

Best Practices for Helping Students to Stay on Task

January 13th 2017

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Take a moment to think about your students:

- ▶ Do you have students who are often late to classes or office hours?
- ▶ Do you have students who put off projects until the last minute?
- ▶ Do you have students who lose things and live with piles of papers in their backpack?
- ▶ Do you have students who miss deadlines?

If you are nodding “yes,” then you’ve come to the right place.



What are the ways in which executive functioning impacts students?

► General Difficulties:

- Planning
- Organizing
- Scheduling
- Completing tasks at all or on deadline

► School related difficulties:

- Organizing materials and setting schedules
- Misplace papers, reports, and other school materials
- Difficulty keeping track of personal items
- Keeping their paperwork organized
- Seeking help
- Working in groups



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The Concern and the Reason

The Concern

- ▶ Forgets to bring the right books and supplies home or to school
- ▶ Their desk, locker, backpack, and notebook are in disarray.
- ▶ They forget deadlines and scheduled activities.

The Reason

- ▶ The neurological process → organize, prioritize, and analyze is called "executive function"
- ▶ Attention deficit disorder (ADHD) and related neurobiological → impaired executive function skills
- ▶ Due to abnormal dopamine levels in the frontal lobe of the brain

Research Data

- ▶ **70% of students** who took one or more remedial reading courses in college did not attain a college degree or certificate within eight years of enrollment. (U.S. Department of Education)
- ▶ High school students are **not taught study skills and time management skills** (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983).
- ▶ A lack of attention to time management and study skills is **one of the most frequent causes of problems** for first-year students. (Rethinking College Readiness, David T. Conley)



Research Data

- ▶ Students scoring low on executive functioning would **benefit from learning techniques to manage time and to redirect attention and eliminate interfering thoughts** (Stone, 2000).
- ▶ **Time management skills have been related to academic achievement** (Lahmers & Zulauf, 2000)
- ▶ **Instruction in time management can also be linked to academic success** (Manalo, 1996).





Psychosocial impact

- ▶ Have low self-esteem
 - ▶ From frustrating and demoralizing experiences in their earlier schooling
- ▶ Called stupid or lazy in the past, even by their teachers
- ▶ Frequently put into classes with "slow learners" or with students who had other academic problems

Pressure on Students

What can professors do?

- ▶ We focus a lot on what the students can do differently
- ▶ How can professors help these students?



High School vs. College

High school

- ▶ Have an aide
- ▶ Given less work to do
- ▶ Extensions given all the time
- ▶ Teachers frequently structured your assignments
- ▶ Classes filled your day

College

- ▶ Less in-class time
- ▶ More work outside of class
- ▶ Great deal of freedom and flexibility
- ▶ Expected to do much more of their goal-setting independently



High school vs. College

New College Students Depend on Professors

- ▶ Students are surprised at the level of course rigor or pace
- ▶ Think professors will initiate interactions if there is a problem
- ▶ Think professors will check in on them

Teachers and Professors

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Checks if you completed homework▶ Have been trained in teaching methods▶ Provide you with info if you miss class▶ Monitor class attendance | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Do not always check homework, but expect you to know material▶ Trained as experts in their areas of study▶ Expect you to get info from missed classes from a classmate▶ Do not always formally take roll. |
|---|--|

High School

College

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How are you
currently helping
students with
Time Management?

Time Management Skills

Assignments

- Clearly written expectations of all assignments
 - In syllabus and in person
- Include an example of the assignment
- Include a calendar version of the due dates
- Remind about upcoming due dates
- Send email reminders the week before
- Time for questions about upcoming assignments, so everyone can hear
- Give the assignment way in advance

Ethnic Cultures of the US Calendar

Today | December 2009 | Print | Week | Month | Agenda

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
29 Applications 3 & 4; Final Review: Post- Lessons & Think P	30	Dec 1	2 Think Fasts 10 & 1	3 Cumulative Project	4 Applications 3 & 4;	5
6 Lessons & Think P; Prompts 8 & 9, Ap	7	8 Applications 3 & 4;	9 Think Fasts 12 & 1	10	11 Prompts 8 & 9, Ap	12
13 Final: Opens	14	15 Prompts 8 & 9, Ap	16 4pm Final: Closes	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31	Jan 1	2

Events shown in time zone: Pacific Time

Google Calendar



Time Management Skills

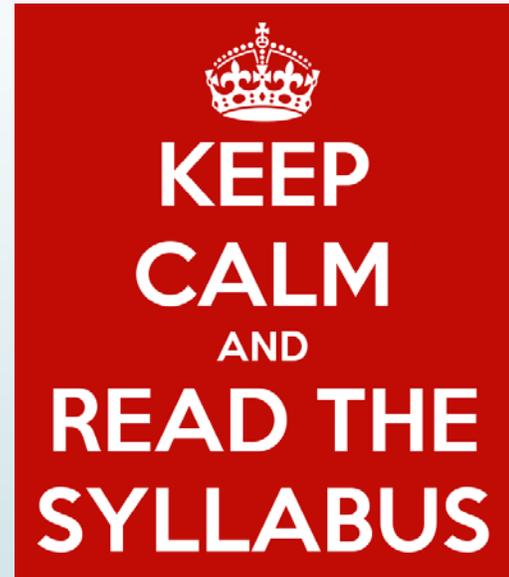
Calendars/Student Planners

- ▶ Encourage students to put in their planner:
 - ▶ due dates of projects
 - ▶ tests
 - ▶ class trips
 - ▶ other important activities and events
- ▶ Assist students, show them some ideas
- ▶ Extra credit if students show you a filled out calendar
- ▶ Routinely ask partners seated together to check each other's planner/calendar that everything is accurately recorded.
- ▶ Keep a master monthly calendar posted in the classroom or website
- ▶ Provide students with a single- or double-page monthly calendar for important dates they can see at a glance

Time Management Skills

Syllabus

- ▶ Include ALL assignments, page numbers, due dates, etc.
- ▶ Presented it both verbally and visually
- ▶ Create a “to do” list for students that can easily be checked off when completed
- ▶ **Highlight** all the due dates in one color. Make the due dates stick out
- ▶ Give examples of how long it may take some students, few days or few hours
- ▶ *“There is the DRC, this service is for students with disabilities to get academic accommodations. Any student who had an IEP/504 plan or attended the resource room might qualify for these services. Example of some accommodations are extra time on exams, and notetaking support. They also provide Learning Disability testing for students who are interested in being tested.”*
- ▶ Include example of some assignments



Time Management Skills

Schedules

- ▶ Send an Email 2 weeks Before Class Starts
 - ▶ Attach syllabus
 - ▶ Allows them to see what that class is like, and bring questions to the 1st class
 - ▶ Remind them to get the book and any other supplies
- ▶ Explain course content and requirements clearly
- ▶ Point out any changes in the schedule
 - ▶ Email
 - ▶ Write on the Board
 - ▶ Say it, over and over





Time Management Skills

Long-Term Projects

► Provide:

- handout explaining project guidelines
- its timeline
- scoring rubric

► Breaking projects into smaller, manageable increments

- Assign separate due dates for stages of the project
- (getting a topic approved, outline submitted, research notes/resources listed, turning in first draft, etc.).
- Can monitor progress

► Make sure students have access to needed materials

- Check in about it
- Textbook not in the bookstore
- Website not working
- Don't own a computer – refer to the TLC program

► Post those due dates and frequently refer to them as reminders



Time Management Skills

- **Establish an Efficient System for grading**

- If online, show what each is grade. Post the grade
- How much is an assignment worth?
- If they missed a few, which should they focus on to making up?

- **The Power of Incompletes**

- **To do list**

- Modeling: Establish daily a list of topics/activities
 - Check off when done
- Make a To Do List in syllabus

- **Praise and Positive reinforcement**

- Use frequent praise and positive reinforcement



POP QUIZ

What is one thing you can do to help students with time management?

Discuss with a partner...

Procrastination

Why do students procrastinate?

- ▶ List:
 - ▶ a lack of motivation
 - ▶ deficiencies in self-regulation
 - ▶ external locus of control
 - ▶ perfectionism
 - ▶ fear of failure
 - ▶ low self-efficacy
 - ▶ low self-confidence
- ▶ Example: A last-minute email from a student with a question
- ▶ Overall - It happens
 - ▶ Might be their style



Procrastination Study



- ▶ Faculty researchers asked 200 students
- ▶ About an important assignment from the previous semester
- ▶ Average Amount of Time Given to Complete → 6.5 weeks
- ▶ Students were asked how many days before the due date they started the assignment
- ▶ Median Response → three weeks
- ▶ **On average, students used about half the available time to complete the assignment**

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Procrastination Study

“It’s easy to lay the procrastination problem on students and certainly they must own a big part of it. But this research indicates that professors are not powerless. There are ways assignments can be designed and courses structured that can decrease the amount of procrastination.”

What did the study find?.....

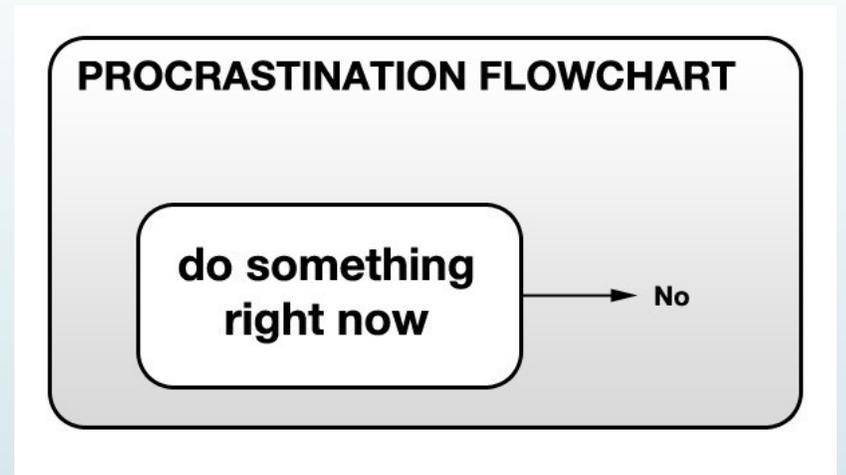
Procrastination

Interest in the assignment

- ▶ Giving student choices
 - ▶ Essay
 - ▶ Presentation
 - ▶ Video
 - ▶ Poster board
 - ▶ Exam

Clarity of instructions

- ▶ Difficulty of the assignment → did not affected motivation
- ▶ Clarity of instructions did
- ▶ If students were not confused they were more motivated to get started



Procrastination

Skill variety

- Assignments with a variety of skills → more interesting
- More effective at motivating students to begin work earlier

Rewards and incentives

- Students started earlier → with rewards and incentives
- These can include:
 - points
 - simply encouraging written comments on work in progress





Procrastination

Interdependence

- ▶ Breaking large assignments down into interdependent parts
- ▶ Got students working on larger assignments earlier
- ▶ Kept them working more consistently
 - ▶ Require:
 - ▶ outline for essay,
 - ▶ topic idea
 - ▶ Student made study guide

Social norms

- ▶ Set the norm for promptness and timely completion
 - ▶ Likely to procrastinate were less likely to do so
- ▶ If norms that validate procrastination were established, they influenced even those not prone to procrastinate.



How to Refer a Student to the DRC?

- ▶ Do not ask the student directly if they have a disability.
- ▶ Use the **class schedule** on page 13-14, to show contact information for: **Learning Center, Career Center, Counseling Center, Transfer Center, Bookstore, EOPS/CARE/CalWorks/Formal Foster Youth, Health Center, Psychological Services, International Students, TRiO SSS, Veterans Services** etc.. You might say, "I want to share some information on campus services that you might find helpful."
- ▶ When you mention the DRC, you could ask the student, ***"Are you aware of the DRC office? The DRC provides a number of services for students with a variety of disabilities."***



How to Refer a Student to the DRC?

- ▶ Ultimately it is up to the student
- ▶ Do not force a student to walk over the to DRC.
- ▶ Please do not ask the student to provide you any disability related documentation.
- ▶ Examples of what to say:

“There is the DRC, this service is for students with disabilities to get academic accommodations. Any student who had an IEP/504 plan or attended the resource room might qualify for these services. Example of some accommodations are extra time on exams, and notetaking support. They also provide Learning Disability testing for students who are interested in being tested.”

Organization Skills

"Part of the problem is that schools don't teach physical organization."

Make all handouts same color

- Can see the distinct color
- Match all my binders and notebooks for that class
- Easier to find and grab

Have a hole-punch handy

- Three-hole punch all your handouts to easily insert into school binder.





Organization Skills

Extra credit for showing how to organize paperwork

- ▶ Extra credit
 - ▶ In front of the class they show how they stay organized
 - ▶ Have them explain how they organize their binders, folders, and/or notebooks
- ▶ Students learning from peers
- ▶ Everyone is different
 - ▶ It is okay if a student's system doesn't look like yours
 - ▶ Different students have different comfort levels for chaos.
 - ▶ Some students can make it work with a system that would make others cringe, but if it's working for them...

Organization Skills

Be a Good Role model

- Be organized
- Stay to your word
- Stay with the syllabus
- Arrive early, start on time, and end on time
- Return work in a timely manner





Helping Students Stay Focus in Class

Lecture Practices

- ▶ After 10 – 20 mins → assimilation falls of rapidly
- ▶ Techniques:
 - ▶ **Lecture/ Questioning** → Talk 10 mins, pause, ask pre planned question
 - ▶ **Surveys with Exemplifier** → Pause, ask directly for a show of hands
 - ▶ **Turn To Your Partner And Pause** → Ask each to turn to a partner and discuss
 - ▶ **Explication de Texte** → Reading and analyzing passage aloud
 - ▶ **Guided Lecture** → Student listen to lecture 15 mins without taking notes, then spend 5 mins recording what they recall, then small group compare what they remember
 - ▶ **Immediate Mastery Quiz** → Last few minutes of class take a test
 - ▶ **Story Telling** → Stories allow a listener to seek an experience of being alive in them

Helping Students Stay Focus in Class

Breaks

- ▶ Have breaks in class, about 15 mins
- ▶ Ask students what they prefer

Be creative in your lessons.

- ▶ Move around while talking
 - ▶ Moving around and standing near the student will help
- ▶ Use bright visuals but keep it simple
- ▶ Use drama when teaching
 - ▶ Varying tones when reading aloud



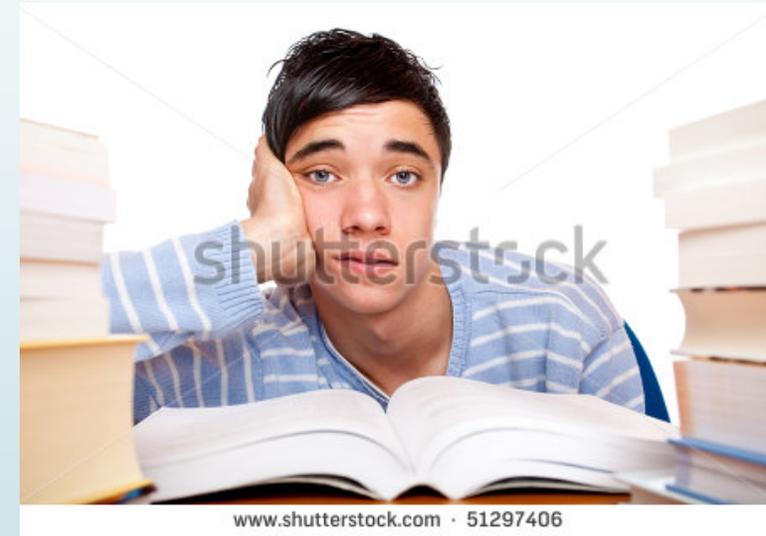
Helping Students Stay Focus in Class

If the Student Looks Bored

- ▶ Do not assume they know the material
- ▶ Then decide to speed up your pace
- ▶ It may be instead that they are having trouble understanding
- ▶ Or they have difficulty pay-attention

Allow student to have manipulatives

- ▶ Allow the student to have “busy hands
- ▶ Small ball, poster putty, or other object to keep them busy and focusing



Helping Students Stay Focus in Class

Stand up for Learning!

- It is OK for students to stand and do their work.
- *"I can't tell you how many teachers look at me funny when I say this, but it really IS OK. I am not a "sit at my desk and work for hours" type of person. I need movement. I get antsy sitting for long periods of time, so it is not strange to think our students would as well."*

Make eye contact

- Let to them to sit in the front of the class to maintain eye contact
- Prevents distractions in front of them



Helping Students Stay Focus in Class

Write directions on the board

- For an in-class assignment
- In case they missed the directions

Allow all students to record

- Allow them to be able to go back and re-listen

Provide quiet places for students to work

- This is a difficult task as most classrooms are lively



Working in Groups

- Avoid
- What are you teaching?
- Is it an SLO?
- Anxiety for students
- Scheduling Constraints
- The Independent Students
- Deciding Who Does Which Part
- Poor Introverts
- Unfair Burden
- Groups do not provide the best or easiest context for learning



Communication

Learn About Your Students

- ▶ Students are aware of their difficulties
 - ▶ They can often tell you what helps them focus
- ▶ Ask:
 - ▶ "How can I help?"
 - ▶ "What has worked in the past?"



Be Available

- ▶ Keep all lines of communication open with students
 - ▶ Grades
- ▶ Discuss problems with the student
 - ▶ frequent absences
 - ▶ lack of participation in class activities
 - ▶ missing deadlines
- ▶ Encourage the student to stay in touch with you
 - ▶ "If you have a problem, come and see me."



Communication



Flexibility

- ▶ Provide extended time as needed
- ▶ Consider more flexibility with regard to accepting late work

Facilitate Success

- ▶ Create learning situations that allow students to succeed.
- ▶ Success for some students can be a perfect C

Stay True to Your Rules & Expectations

- ▶ Be consistent in your approach and expectations.
- ▶ Need a structured schedule
- ▶ Keep rules simple and consequences clear.

Find Ways to Maintain Patience & Understanding

- ▶ Be patient, compassionate, and understanding.

Communication

Power Dynamic

- Feel they have no voice
- Feel they have no power or input in the teaching relationship

Fear

- They are in trouble
- Scared to talk to professors
- Scared to go to office hours
 - They will be label dumb
 - They are asking too many questions
 - They should know the answer
- Scared to write email
 - Don't now how to write an email



Tests

What examination format?

- ▶ long answer essay questions?
- ▶ multiple choice?
- ▶ short answer essay questions?

Give "practice" exams

- ▶ Any old exams available?

Study Guide

- ▶ Clear Topics to cover
- ▶ Study from textbook? Notes?

Essay-type exams

- ▶ Try to anticipate the questions that will be asked on the exam.
- ▶ Give 5 questions ahead of time that it might be on the test, only have them write one





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Learning Links

- ▶ **Time Management:**

- ▶ [Time Management](#) - Stanford University
- ▶ [Smart Tips](#) - University of Chicago
- ▶ [Time Management Tips & Strategies \(Epic How-to Methods\)](#) - Growth Cheat Sheet

- ▶ **Procrastination:**

- ▶ [One of These Days I'll Stop Procrastinating](#) - University of Pennsylvania
- ▶ [Battling the Block: Writing Through and Beyond Writer's Block](#) - University of Pennsylvania
- ▶ [Perfectionism: Don't Let it Get in the Way](#) - Indiana University

- ▶ **Videos**

- ▶ [Time Management Video](#) (17:50 Minutes)



Any Questions?

