

Mid-Year Reports May Prompt Students to Get Organized	Vali G. Heist, Author and Certified Professional Organizer®
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In my former career as a college administrator, I was a part-time instructor for College Success Skills; I taught college freshman how to get organized and practice time management in order to be successful in the college environment. Students bring a variety of abilities to college depending upon the school district from which they graduated and their personal skills, or lack thereof, from the classroom. For me, high school came easy and college was a struggle; I was learning how to study for the first time as I navigated a whole new world in higher education.

According to the authors of the book *Smart But Scattered Teens*, organization and time management skills in students may not be fully formed until the mid to late 20s. In other words, many students have to be taught time management and organization skills in order to succeed in the earlier grades. These specific skills are the prerequisites your child needs to possess so he or she can build upon those skills when studying math, English and other subjects.



Helen Bispels, M.Ed. is the owner of Student Organizing Solutions based in Kutztown. As a professional organizer and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) coach she assists many students who are struggling to keep up in school. Bispels knows that some children who are diagnosed as having learning disabilities or ADHD may also exhibit executive-function (EF) deficits; they lack the ability to start and complete tasks, stay on track, organize, and self-monitor. Some families dismiss EF deficits as secondary to ADHD, but Bispels says that “These skills are critical to master not only to deal with in school, but in everyday life.” ADHD is a well-known diagnosis, but the message about EF sometimes gets lost. EF functions also include learning to balance sports, music and other extra-curricular activities, in other words, time management skills. If we can help our children learn these skills at an early age, it will benefit them for a lifetime.

In Donna Goldberg’s book, *The Organized Student: Teaching Children the Skills for Success in School and Beyond*, she identifies the disorganized student as someone who:

- Owns a backpack that is a disorganized mess
- Hands in assignments late or not at all
- Procrastinates on assignments and studying for tests
- Disturbs family life with late-night help, last minute requests, and frantic mornings going out the door to school

On the other hand, the organized student:

- Carries only school related items in the backpack.
- Brings home the books and worksheets needed to complete assignments.
- Knows when tests are coming up and sets aside enough time to study.
- Can readily locate the supplies needed to complete assignments.

Talk to your son or daughter’s teacher for tips on helping your child succeed, but don’t hesitate to seek professional support. If you are the parent of a disorganized student who could use additional support, don’t delay on seeking assistance for these life skills. Contact Helen Bispels at helen@studentorgsolutions.com with any questions about your student’s particular needs at this point in school. The presence of these foundational skills is not a guarantee of success, but it could stave off the loss of self-esteem that could eventually follow without them.

Clutter quote: “I never could have done what I have done without the habits of punctuality, order, and diligence, without the determination to concentrate myself on one subject at a time.” Charles Dickens