

Testing
Accommodation

From *Strategies for Teaching Students
with Learning Disabilities*
by Lucy C. Martin (2009)

7

Organization

Techniques to Get It Together

Students who are organized have many advantages over those who are not: They have completed assignments, prepared for tests, and stored materials in designated places; they have adequate supplies; and they can locate supplies, materials, and assignments readily. Picture the confidence that such students possess when approaching a classroom. They are ready—and they know it. Now, contrast this image with that of students who struggle with organization. They did not complete the assignment, or perhaps they did but left it at home. Perhaps they completed the homework and brought it to school, but they cannot locate it in their binder. They dash to class and realize instantly that they don't have a pencil, the text, or perhaps a calculator. They don't have the tools to go forward in class. Imagine how these students feel. Many days at school, they will arrive tardy to class while apologizing or explaining "unprepared" scenarios, requesting a pencil or book, or asking for an extension, all in front of their peers.

Disorganization can seem like a plague. Gifted students experiencing this difficulty are often dubbed "the absent-minded professor." This expression may fit the picture but minimizes the disadvantage organizational difficulties present in a school setting. I have seen students who were more than capable of producing top-flight work. If they could not submit it on time, however, the consequences were daunting. The efforts on an A+ research paper might actually earn a D if the paper takes 3 days to locate.

The relatively new term *executive functioning* describes a set of organizational skills necessary in life. The main skills include setting a goal, making a plan, recognizing priorities, initiating a response to high-priority tasks, sustaining on-task efforts while delaying or blocking response to low-priority tasks, flexibly switching from one task to another,

and completing high-priority tasks. Students with executive dysfunction struggle to anticipate or allocate the time needed for their school work. They need techniques to help them break a significant project into manageable units of work. In addition, they need help designating "chunks" within the project, recording due dates for each "chunk," and sticking to the work plan.

The skill of preparation has many components. One key component is allocating time to complete each task; however, some students are so active after school that they simply do not have adequate time to prepare and carry out an action plan.

Parents can help their children with organization in many ways. They can provide much-needed guidance in establishing a balanced schedule for their child. For students with executive dysfunction, allowing plenty of time for ongoing planning and organization is critical. In addition, parents can provide necessary school supplies for their children. I encourage parents to buy "backup" supplies if their child is disorganized. Things get lost, and the relief of knowing an extra protractor is available is worth far more than the cost of the item itself. Finally, parents can help and support their child in allocating and reserving a portion of the home for the transitions to and from school.

DO THE COMBO MAMBO

Working a round, dial-type combination lock is difficult. Students need to remember many specifics:

1. Three numbers (often several digits) for their lock
2. The correct sequence of the numbers
3. When to spin past zero
4. Which rotation to use for each number (clockwise or counterclockwise)
5. Knowing what the above terms mean
6. To pause briefly once each number is aligned

Working memory, focus, and eye-hand coordination all come into play in an often noisy environment during a frequently transitional and limited time. This task can be intimidating for many students. One simple support is to put very tiny dots on the numbers needed. Dark-colored nail polish works well and should be removed as soon as the student has mastered the technique. The dots are not evident except on close inspection.

Naturally, for security reasons, the "dotting" should be done at a time when other students cannot observe.

PARKAS IN JULY

No one wants to shop for school supplies early. It's like taking off a baseball cap to try on a woolen hat. Still, such tools of the trade as binders, dividers, book covers, and pencils are crucial to student success. The right kind and number can make an enormous difference. The time to shop is when stores are well stocked but crowds have not yet arrived. Go in late July. Not only will choices be plenty, but the experience will be pleasant. If you are uncertain as to the needed supplies, contact the school. Mark the calendar now. Just do it!

THINKING AHEAD AND PLANNING BACKWARD

Record the due date on the calendar. The paper is due the **28th**. Now work backward. Prior to turning the final copy in, changes need to be made to the rough draft, and the paper needs to be saved and printed (two copies due to Murphy's Law). This could take 2 days, so allowing for Murphy's Law again (the ink cartridge could be dry), figure 3 days, which brings this chunk of the task to the **25th**.

The previous chunk involves the teacher looking at the rough draft to provide feedback to the student. This will take a week. Teachers also are subject to Murphy's Law, so we'll allow 8 days, which brings the due date for the rough draft to the **17th**.

Putting together a rough draft can take a good deal of time, depending on the length and type of the paper. Assuming this is not an extensive research paper, I would allow 4 days for development of the rough draft (introduction, body paragraphs, conclusion), so Murphy's Law brings it to 5 days, or the **12th**.

Prior to beginning the rough draft, it is critical to review the assignment as it was given. In addition, a review of recent class notes and reflection is needed. Sometimes, a student will want to contact classmates as well. I will call this part of the process "pondering." It is not an involved chunk, so I will assign 1 day, and Murphy's Law makes that 2, so pondering begins on the **10th**. Obviously, if a student wants feedback earlier or in several steps, the timeline could be adjusted.

10th: Begin pondering

12th: Begin writing rough draft

- 17th: Submit rough draft to teacher
- 25th: Make changes to rough draft, save on computer, print two copies
- 28th: Turn in final paper

DISABILITY VERSUS DISINTEREST

Organizational difficulties exist and are often referred to as "executive dysfunction." The attending problems include difficulty planning time, space, and materials. Executive dysfunction often coexists with ADHD.

Disinterest in organization is quite common, particularly in adolescents who have many other interests competing for their time. Some people don't want to be organized at any age. They are more "go with the flow," spontaneous types who tend to view planning as restrictive.

If a student has disability and interest, certain systems can be taught and specific checkpoints established. If a student has both disability and disinterest, it's unlikely that he will be able to make a substantial change in organizational practices on his own, and it will be important to get someone else to do the organizing. Having parents provide this support can be tricky. Organizational coaches are the best answer; however, the student will need to agree with the systems established by the organizational coach. For this reason, many organizational coaches try to strike a compromise between the student's needs and wants. In his adult life, the person with disability and disinterest in organization is likely to need a top-notch assistant.

PRACTICAL ASSIGNMENT FOR SEPTEMBER

In the first week of school, here is an assignment designed to support organization:

- Using Comic Sans font, size 14, type two packing lists. One will be entitled *For School*. The other will be entitled *For Home*.
- List the materials needed for each class in the order they appear on the schedule (e.g., first period, second period, and so on).
- Abbreviate assignment book as A and binder as B.
- Use color and space to differentiate morning and afternoon classes. Use a special sign, such as *, to indicate a class that is part of a rotation on the schedule.
- Post *For School* at the home-packing location, otherwise known as the launching and landing pad.
- Post *For Home* inside the locker or book bag.

ORGANIZING ORGANIZATION

Begin by asking questions and observing behavior to determine where the problem originates. Is this a problem at home or at school?

The following analysis lists the *At School* tasks in italics and the **At Home** tasks in bold.

Each organizational task is analyzed separately. "Possible Problems" and "Possible Solutions" are recorded for each task. The problems and solutions are visually coded to help the school and family identify and respond to organizational issues.

This analysis may look complex, but many teachers and families have told me it has been a valuable tool.

Analysis of Organizational Problems

I. Task: Getting Assignments in the First Place

A. Possible Problems

1. *Student doesn't record homework correctly and completely due to problems with attention, copying, handwriting, or pace.*
2. *Assignment book is lost.*
3. **Student tries to get homework off computer, but there are computer problems.**

B. Possible Solutions

1. *Teachers give assignments at beginning of class.*
2. *Teachers give more time to record assignments.*
3. *Teachers initial assignment book at end of class.*
4. *Student gets another assignment book (if available at school).*
5. **Student asks family to get new assignment book.**
6. **Parents obtain a new assignment book.**
7. **Adults contact technology coordinator to resolve computer problems.**
8. **Student contacts peer by phone to obtain assignment.**

II. Tasks: Doing, Packing, and Bringing Assignments to School

A. Possible Problems

1. *Student didn't bring home right materials to complete work.*
2. **Student doesn't check assignment book and/or computer, depending on how assignments are recorded.**

3. **Student does not have enough time to complete assignments due to too many extracurricular activities.**
4. **Student has trouble waking up, has not packed, rushes to catch bus, and forgets important materials.**

B. Possible Solutions

1. *Student makes a packing list and tapes it inside his locker.*
2. *Teachers dismiss students 2 minutes earlier to ensure careful packing.*
3. *Student centralizes all assignments in one place—the assignment book. Assignments posted on the board and/or the computer are recorded in assignment book.*
4. **Family decides to reduce the number of after-school activities.**
5. **Student packs for school at night rather than in the morning.**
6. **Family and student set alarms to consider slow starts.**
7. **Student posts packing list near the place where backpack is stored (launching and landing pad).**
8. **Parents purchase copies of school texts to keep at home.**

III. Task: Turning In Assignments at School

A. Possible Problems

1. *The binder, backpack, and/or locker are full of papers stored in random order.*
2. *The student cannot locate the assignment she says she did.*
3. **The binder and/or backpack are broken.**

B. Possible Solutions

1. *Student weeds out binder at school (see “1–2–3 Weed Out!” below).*
2. *Student cleans out and organizes locker. A peer can assist.*
3. *Teachers provide regular time for weeding out binder, backpack, and locker.*
4. **Parents remind student to weed out papers once a week as a routine.**
5. **Student weeds out binder at home (see “1–2–3 Weed Out!” below).**
6. **Parents purchase appropriate materials to support organization (the best-quality binders have rings aligned and plastic slant-cut dividers. The best-quality spirals have two double coils).**

IV. Task: Getting Assignments Signed

- A. Possible Problems
1. Student can't find papers to be signed.
 2. Student forgets to ask parents for signature.
- B. Possible Solutions
1. Student designates a section of binder for all forms, letters, and tests that need to be shared with parents, and marks it as "home" section.
 2. Parents ask nightly, "Do you have any papers I need to see or sign for school?"
 3. Student sets watch or beeper to go off every night at the same time to remind her to ask for parent signature.

WHY WOMEN CAN'T BORROW PURSES

Each woman has her own system that has taken years to perfect. She could find a lipstick or Sam's Club card with her eyes closed. Each has her own stuff. Chapstick requires a zippered compartment, and prescription sunglasses need an inside pouch. Some purses even have interior lights for the woman who drives a lot at night.

Most organizational systems are developed through trial and error. Many purses are returned or donated. What works for one will not necessarily work for another. How does this relate to students? I doubt any one system will work for students of different ages, needs, and temperaments. Establishing an organizational system that is entirely uniform does not tend to work well for a mix of students. There is a need to customize storage solutions and organizational systems for individuals. Here are some suggestions to help with this task:

- Find out *how* a student wants to store his stuff.
 - Make sure he can tell you *why* he wants to store it that way.
 - Discuss the systems he has tried. What was successful? What did not work, and why not? Let him try the new system for a week. Then meet to discuss the outcome.
- There's an enormous selection of choices. Consider the following:
- Accordion files
 - Two binders for storing morning and afternoon class materials

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- One mega binder
- Multiple binders—one for each subject

PREPARING FOR TEACHER TUTORING

Some students may dutifully show up for tutoring but have no idea how to use the time. Some students need a prompt. Others might need a script. Here are some questions and tips you can offer. Teachers and advisors can give the tips below to students who can simply refer to them before they go for a teacher's help.

- Bring paper and pencil.
- Do I want help with a test that I took?
Bring the test.
- Which type of question or problem gave me the most trouble?
Highlight or underline this area on the test.
- Do I want help to prepare for a future test?
Ask about the format: Will it include short answers, essays, definitions, and identifications? Will I be able to use notes or formulas? Jot down what your teacher says.
- Is there a particular topic that confuses me?
Bring examples of difficult exercises and homework.
- Is there a CD, practice sheet, or Web site I can visit to review material?
Jot this information down.

BINDER BLUES

Students don't put papers in their binder for several reasons:

1. Some are slow to pack up, often due to processing-speed issues or difficulty with transitions. They don't have time between classes to file loose sheets. They race to the next class and just stuff papers in the front pocket of the binder, saying to themselves, "I'll straighten these out later."
2. Some can't open and close the rings due to fine motor problems. These students often have very poor handwriting.

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3. Binders have misaligned rings. This is particularly common after several months of school.

The following system seems to help many students:

1. Get transparent plastic dividers that are "slant cut" and three-hole punched.
2. Get multiple packages of these dividers. Students may need two to five dividers of each color for different designations, such as "tests and quizzes," "notes," and so forth.
3. Designate a color for each subject. English is blue, science is green, and so forth.
4. Label each divider with a permanent marker. English grammar, English tests and quizzes, and English vocabulary, for example, could all be blue dividers.

Students can now file papers by sliding them into the proper divider—no more fighting with rings!

BACK TO BASICS

Here are A-B-C-D categories to help students organize key materials and storage areas.

Assignment Book

Paper clip current page with previous ones for rapid flip.

Fill in all boxes (subjects and dates). Write the word *none* or the number 0 if nothing is assigned.

Write "Look ahead" or draw an arrow toward the date if a test or project is beyond the week's glance.

Highlight special events and assignments.

Mark parent signature (for test and quizzes) with *P* in box.

Mark completed assignments by drawing an *X* through them.

Tear out unnecessary pages, such as those that are 1 month old or more.

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Binder

Put reinforcements on papers that need them.

Weed out old papers.

Inventory loose-leaf paper.

Clean Out Book Bag

Bring trash receptacle and recycling bin nearby.

Remove all loose pieces of paper.

Lighten your load.

De-clutter Locker

Bring trash receptacle and recycling bin nearby.

1-2-3 WEED OUT!

There are three basic categories of stuff:

1. Need now (binder or folders)
2. Save for later (files at home or locker)
3. Discard (trash or recycle)

I suggest that students perform 1-2-3 Weed Out in a specific location. Using the same place each time will reinforce and speed the process. Students will need a large surface and a trash receptacle and recycling bin nearby.

The trickiest category is the second one. Students should check with teachers to be sure that information can be removed from the binder.

Just two piles and 15 minutes can help bring order to chaos and restore the student's sense of control over materials.

SCHEDULE FOR TEACHER HELP

This simple schedule can help clarify student responsibilities. Many students need visual reinforcement to keep them on track. This schedule seems to work well for students who are forgetful, avoidant, or both.

If the teacher help time occurs during "free" time, I suggest giving students at least one day a week "free." Teachers can write "FREE" across that day. If a student needs teacher tutoring more than twice a week, the parents and the learning specialist should be aware of this arrangement.

Teacher-Help Schedule for _____				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Teacher	Teacher	Teacher	Teacher	Teacher
Room	Room	Room	Room	Room
Time	Time	Time	Time	Time

REAL ESTATE AGENTS ARE RIGHT

Real estate agents are right: location, location, and location. Pencil sharpeners go next to pencils. Stamps go next to envelopes. The key is to locate a book, paper, or supply near the place of its use. Pair function with location. Follow this simple rule, and life will be simpler, more efficient, and less frustrating.

BORDERING ON MADNESS

Certain events and times of year bring stress, as well as excitement. To manage the stress and maximize the enjoyment, mark off two weeks on either side of holidays, exams, special celebrations, trips, drama presentations, tournaments, and so forth. Do not plan *anything* extra during these two weeks. No exceptions can be made. Use every day fully, and refuse or postpone any additional responsibilities. Allowing "spillage" time for the stress and excitement of special times will preserve everyone's sanity and allow the times to be naturally special.

LAUNCHING AND LANDING PAD

The idea behind this strategy is to centralize all school-related items that go back and forth to school on a regular basis. I suggest students speak with their parents to select a spot near the entrance or exit of their home. Once the space is agreed upon, a suitable container, such as a large box, a

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basket, a plastic tub, an empty drawer, or anything that will work for both the parent and the student, can be obtained. I encourage the student to decorate his container. This is fun, establishes a positive association, taps into artistic intelligence, and can work as an attention-getting device. Next, I ask the student to name the container, even something simple, such as "Alice's School Box." Students may use their verbal intelligence to craft something a bit more sophisticated. All school-related items go in the box. Reminders, such as "doughnuts for Monday group" or "special dress for trip," can go in the container or be taped to the outside. When homework is complete, binder, books, and supplies all go in the box. The backpack sits next to the box. It needs to be emptied every afternoon and repacked every evening. Morning packing is a major no-no since this is such a crunch time for many households.

Without centralization, materials end up by the phone, on the kitchen table, inside the desk drawer, next to the computer, or by the TV. The creation of the launching and landing pad marks the end of materials being scattered throughout the home. Until centralizing is second nature to the student, all alternate locations should be checked nightly, and any stray materials should be promptly corralled in the student's school container.

STUDENT INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Students need to centralize key information. This form should be completed in early September and placed in the binder. A copy should also be made for home.

Personal Directory

In case of illness, absence, or emergency:

Family phone

At home _____ Work _____ Cell _____

School main number _____

Advisor name _____ Phone _____ E-mail _____

Student Support

In each subject, name two classmates who could help you if needed:

Subject _____

Student _____ Phone _____ E-mail _____

Student _____ Phone _____ E-mail _____

Subject	_____	Phone	_____	E-mail	_____
Student	_____	Phone	_____	E-mail	_____
Subject	_____	Phone	_____	E-mail	_____
Student	_____	Phone	_____	E-mail	_____

TRACKING TEACHERS

Encourage students to jot specific days, times, and places when teachers are available to help. Advise students to confirm the meeting times and to record them in their planners. Remind students to bring materials and questions to teachers for help.

Teacher	_____	E-mail	_____
Days and times	_____		
Teacher	_____	E-mail	_____
Days and times	_____		
Teacher	_____	E-mail	_____
Days and times	_____		
Teacher	_____	E-mail	_____
Days and times	_____		

REMINDEES THAT WORK

Little slips of paper are often used to record reminders. Most of them end up crumpled at the bottom of a tote, book bag, or handbag. They get lost, ripped, and mashed. Often, they get discarded. They aren't durable or attention getting. Ironically, they are forgettable reminders.

The best kind of reminder would be made of fluorescent steel that beeps. My compromise is to use neon-colored index cards. Color can symbolize meaning. For example, jot school reminders on orange cards and home reminders on blue cards.

In years past, all index cards were white, as were file folders and paper. Let's add a little life and interest to the task of learning. Color it memorable.

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LONG-RANGE PLANNING

Many students record the due date for long-range assignments and/or tests. If this is all they write down, they may not take action until their note comes into view. By then, it's usually too late for adequate preparation time. The key is to make sure students record the LRP (long-range project) each day as an assignment. By recording the assignment daily, students will have a visual tickler. Recording the number of days left until the final due date will be even more valuable. An assignment book entry might appear as follows:

2/7/07

LRP 14 days until final draft.

Many adolescents use two categories of time for planning purposes:

1. Now
2. Not now

Using LRP will create a bridge between these categories.

TAKE CONTROL

Teachers control what is assigned and when it is due. Students must record, look at, complete, pack, and submit the assignment. I want to encourage teachers to exercise their control.

The very best time to review upcoming assignments, clarify expectations, and record appropriate details is at the *beginning* of class. This is not always easy to do, but it will make a big difference for students who have trouble with assignments.

At the end of class, distractions are greater, and students are tired and ready to move on to the next class.

Teachers can model organization for their students by giving assignments every day as part of a routine.

PROMOTING TOTING

The action of opening a suitcase is the beginning of a series of very *intentional* behaviors. Some people make a list of items to take on a trip. Others keep a copy of this list in the suitcase itself. Others keep a travel kit filled with personal items "at the ready."

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Placing items in a tote, bag, or case encourages conscious choices. This process is not nearly as intentional for someone simply gathering items to carry in his arms. Encourage students to pack a bag to carry needed materials. They will think about what needs to go in the bag for classes, and at the end of a class, they can simply toss materials into the bag and head off to their next class. Sturdy canvas totes are open at the top so the contents are clearly visible. They can stand alone without flopping over and are readily accessible—no zippers, Velcro, or drawstrings. Pack a bag and go!

PUTTING TANGENTS IN THEIR PLACE

Tangential thinking is a regular occurrence for

- Creative thinkers (one idea leads to another),
- Multitaskers (operate on several levels simultaneously),
- Persons with ADHD, and/or
- Persons with executive dysfunction.

A thought comes to mind, but it may not be the time or place to talk about or take action on it. Still, a student feels she does not want to lose track of the thought. What can she do?

Make a special place for tangents called the Tangent Locker. Corners make good places for Tangent Lockers. I use the upper right-hand corner of a sheet of paper to record my tangential thoughts. I draw a line so the corner of the sheet forms a triangle and record my tangents in the triangle. Tangents are usually interesting and important—just not timely. Check Tangent Lockers regularly.

DISTINCTIVE GEAR

Luggage carousels are filled with suitcases, most of which are black and hard to tell apart. The same is true for book bags and books. Encourage students to take a little time to add something to their gear that will distinguish it from others'. Monograms can be helpful. Colorful tape, tags, or ribbon can help too. Names must be on or in all materials. This is absolutely essential.

SPARE BINDER IN THE CLASSROOM

Particularly in the beginning of school, students with executive dysfunction may arrive without adequate supplies or materials. This is a fairly

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tricky situation since most students cannot drive to obtain their materials or supplies. The scenario often plays out in the following way:

The student is reminded several times but continues to show up without the necessary materials. After the first week or 10 days, the teacher communicates with the parent. The parent often says he did not receive a supply list and is irritated that action was not taken sooner.

Why not have a "spare" binder in the classroom? Initially, it could be used to model a system for organizing papers. If needed, it could then be given to a student.

EXTRA! EXTRA!

When students misplace or lose materials between home and school, it is wise to obtain duplicate copies of texts. One stays at home, and the other stays at school. This lightens the students' load mentally and physically.

Pencils are easily lost, but teachers do not have an infinite supply to hand out to students. At the beginning of the year, a student with executive dysfunction could bring in 12 dozen pencils. He could then distribute a dozen or two to each teacher for his use as he informs the teacher about his organizational difficulties. When a student did this with me, I felt it was a very proactive step and was impressed with the student's initiative.

IN LIEU OF LOCKERS

Think of a noisy, crowded place. People move over, under, and around each other. Amid this relative chaos, an individual challenged by attention and/or organization is expected to perform a detail-sensitive task (locker combination), locate important materials, and gather them quickly.

This scene takes place not in a subway but in a locker room. As an alternative, inquire about setting aside a spot for student storage in the learning specialist's room. Perhaps an advisor would also be willing to provide some space. The key is that the special storage spot be located in a fairly central location.

Now think of a place without locks where materials remain safe. Imagine being able to ask for help. Finally, expect to receive reassurance and some cues for staying on track for the next class—all this in lieu of lockers.

ACCESSIBLE ASSIGNMENTS

A student may rush to pack up at the end of the day. Even if she has packing lists prepared and posted on her locker, she'll need to have current information at her fingertips. Often, the assignment book is stored inside a

binder. Getting the information she needs will require several steps. To some students, the homework book seems buried within the cavernous interior of the mega binder. Time is precious, so she may not look but just grab materials and hope for the best. By the time she checks her assignment book, she may be home, at which point it will be too late if materials are missing. Keeping the assignment book separate from the binder works well. It can be hooked to the pencil case by placing three circular metal loops through the three holes. Bingo—easy access to writing implement and homework book.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

When students continue to fall behind on assignments, it is valuable to know why. Often, students are unaware of how their time is spent. Having them record their activities for 1 week will increase their awareness and answer teacher questions. The following table can be adjusted to facilitate this assignment. This activity is not in any way intended to be punitive but is undertaken in a spirit of problem solving. In one case, the schedule revealed that a student spent a great deal of time traveling to and from activities in which his sibling was involved. The car needed to function as a work station for this student. As a result of the time analysis, the car was outfitted with a lap desk and necessary school supplies.

What's Going On? For one week, jot what you are doing after school. The times are approximate. I know you don't do everything in half-hour intervals.					
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
10:00					
9:30					
9:00					
8:30					
8:00					
7:30					
7:00					
6:30					
6:00					
5:30					
5:00					
4:30					

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Most students cannot drive and purchase their own materials, so, parents, this is your moment to really support your budding scholar. For example, mechanical pencils with a fingertip advance button will work best for students who experience fine motor control difficulties. The size of the lead can make a difference too. If it's too thin, it will break often. If it's too thick, it will smudge. Highlighters that operate like a ballpoint pen will last longer than those with separate caps. Ask the learning specialist and teachers for suggestions.

DING!

Many students have difficulty planning their use of time, space, and materials. Students who demonstrate specific and significant troubles in these areas may be diagnosed with executive dysfunction. Increasing a student's awareness of time can help him complete assignments on time. Using a timer can increase interest and efficiency. Some digital timers beep before the time is "up." They beep when 10 minutes remain, when 5 minutes remain, and finally when the time has elapsed. They provide audible reminders to stay on task, pick up the pace, or ask for more time. If the student sets the timer, the time reminders then become results of his effort, which make them quite different from the verbal reminder of another person. There is no "nag" element. These timers are available at some of the larger kitchen and bath stores. They are inexpensive, can stand alone (with a fold-out easel on back), and often have a magnet. Keeping track of time on task can be simpler and more accurate with one of these terrific little gadgets.

SUMMARY

In the fall, getting students off on the right foot can help set the tone for the entire year. In this regard, parents have substantial influence. Obtaining the supplies and materials required by the school can boost a child's self-confidence as he enters a classroom, knowing he is prepared. Over the course of the year, items get lost. This certainly goes for adults, as well as children. Parents are encouraged to anticipate this fact of life and obtain additional pencils, notebook paper, index cards, and paper and ink for the computer. Thinking ahead will help reduce those dreaded last-minute runs to the store and even save money on gasoline.

Also, purchasing "distinctive gear" will help the student locate his backpack and binder with ease. Solicit the child's input about a timer, and

bring him along to shop for one with features he wants. He will likely be more invested in using the timer to improve time management. Teachers are not in a position to address organizational difficulties. Often, they teach study and time management skills; however, if students cannot or will not apply these skills throughout the day, teachers can do little. After school, parents can guide students to establish routines that will enhance organization. Establishing a launching and landing pad at home will help centralize materials.

Centralization works for planning as well. If home and school calendars are consolidated, everyone can see at a glance all that the day will require. As the section "Bordering on Madness" emphasized, the calendar should reflect the additional activities involved at holidays. Both academic and home requirements must be on the calendar. For example, a test might be scheduled for Friday. If the family plans for Thursday night are to attend a sporting event, the student will be in a crunch for time. Something's got to give. Either the student studies Wednesday night (clearly not optimal), or the family needs to forego the event.

Consistency and routines help students maintain order. For example, declaring Sunday nights for "1-2-3 Weed Out!" will keep binders organized in minimum time. Think of it as taking out the trash. Perhaps designate Weed Out and trash take-out on the same day. This brings up the point of after-school activities. The amount of time required for participation needs to be given careful consideration. Before committing to a school play or a swim team, speak with the program director about the necessary time commitment. Many students are extremely happy to sign up for various activities, but later, they feel conflicted about competing requirements. Parents need to take an active role in guiding their child to achieve a balance. Students can increase their academic success by identifying resources and support. The information in "Tracking Teachers" is a valuable guide to accessing support. Encourage students to record this information at the beginning of every semester or trimester.