

# ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR THE GIFTED STUDENT

Nan Janecke and Dr. Kelly Schultz  
Academically Talented Youth Program  
Western Michigan University

Based on content from:

“Organizationally Challenged?”  
How Developing Executive Function  
Can Help the Gifted

Presented by:

Ellen D. Fiedler, Ph.D.      and  
Wings for Education  
New Buffalo, MI  
& Hollywood, FL  
ellenfiedler@comcast.net

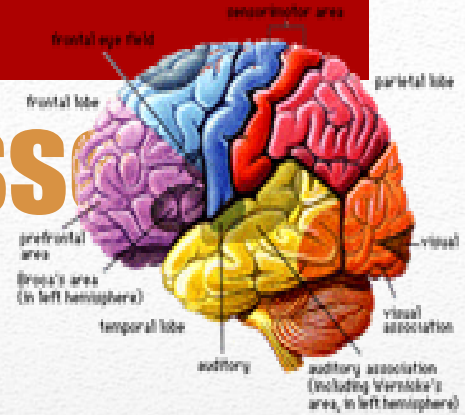
Michele M. Kane, Ed.D.  
Associate Professor  
Northeastern Illinois Univ.  
Chicago, Illinois  
M-Kane1@NEIU.edu

# Executive Functions (Behavior)

Definition - The ability to manage emotions in order to achieve goals, complete tasks, control and direct behavior

- Inhibit competing actions
- Shift strategies
- Self-monitor, check, and regulate emotions

# Executive Function Processes (Educational Implications)



## Organizational Skills

- Setting & managing goals
- Planning
- Organizing
- Time management
- Initiating
- Inhibiting actions

## Higher-Order Learning Skills

- Metacognition
- Monitoring, including goals
- Self-regulation
- Reflection & self-evaluation
- Thinking and acting strategically: socially and cognitively

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References citing relationship between executive functions, attention, and working memory:  
Barkley 1996, 1997; Esslinger, 1996; Pennington, Bennetto, McAleer, & Roberts, 1996

# Typical Behaviors Found in Students with Executive Function Issues

- Does not manage time well
  - Skips steps in multi-step tasks
  - Difficulty identifying important information when taking notes
  - Loses important papers or possessions
  - Has difficulty with transitions
-

# Problems for gifted students?

- Lack of study skills and time management skills
- Major difficulties with written expression; math problem solving (just pops in my head)
- Sequencing in oral and written expression may be inaccurate or jumbled
- Frustration, low tolerance for personal errors
- Long-term goals are elusive; lack of knowledge of how to create goals
- Lack of others' understanding of their inability to express feelings/thoughts accurately

# Why are gifted kids so often “organizationally challenged?”

- They have good memories and are able to rely on it.
- They have so many interests and things going on at once that their lives simply spin out of control.
- They are typically internally-motivated and resist all external efforts to get them to conform to anyone else’s ideas of how they should live their lives.
- They are unaware of the knowledge and/or lack the skills that would help them be more organized.
- Organization requires mundane work, and their brains aren’t wired that way.

# It's Worth a Try ...

- The brighter kids are, the more likely it is that they will have issues with organization.
  - Or, rather, the more likely it is that the grown-ups in their lives will have concerns about their not being organized.
- Due to the development asynchrony of younger children, they may have even more challenges with organization.
- Frustrated parents, counselors & teachers need help.
- The following strategies may (or may not) help gifted kids get more organized.

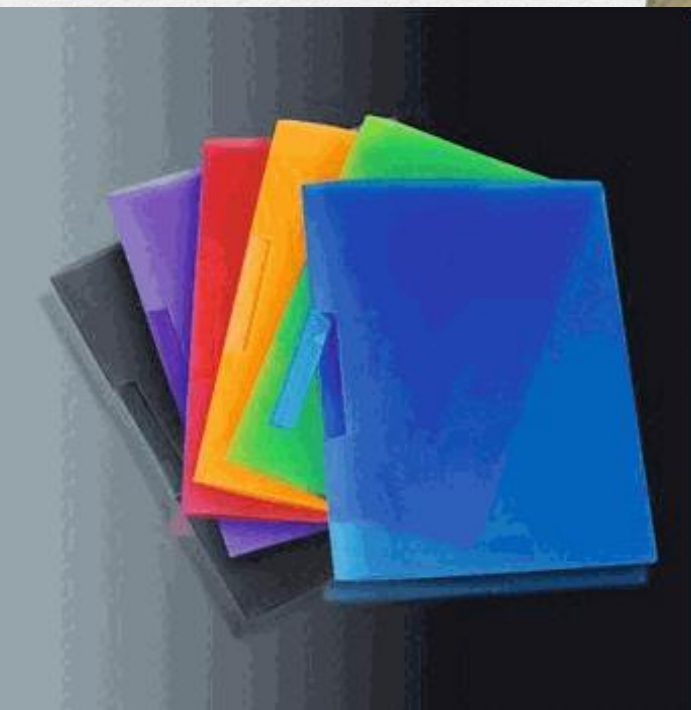
# Find an Organizational System that Works!



# Color-coding

- Kids use different colored folders/“stickies”/index cards/markers for different categories of things they need to keep track of in their lives.
    - *Note:* The kids need to figure out what those categories might be and decide which colors should be used for which.
  - Some kind of chart or “key” can be posted on the wall of their room or in some other convenient location (e.g., kitchen or bathroom).
  - Kids need to decide whether/where the chart should be posted.
-

# Color coded notebooks, “stickies”, and folders



# Timers & Alarm Watches



- Use a wind-up or electronic timer to keep track of when it's time to change activities, quit doing whatever they're doing, or whatever.
- Give kids an alarm watch and (if need be) teach them how to set it.
  - Then, they can list situations in which it might be useful to have it go off to remind them of what they need to do at a particular time.
  - They can also decide how much of an “advance warning” they think they might need.
- Put clocks in the rooms where your student works and plays.



# Technology

- Most kids love using technology and are good at it.
  - Smartphones and computers can be synced with each other or used independently as stand-alone devices.
  - Anything that you can think of that needs to be kept organized (and more) can be kept on technology.
    - Appointments & other calendar events (with reminders as far ahead of time as the kids would like to be reminded of each)
    - Phone numbers & addresses (email & snail mail)
    - Notes (to do's & all kinds of miscellaneous information)
  - Items can be color-coded, as well, using whatever system the kids find most useful for their purposes.
-

# More Technology Ideas

- Use a phone to take pictures of assignments on the blackboard
  - Students can text themselves the homework for each class.
  - Many teachers now not only post grades online, but also class calendars (more on this later). If your student has forgotten what's due, this is the first place to check.
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# Appointment books/agendas/calendars

- Some kids like to have a hands-on master calendar for their schedule.
  - Check out <http://myexceltemplates.com/> for some templates
  - These can either be the kind that hang on the wall or one that they carry with them (although there's always the danger of it getting lost).
  - Check out the ColorNote or Toodledo (free!) apps.
-

# Master Planner

FEBRUARY 2008

17 SUNDAY



## RIDDLES AND RHYMES

What kinds of shoes are made out of banana peels?  
rhyming shoes

18 MONDAY

19 TUESDAY

20 WEDNESDAY

Write Instructions  
 pg 514

Write a  
 Summary for  
 Planned Girl  
 using 4 vocab  
 words

S  
 C  
 h  
 o  
 o  
 l  
 t  
 o  
 d  
 a  
 y

310-311  
 a-m all

651 2-2a  
 evens only

study notes  
 book pg  
 21-1521

Book report  
 Nhw  
 Nhw

book report  
 Nhw  
 on  
 science tomorrow

Learning goal

Health goal

Highlights/Reflection of the week

21 THURSDAY

22 FRIDAY

23 SATURDAY

Double Bubble - Complete  
 poverty, Ellis  
 Island min?

missing  
 assignments

pg 351-79  
 pg 352-353  
 24-30

pgs 351  
 2-2

book report  
 worksheet  
 Nhw

Achievements  
 what you  
 learned  
 worksheet  
 Nhw

### SPELLING

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.
- 13.
- 14.
- 15.
- 16.
- 17.
- 18.
- 19.
- 20.

SPELLING | LANGUAGE ARTS | READING

MATHEMATICS

SOCIAL STUDIES | SCIENCE | LIFESKILLS

### KEEP TRACK

BOOK OF THE WEEK:

### STUDY WISE:

- I prepared my homework
- always
  - sometimes
  - never

SPELLING | LANGUAGE ARTS | READING

MATHEMATICS

SOCIAL STUDIES | SCIENCE | LIFESKILLS



SCHOOL TALK

OPTIONAL TEACHER  
 COMMENT CODES

WEEKS 10

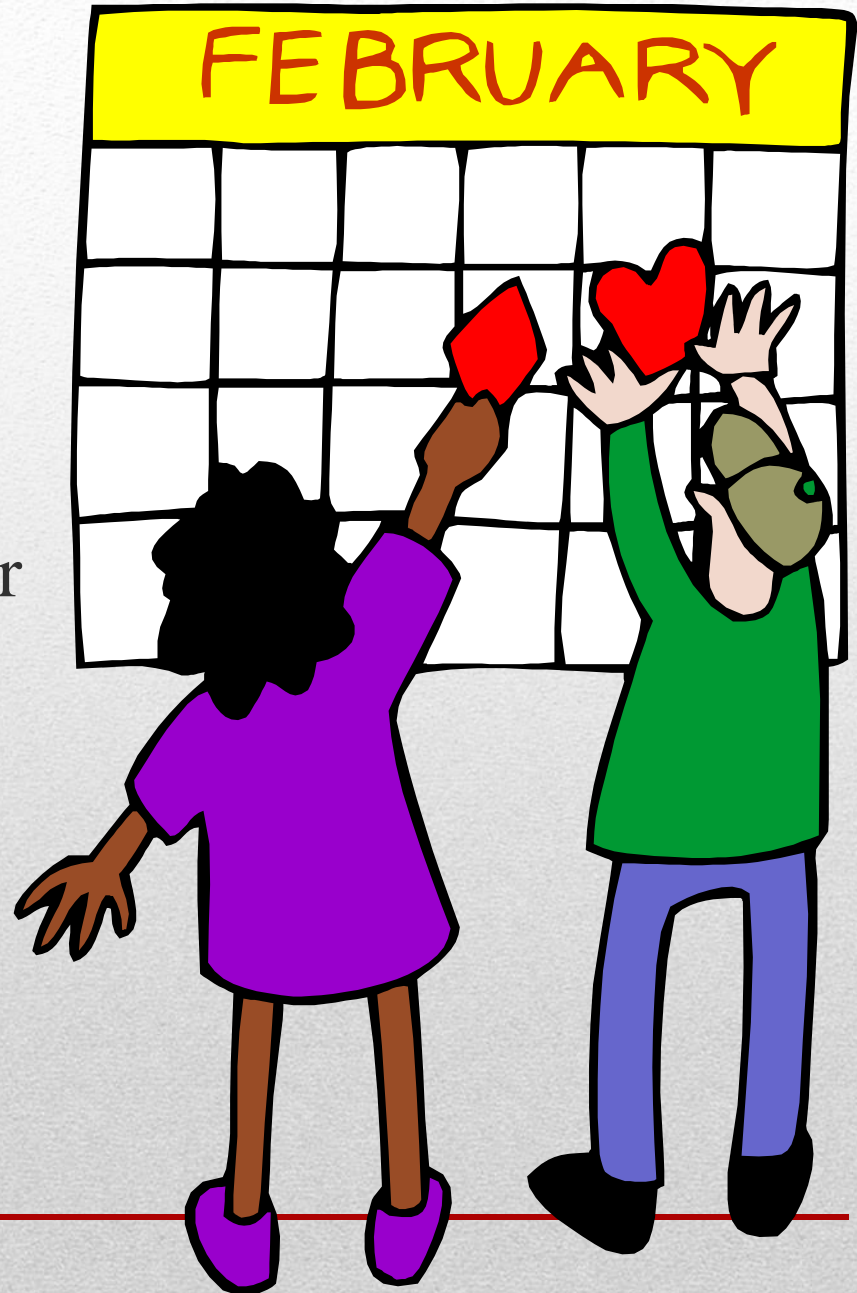
WEEKS 10

WEEKS 10



# Master Calendar

- Have a master calendar
- Post it in a prominent location
- Paper or white board options available



# Master Calendar

Clare's-553-4156 Ro3365-5793 Dad's cell 217-0289 Mom's cell 267-6513  
 KT's cell 290-5720 M-39.30 Dry-Erase Calendar  
 Syd =

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 5:00 Soccer Prac 5:15 Dance Trip to Fort Wayne GOLF	2 5:15 Dance 6:00 Soccer @ Ft. Joe	3 NUMATS Mtg 5:00 Soccer Practice Avergers	4 3:30 Dance 5:00 Soccer @ McHaven	5 7:45 GAT 11:3 Dance 330 2051 616-498-5551
6 3:30 ATVP Mtg 6:00 NUS Ceremony	7 Syd Follow-up App. Name Work 1-6	8 7:50 AP CS Exam	9	10 7:50 AP Eng Exam	11	12 10:00 @ AYSD
13 9:00 CONFIRMATION MOTHERS DAY	14 Lunch w/ Goal DAN'S B'DAY RECYCLE	15 12-1 Dentist 5:15 Dance GOLF	16 7:50 AP Eng Exam	17 9:00-10:50 @ church soccer @ Madison 4:00 MAsyd Haircut	18 1:00 Dress Rehearsal 6- Rachelle's Wedding 6:00 F&S Mtg	19 7:15 Net's Off
20 BAETWOODS 3:30 ATVP Mtg.	21 6:00 Soccer @ Bridgman	22 12:00 Dentist CD	23 5-6:30 Soccer Practice	24 5:30 Soccer @ Drake	25	26 12:00 JESS'S Shower 3:30 WAYLAND
27	28 12:00 Memorial Day	29 10-3 GOLF RECYCLE	30 11-4 CD	31 11-4 2:00 5:00 pct up		Leanne's Shower 12-4

©2000 Doone International, Inc. Works best with Doone's Dry-Erase Markers



# Scheduling By The Week or Project

## Blocking out time

- What are my commitments this week?
- Where do I have blocks of time that I can commit to this project?
- What are my goals/expectations for each block?
- Thinking backwards for planning purposes.

Day→ Time↓	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.	Mon.	Tues.
9 a.m.							
10 a.m.							
11 a.m.							
12 p.m.							
1 p.m.							
2 p.m.							
3 p.m.							
4 p.m.							
5 p.m.							
6 p.m.							
7 p.m.							
8 p.m.							
9 p.m.							
10 p.m.							

# Helping Students Manage Their Materials



Weekly/ Biweekly  
cleanout

- Binder
- Desk
- Locker
- Classroom



# More Ideas from a Teacher on the Front Lines

Homework not making it home?

- Have them pack their backpack as they go – middle school students don't get much time at the end of the day to catch the bus.
- Have them stack their folders in schedule order (1<sup>st</sup> hour, 2<sup>nd</sup> hour) in their locker – this will help when they need to grab them in a hurry



# Role Models/Mentors

- Help kids find how successful adults organize their lives.
    - Encourage them to find a wide range of methods.
    - Then guide them in choosing those that they think would be useful for them to try, themselves.
  - A related idea is to look at the lives of remarkable individuals from history (e.g., Leonardo da Vinci) and find out how they kept their lives organized.
    - Have them imagine what those people might have done to stay organized if they had the resources available to them that are available now, including technology.
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# What else can educators/parents do?

- Hold “morning meetings” where concerns can be addressed.
- Develop “social stories” for gifted students; role play or rehearse potentially problematic situations (e.g. test anxiety).
- Provide emotional safety nets and plans of action when meltdowns seem imminent.
- Provide academic support in areas of need.

# What else can educators/parents do?

- Help students develop self-awareness of personal strengths and weaknesses.
- Help students understand their personal learning styles, learning modalities and preferred learning environments.
- Develop study plans based on personal profiles; create learning opportunities where there are gaps.
- Develop clear, realistic goals including ways to overcome obstacles.
- Teach strategies directly so that students connect Executive Functions with the appropriate strategies.

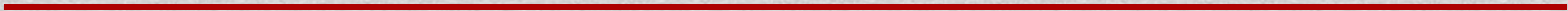
# Still more that educators/parents can do

- Create problem-solving and decision-making opportunities in classrooms and at home.
- Work to develop a personal plan for reducing stress and knowing the physical manifestations of stress.
- Create opportunities for students to learn about cognition, emotion and age appropriate aspects of cognitive science.
- De-emphasize platitudes like “do your best”; help students become aware of effort and results.
- The work of Carol Dweck on mindset tells us that we are building grit and resilience.

# Finally . . .

- Remember that kids have their own agendas – i.e., what they want to do and how/when/if they want to do it.
  - Your influence may be more limited than you'd like.
- Some of us (and therefore, some gifted kids) really DO work better under pressure.
  - However, some of these “deadline workers” run out of time as they push the deadline.
  - One idea that may help is to start the planning process with “Day Zero” (the due date) and plan backwards – i.e., what needs to be done the day before it's due, the day before that, etc.

# Organization = Less Anxiety



# However ... Check these out!

Al Gore's desk:



And ... Albert Einstein's desk:



# Frazz by Jef Mallett

February 23, 2011



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<http://comics.com/frazz/2011-02-23/>

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**Email:**

Kelly Schultz at [kelly.schultz@wmich.edu](mailto:kelly.schultz@wmich.edu) or  
Nan Janecke at [nan.janecke@wmich.edu](mailto:nan.janecke@wmich.edu).

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