

## **These Six Tools Build Success Skills**

### **for High School & Beyond**

If I had to choose **one key to success in high school, organization** would top the list. This complex combination of thinking skills also hit employers' recent list of the **top three skill sets job candidates must have**.

### **Strike Now: New brain development Stage offers opening**

Adolescent physical development between 14 and 24 years primes the brain to build new pathways. Take advantage of this stage when our **Executive Function skills**—planning, decision making, organizing, problem-solving—**swiftly expand**. The **brain uses daily activity** and **challenge to build the physical structure** that supports this uniquely human capacity to think.

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*Evolution has made our brains masters of using resources:*

- *When work is easy, our brain builds weak information pathways to support it.*
  - *When work is challenging, our brains add extra and faster pathways to do the work.*
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### **Use your protective instinct sparingly**

While we all want to protect and ease the lives of those we love, I **urge caution when clearing obstacles** for your student.

- **If you make it easy, your student's brain won't build resources** to support complex thinking.
- **If you step aside, coach, and let your student do** the actions and the problem-solving (with hints from you), you will increase your student's **capacity for staying organized and solving problems**.

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## Consider these five tools to help your student succeed:

**Stand to the Side**—Habits won't form if you do the thinking and action for them.

For example, don't write lists or notes; **avoid demonstration**. Put the pen in his hand and ask leading questions that force his brain into active participation.

Try these:

- “What’s due this week?” “What about outside class, for sports, clubs, plans with friends, etc.?”
- “What must happen this afternoon so that you are ready for school and practice tomorrow?”
- “What’s the schedule tomorrow? What needs to go in your bag for those activities? What are the key pieces of equipment that you must have to participate?”
- “Which of your chores still need to be done?” or “Please write down these things that I need you to do this afternoon.”
- “What supplies will you need for ... (soccer, robotics, etc.)?”
- “Do you have plans with friends? How will that change your schedule or what you need?”

Continue to **"walk" next to him as he moves through the tasks**.

- Don't ask, “Do you have your cleats?” Ask if he has everything he needs and ask him to look again if you have doubts.
- Don't remind him what's on tomorrow's schedule; ask him to check the schedule himself.

Judge what the real damage will be, and then **let him suffer the consequences of failing to plan**. That will **activate his brain** to build capacity to be ready next time.

With this hands-off approach, you also will find that your teen develops tools to suit his unique needs and preferences. **He will find what works for him**.

Don't overthink the **impact of mistakes on college plans**:

- Universities look for students who face obstacles and grow from them.
- Admissions personnel know that learning teens will make mistakes.

- They will look for evidence that the candidate learned to face problems and challenges **on their own**.

**Use Our Technology**—Sit with your student while she checks our student-data systems for missing assignments (for example, Synergy, Teams Assignments, Teams messaging and chats).

- While the systems offer powerful tools for students and families to monitor progress, your student must develop the habit of checking for herself and shouldering the responsibility for missteps.
- **Go through the motions with your teen until the habit sets in.**
- Again, **ask questions that make her think**. Don't tell her how to do it.

You also can use these check-ins for conversation about the future. Help your student think about:

- which subjects spark her interest,
- which challenge her most, and
- which she might study further in her search for a career.

**Use One Note**—Teachers generally post assignments and schedules in OneNote, which students can access from their Bellevue Schools laptop.

If your teen **struggles with meeting deadlines and completing work**:

- Sit beside him to look at each class.
- Continue to ask questions that lead him through a routine.
- In time, that **routine becomes a habit**.

**You don't need to know OneNote** to make this work. Ask questions. Allow your student to demonstrate software. Prompt them to use [district software help guides](#) if needed.

**Map Out a Schedule**—Help your student create a schedule. Map out the days in as much detail as she needs.

- It works for some students to simply list the major activities for each day.

- Other students may need to start building their thinking skills with an hourly appointment calendar that helps them **learn to begin homework and chores before the day slips past** them.
- Some students can manage assignment deadlines in OneNote.
- Others need deadlines transferred to their calendar.
- Here's a [blank Excel week-long schedule sheet](#) that may help.

**Plan Every Night**—Help your student develop the habit of checking her calendar every evening.

- Looking ahead at least one day, maybe several, helps her learn to manage her time and tasks.
- With your coaching, she will know to **get started with large projects and will see overlapping demands early** enough to get everything done.
- Remember to ask questions rather than interpreting her calendar for her. A habit can only develop when she goes through the routine herself.

**Let Them See Your Confidence**—Organizational skills are complex, and many teens struggle because of their developing brains.

- As you work through each of these strategies, show your confidence in your teen.
- Help him to **recognize the skills he already has** and to **plan tools that support him** as he develops. (Remember [What Went Well](#).)
- Help your student to **avoid frustration and to persevere** by telling her that her brain will create more capacity for these.
- Genetics make these skills easier for some teens to develop, but **everyone can gain strength with the right tools and a plan**.
- Remind your teen **not to compare her skills to other students**.
- While this is a strength area for some students, your teen has her own strengths.
- As her brain continues to develop, **she will find hers**.