizer, it is my desire to help students learn techniques that allow them to work more effectively and increase their productivity....and their self-esteem!

As Mel Levine stated, as students have substantially more work, their days become more fragmented, and there are ever-increasing pressures that lead students to feel that they can't afford to make mistakes. Their schedules are overloaded and changes in family structures mean that they are facing a different and overwhelming world. Our kids' are drowning in paper, handouts, printouts and packets. They lose hours each day to e-mail, instant messaging and the Internet. The number of distractions available to students has increased exponentially. Without some training in paper and time management, they will be lost to handle new paper flow, workloads and schedules.

#### Fact #2

Academic pressure is not only about the grades. High School students are increasingly aware that extracurricular activities are a must to present a well-rounded portfolio to the college of their choice. Extracurricular activities take up precious hours of a student's study time. They may not arrive home until late in the evening, leaving barely enough time to eat dinner and complete homework assignments. If the student is already struggling in school, having to search for the right notebook or call friends for the assignment, it is only then a matter of time before the tinderbox is blown and family dynamics are sent spiraling downward.

two types of organization: cerebral and physical. Cerebral organization allows you to organize information mentally filing it in your brain so that you can access it, manipulate it and to use it to generate new ideas. By addressing time management, cerebral organization is greatly enhanced.

When the student is consumed by frustration, anxiety and tension (F.A.T.) caused by poor time management, every aspect of his day suffers. This concept documented in a PBS documentary by Richard Lavoie coined the term "F.A.T. City". This City becomes the student's environment in which he is imprisoned unless teachers recognize the student's inability to create better time management skills.

Creating a realistic time management framework with the student will allow her/him to see that success is possible.

Physical organization refers to the way you manage your space and your stuff.

So, how do you assess if the student is disorganized? Or conversely, to understand what a disorganized student looks like, it is helpful to contrast one to an organized student. Just what does an organized student look like? Basically, an organized student can find what he needs when he needs it.

- 1 Doesn't carry everything he owns in his backpack
- 2 Can identify and bring home the books, supplies and worksheets he needs in order to complete his homework.
- 3 Can locate his finished homework in class and hand it in on time
- 4 Can study efficiently because he knows when tests are coming up, has set aside enough time to study, and doesn't waste time looking for

The disorganized child exhibits a range of behavior that inhibits his performance in school. The disorganized student:

- 1 Frequently loses papers
- 2 Doesn't hand in assignments on time or at all
- 3 Has a backpack full of crumpled paper and random objects
- 4 Can't break down long-term projects and misses deadlines
- 5 Leaves everything for the last minute
- 6 Disrupts home life with frantic searches, urgent requests for late-night help and anxiety-ridden meltdown.

It is also likely that the disorganized child's bedroom is a disaster area, but be mindful that being messy and being disorganized are two different things. You may not be able to see the floor in your child's bedroom, but if he can find what he needs and hands his work in on time, if he is prepared for test and get good grades, disorganization is not an issue. The room may be a wreck, but there is an underlying structure that enables him to function. On the other hand, if a child has a chaotic bedroom and is exhibiting sign of academic distress, it's likely that disorganization is contributing to the problem.

### Fact #3

The concepts and practices of organization and time management need to be part of every school's curriculum. A student's ability to locate his class notes, bring home the right textbook, and complete and deliver an assignment on time is just as vital to his success in school as his ability to read or write. A student will have a hard time focusing on a lesson if he's busy searching for his notebook. Like a student who has trouble with reading comprehension, the disorganized child will fall further and further behind until he gets help. Many educators have learned to recognize deficiencies in reading, writing and math, but not organization. Organization is seen as instinctive. While some students do have an innate ability to organize themselves, many don't. The disorganized student rarely gets the help he needs. When organization IS taught in a school setting, generally speaking, an adult tries to impose her own ideas about organizing on a student, even if the ideas are not suited to the child's particular learning style (Visual, Auditory or Kinesthetic). A student may learn better visually than verbally, or think alphabetically and not by color. Teachers who are not trained in organizational techniques miss many of the learning clues. Tailoring lesson, products and modalities for each child is what a professional student organizer is equipped to do.