Research Guide
College and Career Competency:
Organization & Time Management

Definition:

Organization can be defined as the ability to prioritize and structure tasks, resources, and time (Naglieri & Goldstein, 2013). For students, organization is made up of skills in four areas (Abikoff & Gallagher, 2008): 1) tracking assignments, 2) managing materials, 3) managing time, and 4) planning tasks.

Time management is considered to be a particularly important part of organization and **self-regulated** learning (Eilam & Aharon, 2003; Zumbrunn, Tadlock, & Roberts, 2011). Based on the literature, time management can be defined as "behaviors that aim at achieving an effective use of time while performing certain goal-directed activities" (Claessens, van Eerde, Rutte, & Roe, 2007, p. 262).

Essential Components for Students:

1. Plan and prioritize tasks to get things done on time.
2. Manage your environment, resources, and time.

Research:

- Organization is an important part of effective study skills, which in turn are fundamental to academic competence (Gettinger & Seibert, 2002). Good organizational skills enable all students to maximize their study time and adapt their schedules, making it more likely that they will have sufficient time to complete their work.
- Organization, including time management, is an important part of **self-regulation** and self-regulated learning, particularly during the initial planning phase (Zumbrunn et al., 2011). A study of 9th grade students conducted by Eilam and Aharon (2003) showed that students who demonstrate strong self-regulated learning behaviors manage their time and achieve at a higher level than students with weak self-regulated learning behaviors.
- College students who were trained in time management as part of self-regulated learning training over a five-week period showed significant decreases in procrastination, as well as improvements in math skills (Schmitz & Wiese, 2006; Zimmerman, 2008).
- Organizational skills play an important part in students' post-secondary success. Indeed, studies show that students who fail to develop solid organizational skills before graduating from high school face an increased risk of underperforming in college or dropping out of college entirely. Simmons (2006) conducted a survey of faculty and administrators at the collegiate level and discovered that many of them cite poor organizational skills as one of the main reasons students do not receive terminal degrees. College students with ADHD, as LaCount, Hartung, Shelton, and Stevens (2015) reveal, are particularly at risk in this regard unless offered a suitable intervention. To remedy this skill deficit among students, post-secondary institutions across the United States, including Brown University, Rutgers University, and a host of community colleges,

have increasingly started to offer courses, workshops, and student support resources and services to assist students with organization.

- Organizational skills instruction has been shown to bolster student performance from both a behavioral and academic standpoint. Boller (2008) notes that "Direct instruction in organizational skills, study skills, time management, and behavioral regulation can be easily interwoven into [students'] daily lessons" (p. 171) regardless of the subject being taught. Bakunas and Holley (2004) note that requiring students to organize their supplies and practice organizational behaviors like updating assignment notebooks daily in the classroom can also have a positive impact on their academic achievement. Research by Anderson, Munk, Young, Conley, and Caldarella (2008) shows that students who are taught to set goals, self-monitor their work, and sign behavioral contracts perform better academically than students who do not receive this instruction.

- Many students struggle with organization. However, as a study by Langberg, Epstein, and Graham (2008) shows, students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) tend to have more difficulty mastering organizational skills and productive work routines than students who have not been diagnosed with ADHD. To address this, Gallagher, Abikoff, and Spira (2014) developed an intervention, the Organizational Skills Training (OST) program, to assist students with developing their organization, time management, and planning skills. After over a decade of research, including a pilot OST implementation, Abikoff, Gallagher, and Rosenblatt (n.d.) concluded that students involved with their InCommand training program showed higher confidence in their organizational skills, demonstrated higher academic functioning, received higher ratings in their academic standing, and improved their relations with their families.

- Students with learning disabilities oftentimes require interventions to assist them with developing the organizational skills necessary for academic success. Research by Bryan and Burstein (2004) indicates that 56 percent of students with learning disabilities find it particularly difficult to complete homework. The authors primarily attribute such difficulties to organizational deficits among the students. Hampshire, Butera, and Bellini (2011) concur, asserting that students with learning disabilities clearly struggle to manage homework tasks and as a result, suffer academically regardless of their best intentions or efforts to succeed. According to the researchers, educators teaching students organizational strategies and skills within the context of homework are best served by partnering with parents. Such partnerships, according to Hampshire et al. (2011), can lead to better grades for students and ease tensions related to self-management at home.

- Students' time management skills have a significant impact on their success in post-secondary learning environments. A study by Kearns and Gardiner (2007) indicates that university students who employ time management practices tend to feel better about their studies and perform higher than students who do not exercise time management practices. Research by MacCann, Fogarty, and Roberts (2012) explains that time management can be particularly important for students who are attending college part-time. Basila's (2014) work outside of traditional, face-to-face classes shows that students' time management skills have an especially powerful impact on their ability to succeed in online courses and ultimately serve as a predictor of their achievement in such courses.

- According to research by Mitchell, Skinner, and White (2010) and Robles (2012), organization and time management skills are extremely important in the workplace. Along with other important soft skills, including **communication** and **ethics**, these skills are critical for entry-level success on the job.

- Boller (2008), Zumbrunn et al. (2011), and other researchers contend that teachers should provide lessons on time management or otherwise support the development of time-related

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self-regulated learning behaviors among their students throughout the school curriculum. In addition to providing students with strategies for organizing and regulating the time needed to complete tasks, self-regulated learning also affects student motivation, responsibility, and other areas essential for student success (English & Kitsantas, 2013; Zimmerman, 2008).

- Time management can affect an individual's sense of well-being. As Burrus, Jackson, Holtzman, Roberts, and Mandigo (2013) and Kearns and Gardiner (2007) illustrate, students who understand time management strategies and exhibit sound time management skills are often able to lessen the amount of stress involved with schoolwork and academic achievement. Relatedly, research by Jex and Elacqua (1999) indicates that workers who show an aptitude for time management tend to experience fewer stressors, less burnout, and better physiological and psychological health than workers who lack time management abilities.

- Good time management depends on an accurate prediction both of how long a task will take and how much time has passed while working on a task. Research conducted with 48 adults found that individuals who perceive themselves as good time managers will accurately estimate how much time is required for a future task, but will underestimate how much time has actually passed. In contrast, those who do not perceive themselves as good time managers will either over- or underestimate time required for future tasks, and time that has passed (Francis-Smythe & Robertson, 1999).

Assessments:

Please note that the assessments listed here reflect what is currently being used in multiple disciplines to measure organizational skills. Not all of these measures will be easily used in classroom settings or by classroom teachers. However, the general knowledge that these measurements exist and the ability to review particular items from these assessments is valuable.

- The Organization Skills Self-Assessment (Nugent, 2014) is a scoring rubric and personal reflection tool for adolescents. The rubric contains five criteria for organization: level of preparedness, personal organization, time management, use of organizational tools, and course completion. A sample item is "I am usually good at making a work plan and figuring out the order in which to complete assigned tasks so they are done on time." This link will automatically download the the self-assessment as a Word document: http://jennugent.weebly.com/uploads/2/6/6/1/26610267/ organization_skills_self_assessment.doc.

- The Learning and Study Strategies Inventory-High School Version (LASSI-HS) is a self-scoring, 76-item assessment for measuring students' recognition and use of study skills (Weinstein & Palmer, 1990). LASSI-HS utilizes a 5-point Likert scale across ten domains which encompass various components crucial to academic success. LASSI-HS may be used as a diagnostic tool to help students better understand their relative strengths and weaknesses when it comes to skills such as time management and concentration, as well as a means for educators to assist students with addressing their skill deficits. For additional details on LASSI-HS, see http://www.hhpublishing.com/_assessments/LASSI-HS/scales.html. A complete user's guide for LASSI-HS may be accessed at http://www.hhpublishing.com/_assessments/LASSI-HS/LASSI-HS_Manual.pdf.

- The Time Management Questionnaire (TMQ) is a 35-item instrument that gauges young adults' attitudes towards short-term planning, long-term planning, and time (Britton & Tesser, 1991). The TMQ uses a 5-point response scale to measure seven components, including prioritizing goals, generating tasks and subtasks, scheduling tasks, and carrying out tasks. Items include, "Do you plan your day before you start it?" Further examples of the items can be found in Trueman and Hartley (1995), available from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED417667.pdf.

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- The Time Structure Questionnaire (TSQ) is a self-reporting tool that measures participants' perceptions regarding the organization and purpose of time (Bond & Feather, 1988). The TSQ employs a 7-point response scale across 26 items and can be used with individuals ranging from adolescents to older adults. Items include, "Do you ever have trouble organizing the things you do?" A copy of the TSQ is available through Brandeis University at this link: http://www.brandeis.edu/roybal/docs/TSQ_website_PDF.pdf.
- An informal 15-question self-test on time management is available at https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newHTE_88.htm (Mind Tools, n.d.). It includes questions like "I am stressed about deadlines and commitments," which are rated from "not at all" to "very often."

Instructional Practices:

- Garcia Winner's (n.d.) article "10 Steps to Foster Organization: Homework and Beyond" describes how teachers can assist students with the development of their executive functioning and organizational skills. From early steps in the process, such as "Clearly define what needs to be done," to later steps, such as "Prioritize and plan daily," Garcia Winner provides practical methods and a clear structure for teaching organization in the classroom. See the full article at https://www.socialthinking.com/Articles?name=10%20Steps%20to%20Foster%20Organization%20Homework%20and%20Beyond.
- From the New York City Department of Education – INQUIRE (2008), Organizational Skills Instruction (OSI), http://nycdoeit.airws.org/pdf/osi.pdf involves "teaching students how to manage their time and schedules, school materials and supplies, class and homework papers, daily and long-term assignments as well as how to set up a study space." Based on research by Anderson et al. (2008), OSI provides students with a structure for practicing organizational skills. The structure includes such tasks as organizing a notebook and using a school planner.
- The Missouri Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support (MO SW-PBS) website provides Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions focused on students' organizational skills. These include a presentation (http://pbismissouri.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/4.11_Organizational_Skills_for_Tier_2_3.pdf) on an intervention designed to "facilitate student organization and promote student ability to sort and store paperwork, identify assigned homework, and locate completed assignments when they are due" (Missouri Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support, 2012).
- Gallagher, Abikoff, and Spira's (2014) Organizational Skills Training (OST) is an intervention designed to help students with ADHD develop sound organizational skills. The intervention addresses four areas: tracking assignments, managing materials, time management, and task planning. Abikoff and Gallagher's (2008) assessment, Children's Organizational Skills Scale (COSS), serves as a screener to determine if students should receive OST training. Additional information on OST is available at http://www.guilford.com/books/Organizational-Skills-Training-for-Children-with-ADHD/Gallagher-Abikoff-Spira/9781462513680/authors.
- An effective form of time management training includes the use of time management forms and diary entries, where students discuss procrastination and how to overcome it. Students also categorize how they spent their time, for example, leisure or study (Schmitz & Wiese, 2006).
- The School of Education at the College of William and Mary has created a useful list of tips (https://education.wm.edu/centers/ttac/resources/articles/learndisable/ithinkididit/index.php) for helping students with learning disabilities become better organized (Ito, 1999).
- An organizational skills resource package made available by the Orangeville District Secondary School (n.d.) in Ontario, Canada offers educators a group of tools to help students understand

and develop effective organizational habits. The resource package includes a student questionnaire, three-part learning exercise, and a list of organizational tips or discussion points. This link will automatically download the resources package as a Word document: www.ugdsb.on.ca/uploadedFiles/odss/guidance/Organizational Skills Resource Package.doc.

- The West Virginia Department of Education's *Learning, Individualized Needs, Knowledge and Skills* program (LINKS) offers educators a variety of lesson plans for helping students develop skills necessary for success. For students in grades 5-8, plans are available at http://wvde.state.wv.us/counselors/links/advisors/ms-lesson-plans.html, and for students in grades 9-12, plans are available at http://wvde.state.wv.us/counselors/links/advisors/lesson-plans.html. These include lesson plans specifically focused on helping students develop organizational skills; the Improving Organizational Skills lesson plan (West Virginia Department of Education, n.d.-a) for students in 10th grade can be automatically downloaded as a Word document via this link: http://wvde.state.wv.us/counselors/links/advisors/documents/10.16_000.doc. LINKS also provides a survey for students to self-rate their organizational skills (West Virginia Department of Education, n.d.-b); this link will automatically download the Word version of the survey http://wvde.state.wv.us/counselors/links/advisors/documents/R10.16.1-Organizational-Skills-Survey.doc.

- The West Virginia Department of Education's LINKS also provides lesson plans specifically focused on helping students develop time management skills, with activities such as creating time management plans or schedules. An excerpt from the Time Management lesson plan (West Virginia Department of Education, n.d.-c) for 9th grade students is provided below; this lesson plan can be automatically downloaded as a Word document by clicking this link: http://wvde.state.wv.us/counselors/links/advisors/documents/Lesson9.3_CFWV.doc.

- The PBS-sponsored website *It's My Life* introduces school-age children to a range of practices which promote time management. The website offers students a variety of educational content, including articles, videos, and games. Time management topics (http://pbskids.org/itsmylife/school/time/index.html) available to students include "Have-To's, Want-To's, and Goals" and "Choose Priorities" (CastleWorks, 2005).

- Macmillan English has created a group of resources to teach adolescents a range of life skills, including organization and time management, available at http://www.macmillanenglish.com/life-skills/time-management/ (Macmillan Education, 2015). Several lesson plans, such as "Open Mind: Managing Distractions," deal with real-world time management dilemmas in an engaging manner. Here's an example from the lesson (Macmillan Education, 2015):

  Macmillan also offers games and other content to enhance the learning experience.

- The University of Kentucky's *The Successful Person's Guide to Time Management* (http://www2.ca.uky.edu/agc/pubs/fcs7/fcs7101/fcs7101.pdf) addresses the importance of time management and offers a number of strategies for acquiring and practicing time management skills (Fetsch, Flashman, & Bradley, 2008). Along with a discussion of time management, *The Successful Person's Guide to Time Management* also provides a series of assessments to help individuals examine their behaviors and adopt the practices necessary for effective time management.

- The State of Washington Career and College Readiness site provides educators with some helpful teaching resources on time management geared towards students in grades 6-12., The 6th grade lesson plan on "Time Management" (Career Guidance Washington, 2014) can be automatically downloaded as a Word document via this link: http://www.k12.wa.us/SecondaryEducation/CareerCollegeReadiness/CareerGuidanceWA/Grade7/7-5_TimeManagement.docx. The lesson plan for 7th – 9th grade on "Planning and Follow Through" (Career Guidance Washington, 2013) can be accessed as a PDF via this link: http://www.k12.wa.us/SecondaryEducation/CareerCollegeReadiness/Nav101Lessons/Grades9-10/Gr9-10_L8_MapFuture.pdf. For more lesson plans for students in 6th grade, see http://www.k12.wa.us/SecondaryEducation/CareerCollegeReadiness/CareerGuidanceWA/Grade6.aspx (Career Guidance Washington, 2014); additional tabs are available from that page for students in 7th – 12th grade.

- The research from Burrus et al. (2013) and Francis-Smythe and Robertson (1999) suggests that teachers can develop students' time management skills by helping them make good estimates of how long a task will take and how much time has passed while working on a task. A useful strategy would be to have students reflect on prior assignments and the amount of time involved in completing tasks. Then, for new assignments, have students estimate how long it will take them to complete an assignment and keep a log of time spent on tasks. At the conclusion, have the students reflect on any discrepancies between estimated and actual task time. Teachers can also time in-class assignments, and then ask students what they perceived as amount of time passed. The class can then discuss variations in perceived time passed compared to actual time.

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