

How to Get & Stay



TIPS FOR MTHS PARENTS & STUDENTS

The first step is to gather information about each class so you can get organized:

- **Calendar:** On Skyward: you can go to “Calendar” to use as a reference. Print it out or provide your own. If teachers update to calendar things like quizzes and tests/projects, that is already inputted there! You can also use your smart phone calendar and then print out the calendar at home, with all the assignments and such that you have entered right on it! You can enter the information into your smart phone during lunch or later if the phone can’t be pulled out during class.
- **Make sure you have a syllabus for each class AT HOME:** Always have a copy for home as it can be a great source of information (often you have to return it to school but get a copy or go to the website for a copy). Some teachers have this information on websites; the issue is it’s important to know from the teacher where the information on homework, deadlines, tests, project dates, etc. is located.
- **Teachers also write their availability outside of class hours** on the syllabus: either before, during, or after school. On the calendar or other convenient place: write out a schedule on the calendar showing when each teacher is available for help so you always know. If you are having difficulty in a certain class, look where this information is recorded to determine for that week when you can see the teacher outside of school hours for extra help.
- **On the syllabus teachers also write in test dates and project dates, when work is due, etc.** Write out for each class on the calendar when due dates/test dates are known, or projects are due. You can then review in advance for the week or month what is due that week/month.
- **What is really important:** Find out from each teacher how you know what work is due: are homework/projects, etc. written on the board daily? Is the homework on the website? Does the teacher verbally inform the student about assignments? Write this information on the calendar so you always know what how homework that is due is communicated to the students. Also find out about the due date: is it weekly on Friday, or daily homework, etc.? Write this information in too.
- **Also find out what the expectation for receiving the homework** in class is: Do the students hand it in at the end of the class, put in a box on the desk, etc.? Write this information next to the teacher name/class also. This is important if you forget to hand in assignments routinely.
- **Many teachers have websites.** Bookmark them and check regularly as it is a wealth of information. Assignments, due dates, tests etc. are often on here. Add to calendar.
- **Late work:** Look on the syllabus/web site for the policy regarding late work. Some teachers don’t accept it at all, some allow a certain amount of late work. This is for unexcused absences, as all excused absences allow the equal amount of days absent (absent 2 days) to the amount of extra time to turn in the school work (=2 days).

- **Example of what to write on calendar:** The calendar intervention won't work if you don't use it!!!
 - 1st period:** Name of class
 - Teacher:** Name of teacher
 - Contact:** Phone #/E mail
 - Available:** When teacher is available at school outside of class hours (times for before, during, or after school the teacher is available for extra help)
 - HW:** Where information about what the homework is for the night is located (written on board, verbally communicated, website, etc.)
 - HW handed in:** Where is it returned? (end or beginning of class time to a box up front or directly to the teacher, etc.)
 - HW due:** When it is due generally (on Fridays, every day, etc.)
 - Late work:** Can you get credit (full or partial) for late work?
 - Quizzes:** When are they scheduled (routinely every week, pop quizzes, etc.)
 - Tests:** When are they scheduled (are there study review times or study guides available, etc.)
 - Skyward:** How often is it updated

How to stay organized:

- **Check skyward regularly for missing assignments.** Ask teachers when/how often they update Skyward: write this on calendar. The expectation for teachers is that every two weeks they must update. If you know/teacher can tell you how often it is updated and when (every Friday for instance) you will know how "real time" the information is. This can prevent arguments between parents and students about homework!
- **Based on missing assignments/work that is not understood:** come up with a schedule when you should see teachers regularly to check in on assignments: the information when a particular teacher is available for extra help is on the calendar. For instance, the English teacher is available every day before school at 7:00, and you are missing assignments or don't understand a project you are working on/test preparing for. Go in every morning until caught up or when needed. Parents, you can remind your student in the morning before he/she goes to school to go and see the teacher to get caught up. This can be done for homework that you couldn't complete the night before because you didn't understand it. Look on the calendar to see when the teacher is available and go in to see him/her that next day to discuss what is holding you back from completing it rather than just not handing it in!!! This is important because you don't want to get behind on assignments. The teacher will be thrilled that you care enough to do this.
- **Student or parent can also e mail teacher** to say you/he/she is coming regularly every week if you and your student determine to do this. Parents can follow up here and there to see if he/she is coming and what the teacher's thoughts are.
- **Parent or student can e-mail or talk to teachers** about what they see as your/your student's barriers, then, based on that information, intervene specifically.
 - A. Is it not completing assignments in class?**
 - B. Is it not knowing what the homework assignment is?**
 - C. Is it not completing your homework?**
 - D. Is it not handing in assignments or homework?**

Based on all the above information gathered, you would intervene specially. For example:

- A. **If it is not completing assignments in class:** Do you come in late so miss the instruction for the assignment? Are you too social or get distracted easily so you don't hear the instruction for the assignment or you get off task so time is up for completing the assignment? Do you not understand the directions or how to do the assignment? Problem solve around why you are late with you parent/teacher to help get you to class on time. Preferential seating by the teacher to reduce distractions can help. Ask for it! Do you raise your hand to ask for help if you don't understand? Start doing this and if you feel too shy or hesitant, just let the teacher know, they are happy to stop by your desk to check on understanding! Is it time constraints? If you need more time, talk to the teacher!
- B. **If it is not knowing what the homework is:** How does your teacher communicate what the homework is for each class? It should be on your calendar. You can check the calendar or parents, you can remind your student to check the board or whatever before she/he leaves the specific classroom (this is where smart phones can be handy; set an alarm for that specific class to go off just before the end (on vibrate of course), which is a reminder to check what your homework is that day if written on the board). Having an organized backpack is important here as you need a place for each class in it where you place homework due and homework completed. Be sure to have a place where you routinely write down the day's homework.
- C. **If it is not completing your homework:** Do you have other commitments after school such as work, athletics, school or other meetings/groups, babysitting, etc.? Juggling a busy schedule is tough but remember, your "real job" is school so it has to be a priority. Do you have a place at home which is quiet and set up for you to work on school work? Do you have a specific time of the day you are more alert to do your work? Do you have a routine for school work at home? Having a routine is critical to homework completion. Some students need a break after a long day at school so do work later after dinner while others want to get it done right away after school and be done with it. Figure out what works for you and your family. If you get assistance from your parents then it needs to be done when they are available. Students with ADHD on medication often need a booster dose for homework completion, talk to your doctor! Do you not understand the work so just don't do it? Don't do that, instead, visit the teacher the next day to show you have tried to do the work but couldn't complete it and to get instruction so you CAN complete it! "Chunk" your homework time by taking regular breaks if needed, for snacks or go outside and take some deep breaths to get oxygen to your brain or a 5 minute quick walk! Consider staying after school for the "Study Club" to do your homework so you don't have to think about it when you get home. Staff are available to help you if you need instructional assistance.
- D. **If it is handing in homework:** Review from the calendar every Monday for that specific class (the one with the problem handing in assignments) to see when homework is due. For example, it is due on Friday and is to be placed in the box by the door or whatever it is for each specific class. Is your backpack a mess? You need to have an organizational system for keeping due work and completed work in an accessible place in the backpack. Also, use your smart phone to set a reminder for whenever work is due (beginning of class? End of class?). Do you forget to put it in your backpack? Have a "routine" at home around this, either put it in the backpack directly when finished or place it in a central area where you can pick it up before school. The most important thing is establishing a routine for this. See if you can e mail your work to your teacher directly upon completion at home/school if this is an issue.

- **Student checking weekly with teachers** to see if they have all of their assignments will help. Students sometimes report that the teacher has “lost” their assignment: So, to prevent an issue: make a copy of the assignment and keep in a folder that stays at home. Parent can “sign and date it” (the original) and then copy on your printer (if it scans) so if there is an issue with lost assignments by the teacher (this can happen occasionally as teachers have many students and many assignments to be responsible for), then you have a copy and parent dated it the day it was done so you have some ammunition to get full credit. This doesn’t typically happen but could.
- **You/your student can also e-mail the assignments directly to the teacher**, if teacher agrees, if losing them/handing them in is a problem.
- **Parents can have their student get a “progress reports”**. The counseling office Weekly Student Progress Reports (green forms that are available in the counseling office at the counter on the left side, available to all). The student fills it out with their classes and then on Thursday and Friday gets teachers to complete what their grade is and if they are missing assignments. It should be brought home on Friday afternoon and completion of this can be tied to home rewards/consequences.
- **I got my kids an accordion file folder** instead of a binder. It has slots in it so they are used for each class. Each class can have 2 slots: One slot can be for homework to be completed, another for completed assignments. For some kids it keeps you much more organized.
- **Have a “backpack Friday”**: Keeping your backpack organized and sparse is critical (lost assignments can be found here!). Empty or help your student empty out the backpack weekly on a regular day where you do it and be sure that all assignments have been returned and then re-organize the backpack. Parents should constantly review organizational skills in a **teaching, not punitive**, way.
- **Absences**: Being absent for a period of a few days can have a snowball effect on work completion and thus, organizational skills. I have seen kids stop handing in work as they feel overwhelmed by the amount of work needing to be made up. Don’t do that! The day you return, see you teacher in each class to discuss missing work and start on it as soon as possible. If you have too many assignments, just prioritize and get to them within that next few days but never ignore them. And, talk to the teacher if you need extra time! I can always assist with this if you have a legitimate medical reason for missing school (illness, appointments, etc.).

The issue, I have found, is that high school students have higher organizational skill needs so the key is that you require organizational assistance, especially for the first year. I have 3 boys (out of high school now) who needed continual organizational assistance from me. I thought of us as a “team” (really I did) and my boys found that two heads were better than one in learning how to negotiate the demands of high school. Sometimes you have to keep trying to get a plan that works for you but be persistent. Figure out what tips above (and others) are helpful and what are not and then be consistent for the entire 4 years of school **or until you/your student demonstrates consistent mastery of organizational skills**. Lots of times parents stop assisting, which is fine, but it should be for a trial period of time with frequent check ins.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns or other ideas! I will add them! Sincerely, Julie

Julie Hill, RN, Certificated School Nurse 425-431-1066 hillj@edmonds.wednet.edu

In my office at MTHS on Monday and Wednesday but I am available all week as I work at other schools as well.