# School/Community Relations Today

Our topics cover your world

**February 2013**

## This month's issue includes:

• Asking questions is a good way to find things out: Starting a district Q&A program
A district's best source of information for its community is staff. But do they have the information they need to respond to questions about the district? Set up a regular process to ask and answer their questions.

• Communicating about school security
The Sandy Hook tragedy has raised questions for all schools about student safety. Communicating with parents and community members about school security is essential to restoring a sense of peace in buildings. See guidelines and a sample letter to parents.

• Is your finance measure ready for the ballot?
Before your district places a finance measure on the ballot, make sure you set the stage for success: You need a year-round PR program, a community survey with encouraging results and a ready and willing group of volunteers.

• Is your district ready to go paperless?
Eliminating your hard-copy communications sounds like a good way to save money and be greener. Before you make the leap to digital communications, consider how the change will affect your parents, community members and business owners. Also, remember that some documents must be printed according to state and/or federal regulations.

• Naming a school: An opportunity for high involvement
Naming a new school can be divisive, but it doesn't have to be. Learn how a well-planned process and good communications will result in a name that brings as much pride to your community as the new school.

• Insights for Parents: Good time management leads to better school success
Studies show that self discipline and persistence have a greater impact on student achievement than intelligence alone. Share these time management tips and resources with parents to help keep students organized at home.

Kentucky School Boards Association KSBA
"A brighter future through better public schools"

**For more information about this service, contact Jenny Wohlleb at 1-800-372-2962 or through e-mail at jenny.wohlleb@ksba.org.**

# Is your district ready to go paperless?

If your district is wrestling with the idea of going paperless, or at least reducing paper, you are not alone. Countless districts across the country are contemplating the pros and cons of moving away from paper — that tangible, traditional means of school communication. Some districts are taking the leap by transitioning as many documents as legally possible from paper to digital files. Others are opting for a more gradual phase-in.

This tip sheet is designed to help you work through the decision-making and steps needed to reduce paper usage. If you're just starting the conversation, consider that it will mark a major shift in how you do business. For that reason, it is imperative that your school board and administration agree about proceeding.

In a world where even *Newsweek* has ceased printing and gone electronic, the idea has many positive points. Proponents point to the three "E" rules of a paperless school district:

***Economies***: It will save money by reducing paper costs, ink, postage and the manpower required to produce and distribute the paper copies.

***Efficiency:*** It's quick and efficient as it requires only a push of a button to have instant distribution of information. It's also a more reliable, and cheaper, distribution system to parents than papers stuffed into student book bags.

***Ecological impact:*** More trees will be saved as result of less paper being produced, not to mention savings of other natural resources and reduced pollution.

Most districts are already reducing their paper usage as they've started using websites for district and school news, as well as other social media such as Facebook and Twitter.

*Note:* No matter how paperless you might envision your district, remember to check federal and state requirements for distribution in print of certain documents.

The first question is how paperless can your district ready become — both from philosophical and practical standpoints? As you work towards creating a paperless district, consider the potential impacts of such a change, especially on parents' ability to get information:

**How will you reach those parents/guardians in your district who don't have access to a computer, smart phone or other means of accessing electronically generated information in their homes?**

Before getting too far into the change process, conduct a survey of parents to determine

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at-home access to computers, smartphones or other technology. As part of the survey, ask parents how they receive news and other information from the community now.

If there is no access to electronic communications at home, will those parents have the time to find and to use computers available either at the public library or at the school their child attends?

**What is the public relations impact on relationships you have with organizations and businesses in your community?**

Would these changes affect those in your town who provide information about the school district to potential residents, such as realtors? Would they be hurt by the change or would they embrace it?

How will you reach the greater community? How will you reach non-parents, senior citizens and businesses concerning activities that will affect them? These include levy or bond funding initiatives, school board elections; proposed boundary changes; school construction plans and potential neighborhood disruptions.

Once you've agreed that a move toward a paperless district is feasible, it is time to start planning how to accomplish it. This process could require several months.

Begin by creating a 'Paperless District' Committee. Members should represent school staff (elementary, middle and high school), central office staff, (the person in charge of district communications and the district's purchasing department should be among them), PTA and other parent groups that send newsletters and fliers.

The committee's task will be to: 1) identify state- or federal forms and their accompanying rules of distribution; 2) conduct an inventory of all paper products being generated; 3) recommend which of those can be converted to an electronic format and 4) develop a recommended implementation timeline.

To make the inventory of hard copy materials more manageable, you can divide them into internal and external categories and then further sort them:

***School Board:*** meeting agendas and supporting documents, communication to parents from the school board, messages or letters.

***Central Office Administrative Communications***: newsletters, calendars, school profiles, superintendent letters, key communicators updates, school board materials and packets, policy books, school lunch menus.

***School-Level Administrative Communications:*** newsletters, letters from the principal, attendance notifications, permission forms and notifications, including field trip, media release, award certificates, counselors' letters of recommendation, transcripts.

***Academic Paper Products***: report cards, student work sheets, resource materials, progress reports, and teacher newsletters.

***Activities and Extracurricular Events***: PTA newsletters, fliers publicizing activities and events, fundraisers, etc.

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Once the committee's recommendations for either a gradual or a complete changeover have been accepted, set a firm timeline for implementation and stick to it. The committee might recommend a gradual phase-in and phase-out period where both electronic and hard copies are being distributed.

The timeline for implementation should take into account how long it will take to either scan or reproduce documents into an electronic form.

Make sure that departments and schools are on board to order a smaller amount of paper to correspond with the upcoming reduction in printed material. If implementation begins the next school year, reduce the amount of paper ordered for that year. But remember, you may need to provide some documents in print format, just in smaller quantities.

Notify your parents of which documents will be produced electronically and how they can access them if they are unable to do so at home. If you are realizing a cost savings, explain how that will improve student learning by directing more funds to it. Be clear in explaining which documents will continue in print form and the regulations that require it.

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*Contributed by Jackie Smith, communications consultant*

# Is your finance measure ready for the ballot?

Before the school board makes a final decision to put a finance measure on the ballot — for operating funds or bonded debt — make sure you have your district's information and advocacy campaigns in place and organized to win.

Not sure all the pieces are in place? See these past tip sheets: *Deciding what a community will support*, January 2012; and *Ten steps to a successful finance campaign*, September 2010.

Your district is ready to go if you have:

- A year-round public relations program in place that provides two-way communication with all key constituents: staff, students, parents, key community groups and contacts.

- Conducted and studied the results of a community survey and/or organized community discussions of the issues that indicate approximately 60 percent of the district's voters believe the proposed operations or bond levy is essential to student learning and are willing to pay the additional tax cost.

- A large group of willing volunteers ready to participate in the kind of campaign that is required to win.

If these three components are in place, have the school board set the election date and get to work.

**Start with Election Day and work backward to develop coordinated district information and community advocacy timelines.** The district's information provides the base of understanding voters need to make an informed decision about the finance issue before the campaign does its major work to connect with key voter groups and get targeted voters to the polls.

**District information and community advocacy activities must operate independently from each other.** At the same time, any decision-making research the district does is a public record and available to the campaign or any other community member or group that may request it.

**Make sure the advocacy committee has strong leadership and is organized to win.** The committee should have a chair or co-

### Ten steps to a successful finance campaign

*September 2010*

1. Develop a year-round PR program.
2. Plan ahead.
3. Study election records.
4. Survey your community.
5. Plan your campaign.
6. Register voters.
7. Identify how many "yes" votes you need to win.
8. Develop targeted campaign materials.
9. Get your "yes" voters to the polls.
10. Debrief and evaluate after the election.

### How will you decide?

*January 2012*

1. Convene a community task force to identfy possible community resources.
2. Appoint a staff/ community group

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chairs to coordinate all facets of the research-based campaign, making sure sub-committee chairs and volunteers complete the required campaign tasks. School board members and school administrators (on their own time) can and should help provide this direction.

**Encourage advocacy committee members to keep the campaign organization simple**. In addition to a strong chair or co-chairs, the campaign needs committees for finance, data, publicity and volunteer coordination.

The **finance committee** raises campaign funds and keeps accurate accounts for all required election income and expenditure reports.

The **data committee** is responsible for making sure the campaign has all the voter information and lists needed for phoning, mailings, door-to-door and social media activities.

The **publicity committee** prepares all campaign literature based on research and adhering to agreed upon themes and messages.

The **volunteer committee** is key to the campaign's success. These committee chairs make sure there are enough volunteers for every campaign phoning, mailing, door-to-door and social media activity. They also make sure someone is responsible for providing beverages and snacks at all activities that involve volunteers.

to determine whether a tax measure is viable.

3. Form an advocacy committee to gauge community and volunteer resources.
4. Conduct listening sessions and a telephone survey to measure community support and help determine if and when to send a measure to voters.
5. Communicate to keep patrons informed and involve them in the decision-making process about whether to sponsor a measure and what it should include.

The advocacy campaign's primary objective is to identify potential "yes" voters and get them to the polls. Identifying voters requires a personal connection by phone or door-to-door. You also need personal contacts, sometimes more than one, to make sure "yes voters" cast their ballots. This is especially true in states with easy access to voting by mail or early voting

If your campaign is research-based and you do the work required to get out the "yes" vote, you'll win. But win or lose, remember to thank everyone who worked on the campaign. Then keep community members informed about how their tax dollars are being spent to improve student learning.

These steps will help you design your blueprint for campaign success. The National School Public Relations Association's *Election Success: Proven strategies for public finance campaigns* can give you more details. It was written by Gay Campbell, APR, and Jeanne Magmer, APR, as a step-by-step guide to help any school district plan and carry out a winning school finance campaign.

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*Contributed by Jeanne Magmer, APR, communications consultant*

# Naming a school: An opportunity for high involvement

What to name the new school? This question draws communities into intense discussion and evokes memories of shared experiences and community history. People remember those who have made significant community contributions and think about geographic characteristics that mean a lot to them.

Inviting community members to give input into naming an important, lasting community fixture generates conversation and support for a new school and its mission. In rare instances, it generates controversy. This can be prevented through a well-planned process and good communications.

**Establish the ground rules**
A policy and procedure for naming schools clearly spells out the process to name any school facility. This may be a new building, a sports facility or the wing of an existing building.

The policy should include:

- Any restrictions on names of places or people. Many school districts specify that a building will not be named for anyone who is still living. They know a person who is famous today can become infamous tomorrow. Other school districts use only geographic names that pertain to the location of the school.
- A declaration that there will always be a process for public input and indicators of the scope of that process. This clarifies board intent and role of community input in the final decision.
- A statement that the final decision will be made by the school board.

**Take time to do it right**
Many community members will want to immerse themselves in finding a name that will symbolize the meaning each of them places on the new school. Some may even see their contribution to naming the school as a gift they can give future generations of students. A lengthy process that provides many opportunities and methods of giving input builds trust. It signals that the administration and school board want to partner with the community in making decisions with long-lasting implications.

**Build school spirit**
Involving students in naming a school can ease their transition to the new school and build community support around it. When the Everett, Wash., school district was building a new elementary school in a fast-growing part of its community, it invited potential students of the school to join parents and other community members in suggesting a name. Some groups thought the new school should be named for a community member. Others thought it should be given a name that reflected the geographic location of the school.

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The school district encouraged these conversations with board members and staff, meeting with various groups when invited. The already-chosen principal met with students who would be attending the school.

After a listening period, the school board named the school after a well-known landmark near the school: Penny Creek Elementary School. Students and staff at the school decided the mascot would be a frog and the students started calling themselves the Frogs. Potential anxiety about leaving their current school and friends was replaced with enthusiasm about becoming Frogs. Frog logos appeared on signs and T-Shirts. Teachers planned lessons around frogs. Students and parents visited the nearly-completed building over the summer. By the time the school opened in the fall, students and staff were eager and proud to be part of this new school.

Community members who had lobbied for naming the school after a noted, deceased community member were soon strong supporters as they watched the students embrace their new school. The Frogs were a good reminder of the joy of childhood discovery, a gift every community wants to give to its children.

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*Contributed by Gay Campbell, APR, communications consultant*

# Communicating about school security

The unthinkable tragedy at tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School has caused parents and school staff across the nation to turn their attention to safety at their own schools. Communities are turning to their own school districts for reassurance that their children are safe.

Communication about school security should not alarm the community but it should respond to the current emotional energy to help improve safety. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (nctsn.org) says "restoring a sense of safety and security" is important for families coping with such horrible news. Acts of violence in another state should not be a source of obsession for all educators. However, they do serve as a reminder that we should all give safety and security a renewed level of importance without living in constant fear.

"We do want to remind parents that the greatest risk to kids is still outside the school rather than in it," says school psychologist and threat-assessment expert John Van Dreal, author of *Assessing Student Threats: A Handbook for Implementing the Salem-Keizer System.* "But we also want them to know there is a lot they can do as parents and we can do in the schools to help keep kids safe."

"This is a great time to remind parents and community members that they need to act if they see something at or near the school that just doesn't look right. We should remind them to report disturbing statements and behaviors that could indicate a threat to school safety," Van Dreal said. "Parents and citizens can supply that key piece of information that helps officials identify a threatening situation."

**School Security includes threat assessment**
Van Dreal is chair of the Student Threat Assessment System, a multi-agency structure in Salem, Oregon. The system operates within a community that has centralized education resources, risk management and security resources, public mental health and the presence of law enforcement. It has been adapted to address the surrounding rural communities with limited resources or resources contracted through providers located in urban centers.

The adult Threat Advisory Team is a multi-agency collaboration addressing threats of violence within the adult population in Marion County, Oregon. Both teams are instrumental in keepings schools safe. More information may be found at studentthreatassessment.org.

The teams are available to consult with school districts and communities on the development of a Student Threat Assessment System and/or the adult Threat Advisory Team; however, Van Dreal strongly suggests consideration of the formation of both teams, as schools and communities have clearly been the target of violence from both youth and adults.

Van Dreal says even if you lack a formal threat assessment team, you need the public to help

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you. Let the public know they should report suspicious or threatening behaviors, objects and statements to police and school officials.

**Tell your community that you have safety procedures — but don't share the details.**
Parents want to know that your schools have emergency plans. Tell them if you have lockdown procedures and how often you practice them. If you have a formal threat assessment process, tell the public about it. Van Dreal cautions against publishing details about safety and security procedures. Do not give a level of detail to the general public that a potential assailant could exploit for planning a violent incident.

**Remind them that law enforcement, not the public, reviews your plans.**
In the wake of highly publicized acts of school violence, it is common for parents and well-meaning patrons to either volunteer or demand to review school security procedures at a detailed level. Some citizens may call for community meetings to discuss security measures. It is best to not have open discussions about specific security measures, but the principal may share some detail verbally with known parents to reassure them.

Larger districts often have law enforcement officers in schools. In smaller districts, officers may not have a regular presence in the schools and therefore should be consulted during processes to review and improve security procedures. The public needs to know that school security plans are developed and reviewed by experts. Parents do not have a role in reviewing safety plans in detail.

**Ask parents to talk to their kids**
Parents do have a role to play in encouraging kids to take safety drills and precautions seriously. In its publication, *Talking to Children About Violence: Information for Parents and Educators*, the National Association of School Psychologists advises that any explanations about school security issues should be developmentally appropriate: "Early elementary school children need brief, simple information that should be balanced with reassurances that their school and homes are safe and that adults are there to protect them."

Middle and high school students will want more details about what is being done to keep them safe. Older kids should be given more detailed advice about their role in safety at school (e.g., not providing building access to strangers, reporting strangers on campus, reporting threats to the school safety made by students or community members, etc.).

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# Sample letter to parents

Dear Parents:

As you know, a terrible tragedy occurred in Connecticut just before our winter break. We have received calls and emails from parents with questions about school safety:

**1. How do I know my child is safe here?**
School is still the safest place for your child. Please reassure your children of that fact. Extreme violence and accidents occur, but we are taking every step we can to ensure it doesn't happen in our schools. We will run extra security and safety drills early this calendar year and we will remain vigilant to ensure our existing safety procedures are adhered to.

**2. Can the general public review school security plans? Can parents?**
No. We do not want our security plans to be exploited by unknown people. However, if you have specific concerns or questions, your principal may share information with your verbally because you are known as a parent.

**3. How can I be assured that your security plans are adequate if they are not published?**
Our security plans are developed and continuously improved in cooperation with local law enforcement. City and county law enforcement have officers working in our schools and cooperating with us on security and safety issues.

**4. What can I do as a parent to help with school security issues?**
If you see something of concern at your school, tell the principal. Through vigilance, we can all make our schools safer. Please tell your children to take safety drills seriously. Do not alarm your children, but tell them safety drills are important and serious. You also play a major role in threat assessment by reporting suspicious or threatening situations and statements.

**5. What is threat assessment?**
Threat assessment is a cooperative effort between the school district and various local agencies including law enforcement. The goal is to share information about situations that may pose a threat to our schools or our community. If you hear something or see something that makes you concerned about a potential threat to our schools, please contact law enforcement so they can use is in threat assessment.

We need to be prepared for the possibility of violence in our schools. However, we also need to remain calm and reassure the students that they can concentrate on their studies and not worry about their safety.

Thank You.

Superintendent

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*Contributed by Marcia Latta, communications consultant*

# Asking questions is a good way to find things out: Starting a district Q&A program

Surveys show that patrons get much of their information about your school district from its non-administrative employees. Therefore, it benefits the district if the spokespeople — teachers, bus drivers and custodians — know what the district is doing and why.

One great way to educate your district staff is through a 24/7 question and answer program where you commit to collect 24 questions from employees and publish the answers within seven business days. The results are a better informed workforce and more open lines of communication.

We have been doing this program twice a year for three years at Salem-Keizer Public School District 24J in Oregon. After the first time, we surveyed our employees and found that it was very well-received and considered highly valuable by our employees. Subsequent surveys proved the value remains high. We recently dropped the 24-question limit and have agreed to answer all appropriate questions submitted in the first 48 hours.

It engages our employees even more than we had predicted. Employees are interested to know how many questions we get, what the questions are and how well we answer them.

In November and April, we announce the opening of "Ask 24J." We use our electronic staff newsletter "Inside 24J" to make the announcement and publish the answers, but using district websites or email would also work.

To see samples, go to salemkeizer.org and use our website search window to search for "Ask 24J." There are samples going back a few years that show what employees asked and how we answered them.

**Announcement to Employees**
This was our program announcement to employees: "Do you have a question that you have really wanted to ask about the district? Something you have always wondered about, wanted more information on, or wish you understood better? Send us your question today at noon!

We want to help answer some of your biggest questions about Salem-Keizer. After all, as an employee, you are an ambassador for the school district and a valuable source of information for the community.

You will have 48 hours to submit a question. We will have answers ready within seven business days. The questions and their answers will be posted online and sent out in Inside24J.

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**How it works**

1. The link to the question form will appear below at 12 p.m. today, Monday, Nov. 5.
2. Questions can be submitted anonymously.
3. The form will close on Wednesday, November 7, at noon.
4. Once we have all the questions, we will start getting information and answers.
5. Answers will be sent out in the next issue of Inside24J."

**Sample Q&A Published on District Website**

**Ask 24J: Your questions answered**

1. **With our high number of Spanish-speaking families in the district and much needed Spanish-speaking employees needed to communicate on a daily basis, why is the district not looking at that small amount of staff with that special skill in getting a differential? It is a skill and is being used on a daily basis when others in the same position do not have that skill, but are equally paid.**

   Skills are job-based. Some of our employees may have more sophisticated computer or writing skills and may be in a school office specialist position, but they are not paid extra for those skills, and yet they use them every day, too. Employees whose primary responsibility is translation are paid at a different level of pay.

2. **If the district can save money by offering early retirement to teachers in the 55-58 range, why aren't they considering doing it? At present, you are not eligible for district paid medical unless you have worked for 30 years or reached the age of 58.**

   The district does not have extra revenue for payout incentives that offer a richer early retirement program to allow teachers to retire sooner. The current early retirement incentive payouts and the budgeted amount for what the district pays into PERS are significant. Many of our retired teachers use their ERI benefit to pay for their retiree medical insurance. It is not district paid.

*See more answers at:* http://www.salemkeizer.org/inside24j/inside24j-november-15-2012/ask-24j-your-questions-answered

**Preparation**

In order for this program to work, district-level administrators, including the superintendent, need to be ready to answer questions that pertain to their areas of responsibility. The project staff member compiles the questions and sorts them according to the appropriate district departments.

Department heads may enlist staff to help, but each top-level administrator must review the answers and submit them to the communications staff person or 24/7 project lead. Otherwise, your communications staff might be searching for answers long after the seven days have run out. That would send a very poor message about your regard for employee questions. If a question is routed to the wrong department, it should be noted right away and rerouted. Time is of the essence.

Some questions may have implications for two departments in the central office. In that case, the top administrators of those departments need to work together. To work, this project has to be a high priority for the superintendent and everyone on her team. In fact, the very act of pulling together the answers in a short timeframe can indicate a high level of teamwork at the

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district office. The first time you do it, it feels a little like a stunt because of the deadline — and people love stunts.

**So, What Will They Ask?**
Generally, employees will ask about district policies and practices that affect their working conditions or compensation. Staff genuinely want to know why certain things are the way they are. Some questions make us wish the person had simply called us and asked long ago. The fact that they never asked may mean that others have long wondered the same thing and will benefit from the published answer.

During budget season, a high percentage of questions will be about potential budget cuts. Those should be lumped together with a response that it is too soon to know until the budget process works itself out. Our spring edition always contains a statement about the budget process and asks employees not to ask about specific potential specific program and position cuts. We tell them questions about revenue projections, current year budget and processes are fair game, but we won't be able to answer questions about specific program or staffing cuts. Likewise, if you are in contract negotiations, you may need to lump some questions together and respond that those discussions will be subject to negotiations instead of your 24/7 feature.

We rarely need to reject questions, but we reserve that right. If a question would cast a specific employee in a negative light, it is rejected or edited to be informative but not abusive. The point is to ask about the district, not to criticize other employees or supervisors. So, feel free to toss out questions that are not appropriate, but that does not mean you should toss out tough questions that you just don't want to address. If you do that, your employees will expose you, and your credibility will be damaged. Be prepared to defend the decision to cut any question.

Top-level administrators should not be subject to disrespect, but tough questions should not be softened too much. It is better to give a good answer to a tough question. In our experience, the district administration always looks good for being open to any and all questions. If anything, questions containing criticism reflect more on the people asking them. If the person asking the question uses unprofessional or negative language it simply makes it easier for us to sound professional and positive.

The beauty of publishing answers electronically is that they can be edited even after publication. If employee feedback shows that an answer is being taken wrong or was inadequate, simply revise and improve the answer.

**Another Approach**
If you doubt your ability to answer a big batch of questions on a short timeline, try another approach. Perhaps feature an "employee question of the week" or have an ongoing feature on your website. The main goal is to be open to questions and commit to doing the work to answer them in public. Even if the answers are not what some employees want to hear, they will appreciate that you took the time to inform them.

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*Contributed by Jay Remy, communications director, Salem-Keizer Public Schools*

# INSIGHTS

## FOR FAMILIES

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# Good time management leads to better school success

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***February 2013***

INSIGHTS FOR FAMILIES is provided by your child's school in recognition of your role as a partner in education. Insights is produced by Marcia Latta, communications consultant.

Self-discipline and good organizational skills — prioritizing and completing projects, motivation, lack of procrastination — have a greater connection to academic success than intellectual ability alone. A study published in *Psychological Science* found that "highly self-disciplined adolescents outperformed their more impulsive peers on every academic-performance variable, including report-card grades, standardized achievement-test scores, admission to a competitive high school, and attendance." *www.sas.upenn.edu/~duckwort/images/PsychologicalScienceDec2005.pdf*

The competition for your time is stiff. Long to-do lists can cause stress for parents and children, but adopting some self-management skills can make daily life smoother and create habits that help students succeed in school.
Education.com has the following tips to help you teach your child time management:
*education.com/magazine/article/teach-time-management-key-success/*

**To save time, everything in your house should have a designated place**, including: back packs, lunch boxes, coats etc. It's easier to find something if that item has a home.

**Set up a monthly calendar with each child.** Use your school district's global calendar to add school vacation days, exams or other testing dates and any other important events. When school begins, help your child expand the calendar with a color coding system: red for tests or quizzes, blue for long-term projects, black for nightly homework and green for fun activities.

**Practice estimating time with activities** such as a family dinner or sports practice. Begin by practicing this skill with everyday activities over the summer, and then encourage your child to use the same strategy with his or her homework. By recognizing the actual amount of time necessary for schoolwork, chores and fun activities, your child gains an awareness of the passage of time and the importance of managing time efficiently.

**Teach your child how to divide long-term projects into manageable tasks.** It is easy to combine this strategy with practicing how to estimate time accurately. For example, have your child list the steps associated with preparing a family dinner. After the activity is divided into specific tasks, your child can estimate the time each step will take and compare this to the actual time. Learning how to divide large projects helps students initiate and complete daunting academic assignments by breaking the large task into manageable pieces.

**Avoid procrastination.** Some students cancel afternoon or weekend plans because of homework but still delay completing the work until the last minute. Teach your child to pair difficult or

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boring tasks with a reward. Working from a "To Do" list helps both you and your child prioritize tasks and plan time effectively.

Establishing good habits early is the most effective way to ensure that they stick. Younger children can get in the habit of self-discipline with these easy, visual tips from GreatSchools.org:
*www.greatschools.org/students/academic-skills/1560-time-management-for-kids.gs*

**Create a chart for your preschooler or kindergartener** for the bathroom wall and call it "Body Beautiful." Illustrate hygiene tasks, such as brushing teeth, with words or images. This teaches how to visualize and finish tasks independently.

**Limit screen time.** Television is a common waste of time. Plan ahead and set limits with your child's input on the amount of television per week. Write the plan based on viewing preferences and schedules. Also, consider that screen time includes computer and video games.

**Create a chart for older children, too.** Charts with time blocks for each task are helpful for children ages 7 to 12 years old who are learning to manage their own time. Have your child include all school and chore responsibilities and check off each task when done. This teaches personal organizational skills and scheduling.

**Create a separate homework chart.** Have your child make a homework chart and list assignments for Monday through Friday. After finishing assignments, your child can mark it as completed. This teaches children how to keep track of deadlines and duties.

**Planning tools can provide extra help**

All students have their own learning style. Consider these tools to help your student manage time better:

- **Timers:** Set a basic kitchen timer for homework sessions or musical practice.
- **Analog clocks with post-it notes:** Label the face of the clock with the task and time your child will start it.
- **Online calendar with task list:** If your child uses a computer, an online calendar such as Google Calendar, helps schedule tasks by day, week or month.
- **The Lazy Meter:** There are numerous smartphone apps and computer programs that help manage time. The Lazy Meter is an online to-do list that schedules tasks for one day at a time. It helps students focus on a daily goal and check it off when complete. *www.lazymeter.com*