

August 2019

ONcall

ready-to-use NEWS

Communications planning: Editorial calendar for the new year

You may have a mind like a steel trap, but it's nearly impossible to remember all the dates and activities throughout the year that need to be communicated to your different school district audiences.

There's so much content to create, and so many communications channels to manage. Reminders about back-to-school events. Updates on important activities, such as concerts and plays. Information about new curriculum and programs. Publication dates for district newsletters and staff communications.

And even though you may think you're organized, the reality for most school PR folks is that you spend much of your time in crisis mode, and priorities get lost in the shuffle. But there's an easy solution — a communications calendar.

You need an editorial calendar

A communications calendar helps you manage your communications and strategically plan what you're going to say (and when you're going to say it and to whom). It's a simple tool, but it packs a huge punch. Those who use one find it's easier to stay organized and on top of the communications tasks they need to do.

There are all kinds of options for creating a communications calendar. A Google spreadsheet is ideal because you can easily share it with others, and you can access it from work, home or even cell phone. You can use new tabs for each month or quarter, so it's easy to view. Or if you prefer a calendar format, you could set up several Google calendars within one account (one for each communications channel). That way you could layer the calendars on top of each other and see everything at once.

You may need more than one communications calendar. If you are communicating about multiple programs or schools, you may need a separate calendar for each program/school. You may want a separate calendar for the different tools you use, such as one to organize your blog or social media posts and another for other types of communications.

Add your key dates

The National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) publishes a useful tool for helping with your communications calendar. Their "Resources for Planning the School Calendar" lists a variety of dates that you may want to consider as you establish programs for next year. The price is \$40 per copy, plus shipping and handling, and can be ordered online at nspra.org/products.

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The calendar includes dates for a variety of national observances, from National Bullying Prevention Month to National School Lunch Week to Administrative Professionals Week. Curious about when Public School Volunteer Week begins? This calendar lists the date, along with those of Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day, National School Nurse Day, National Physical Fitness and Sports Month and many more.

Review the Key Dates issue, published each spring, for a list of primary events and holidays.

Your calendar is the key to planning your content

By developing a communications calendar for the year, you are able to think through the different occasions you want to highlight with different audiences and plan accordingly. Along with noting the dates, your calendar is where you include strategies you plan to use. For example, for National School Nurse Day you may want to have the School Board approve a proclamation in honor of your school nurses. In addition, you may want to include a message in your newsletter and recognize the nurses at a staff meeting. By having all this on your calendar, you can plan ahead and not be faced with saying, “mea culpa,” for letting the occasion slip by unnoticed.

Communications calendars are a lifesaver when it comes to keeping a vibrant presence on social media. Social media tools, such as Hootsuite (<https://hootsuite.com>), allow you to schedule your Facebook and Twitter posts, so your pages stay active even when you’re on vacation or busy with other pressing tasks. By using your communications calendar, you can schedule posts about upcoming activities or observances weeks ahead of time. Same with blog posts.

Another benefit of a communications calendar is that it helps you regulate the frequency of your communications. Regular communications are the key to keeping your patrons engaged and well informed — not so many communications that they overwhelm your audiences but enough that they get your messages across.

Once you have your calendar, it’s important to review it regularly. If you’re lucky enough to have a communications staff, a regular editorial meeting will help you stay on track and avoid missing deadlines. It’s also a great time to brainstorm upcoming events and important dates that you want to add to your calendar.

A communications calendar is a great tool for everyone, whether you’re a PR professional or a principal or superintendent. But even if others don’t use one, be sure to share yours, so that your colleagues can better understand all that goes into communicating effectively with the variety of audiences that you have. Most are completely unaware of the wide scope of communications that is necessary to communicate effectively with a broad group of audiences. Sharing your calendar will also make them more aware of the times of year when communications are at a peak and your time is especially limited.

Contributed by Connie Potter, communications consultant

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inside

Communications planning: Editorial calendar for the new year

Plan communications content in advance and schedule all of your channels with a master editorial calendar that includes reminders, updates, activities and program information. Making this plan in advance will ensure that no audience is overlooked and can minimize the last-minute stress during the school year.

Contracts and pledges confirm commitment to school success

Contracts for behavior, homework, parental support, school requirements, etc., are a great check for understanding about what to expect from all parties. Consider starting parent, staff and student pledges for your classrooms and schools to clarify expectations and improve accountability.

Set and share clear expectations for communicating with parents

Parents have concerns and questions, and the start of a new school year opens a two-way floodgate of information. The goal is to have engaged parents without disrupting school and the ability of the teachers to work. Start the year off right by setting good communications expectations with parents..

Timing is everything when you share your news

Timeliness is key factor in whether your news gets noticed. Consider timing when you share important news - release urgent messages quickly to beat the social media rumor mill, and time strategic news carefully to increase or minimize attention and reach your audiences.

What are your school rules and how do you share them?

Schools can be both welcoming and firm about following rules. It's how you state the rules and whether your school community understands why they are important. Before school starts, review and agree upon standard rules that will be enforced consistently at each individual school and among schools in the district.

INSIGHTS FOR PARENTS: School Success Tips

School is starting, and many students could benefit from tips to help them succeed academically. Share these common-sense tips to help them start the year strong.

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Contracts and pledges confirm commitment to student success

To start the school year on the right foot and with everyone on the same page about expectations, many schools and teachers use contracts that list commitments and agreements. These contracts for behavior, homework, parental support, school requirements, etc., are a great check for understanding about what to expect from all parties.

These voluntary pledges, signed near the beginning of the school year, outline mutual expectations for helping each student succeed, reaffirm the dedication and caring of staff, and clarify the basic role parents play in the academic success of their child.

There are contracts for staff, parents and students. The parent pledge stresses the importance of parents in their child's education, the student pledge stresses the student's responsibility for his or her own academic success, and the staff pledge conveys to parents the dedication of teachers to the success of each student.

Tailor your contract for your needs

There are many sample contracts or templates that can be adapted based on specific school or classroom needs. The contracts will be signed by the students themselves, their parents and/or teachers. Be sure that the signers have read the contract and have confirmed that they understand the terms. This is a good opportunity to emphasize the importance of honoring the terms of a contract and only signing after fully understanding the agreements.

Academic contracts can help students understand their academic responsibilities. Contract terms include attendance, participation and completion of work. This contract can be signed by students and parents who agree to support their child academically.

Behavioral contracts are for positive classroom behavior. The terms can establish how students, parents and teachers will work together to promote a positive classroom environment, including parents showing support for school rules and the teachers clarifying classroom expectations and school policies.

Homework contracts can help ensure that students spend adequate time on schoolwork outside of the school day. This can include homework, classroom prep, and time management. Parents who sign this contract agree to support students at home by providing homework help and a distraction-free place to work. Teachers can also sign this contract by agreeing to assign an appropriate amount of homework that is relevant to the work students have done in class.

Technology contracts help ensure appropriate, safe use of school computers and internet ac-

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cess by reminding students that the use of technology is a privilege. Misuse of school technology, including modifying equipment, filters or internet access or damaging hardware or software, can result in revocation of technology access and possibly additional consequences.

Parent pledges

The content of parent pledges can vary by grade level. All parent/family pledges should include an introductory statement giving the reason for the pledge program, encouraging parents to participate and emphasizing that signing the pledge is not mandatory.

Sample introductory statement: I understand that my participation in my child's education is important to his/her achievement and attitude. Therefore, I agree to carry out the following responsibilities to the best of my ability. I will:

- Place a high priority on learning and knowledge.
- Have high expectations for my student and encourage him/her to believe in him/herself
- Encourage my student to do his/her best at all times.
- Encourage my student to read at home each day. Families of elementary students may commit to reading to their child a given number of minutes a day as well as encouraging the child to read independently each day.
- Be sure my child completes all homework assignments — with family help when needed.
- See that my child gets sufficient sleep to be ready to learn at school.
- Make sure my child arrives at school on time and ready to learn.

Some parent pledges also include:

- Treating students and staff with respect.
- Encouraging active, healthy living habits.
- Providing a quiet place for the child to study.
- Ensuring the child spends a given amount of time writing each day .
- Working with the child's teacher(s) and letting staff know immediately if the parent sees a problem in the child's education or a problem that might interfere with the child's education
- Monitoring the child's time spent watching television, playing electronic games, texting and using other social media or electronic devices.
- Volunteering time to the school.
- Attending parent meetings, open house and parent conferences.
- Encouraging student interest and participation in school activities.

Student pledges

Student pledges are often similar to parent/family pledges. They can also include commitments to:

- Doing my best work.
- Learning from my mistakes.
- Following school rules.
- Accepting responsibility for my words and actions in and out of class.
- Respecting myself, the school, classmates, staff and families.
- Reading a given number of minutes a day beyond homework time.

Some schools or teachers also have individual classroom pledges that include items such as following directions, listening to others, respecting the way classmates learn and helping others when possible.

If student pledges are used by the school, families may be encouraged to sign student and family pledges at the same time, discuss the content and plan together how they will carry out their pledge.

Staff pledges

Staff pledges often include:

- Providing a safe, caring environment.
- Providing the best possible education for each student.
- Communicating regularly with families about student progress.
- Respecting the school, students, staff and families.
- Communicating in a positive way about the school, students and staff.
- Organizing challenging lessons and activities that promote student achievement.
- Participating in professional development activities that improve teaching and learning and support working in partnership with families and the community.

School-specific pledges

Some schools use pledges for issues related to bullying, drug use and student safety. In some cases, parents, staff, and students discuss the issue, write the pledge and encourage signing and adhering to the pledge.

Communicating the pledge campaign

The reason for a pledge, the process used for determining the content of the pledge and communications around the pledge are all important to the success of school pledges. Involving the right people in planning and carrying out the project may determine how well the project meets the intended goals.

Parents, students and staff need to know who has been involved, the intent behind the pledge project, that signing pledges is optional and how to use pledges to help students succeed. The project should be a year-long promotion with communications throughout the year referring to the pledges, parent and student meeting agendas, and pledge content used as the basis for commending parents, students and staff for their successes.

Assessment of the pledge program

The pledge project should be assessed in the same way schools assess student progress. Informal and formal evaluation methods can be used to periodically look at results that can be attributed to the use of pledges to encourage student achievement:

Has there been a year-to-year improvement in on-time arrival at school, completed homework and other factors since families and/or students signed pledges?

Are more parents participating in meetings, open houses, conferences and volunteer activities since signing pledges?

Do staff members report improved behavior that can be attributed to students having signed pledges?

Sample contracts

Education World: A parent/student/teacher contract

<http://bit.ly/2XsxaPA>

Western School Corporation: Parent/student homework contracts

<http://bit.ly/2YCAzrA>

Helix Charter High School Contract

<http://bit.ly/2JDsVXJ>

Bellingham School District: Student technology contract
<http://bit.ly/308pLBM>

Contracts for
Success

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Contributed by Gay Campbell, communications consultant

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Set and share clear expectations for communicating with parents

The start of a new school year means the start of new relationships. When students enroll in school, the students, their parents or guardians, other parents, and school staff are all part of the school community. This relationship, like any relationship, can thrive if the communication is a priority, expectations are clear, there is mutual respect and.

Communication is key

Communication is an essential skill. Many employers consider it the most important workplace skill, and the skill that is most lacking in workers. In any organization, confusion could be largely eliminated with regular and effective communication.

Start the school year with a plan to keep your school community informed about your school activities, events and important dates. Your school likely has established methods and channels of communication. Which one is best? It depends on your audience. You could do a survey or start with the results from a survey by the National School Public Relations Association (www.nspr.org). of how parents prefer to receive school news. The top five responses were:

- E-mail from the district/school
- Online parent portal
- District/school e-newsletters
- District/school website
- Telephone/voice messaging system

The survey indicated that many parents would like information as timely as possible — when the decisions are made and on a regularly scheduled basis. Also, the survey noted that social media was not among the top preferences for communication tools, but it did not delve into why this was the case. To capture social media users, don't rely on social channels exclusively. Schools can post content on these channels that parents have indicated they prefer and then share to social media.

Setting expectations for parents

Parents have concerns and questions, and the start of a new school year opens a two-way floodgate of information. The goal is to have engaged parents without disrupting school and the ability of the teachers to work.

Start the year off right by setting good communications expectations with parents. Clarify how they will receive notices of student academic progress, when they can contact teachers and how they can get involved as volunteers.

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Auburn Elementary School in the Salem-Keizer School District in Oregon, posts its parent involvement policy on its website in both English and Spanish.

“Educating students at Auburn Elementary School is a collaborative effort involving the student, the teacher and the parents working together to achieve high student performance. Parents can participate in their child’s education and receive information in the following ways...”

The list includes the schedule for parent meetings and notifications of academic progress and assessment results; a description of grade-level expectations and curriculum standards, volunteer guidelines, and school newsletter information. In addition, it reiterates the partnership between school and parents: “By November 30, a School-Parent Compact will be signed for each Auburn Elementary School student. This compact specifies the means by which the school and the parent will build and sustain a partnership to help the student achieve high academic standards.” <http://bit.ly/2YqOJMI>

Responding to expectations from parents

What if parents have concerns? Is your policy about how they can communicate with you clear? Have you provided information to help them express concerns or ask questions?

In the absence of these guidelines, you cannot expect that parents will not catch the teacher “for just a minute” before class as students are entering or take their concerns directly to the school board.

This is another instance of the need for communication. State your commitment to parents and your expectations for parents in writing. Be clear and be kind, but be sure they know the processes so they do not unintentionally disrupt learning.

Concordia University in Portland, Ore., published the following recommendations to better understand parent expectations (<http://bit.ly/2J695VN>):

Communicate, communicate, communicate. Parents want to stay in the loop about their child at school. Communicating with parents add accountability to students.

Share expectations upfront. Start early and be clear about what you expect.

Don’t forget to care. Parents expect schools to care about their children. Classroom expectations can be rigorous, but staff should demonstrate kindness to students.

Practice empathy. We don’t know what others are thinking or feeling. Approach parent relationships as a mutual partnership. Often, parents respond well to a sympathetic ear and kind words, even if a solution is not immediately clear.

Don’t waste parents’ time. Families have many demands on their time. Make your communications to families clear and informative, and try to keep the expectations on them manageable.

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Timing is everything when you share your news

“Recently.”

That word rarely belongs in school district press releases. Its use generally indicates the news release is not, well, newsy. Instead, it is outdated.

This is the conundrum facing school communicators. “Timing is everything,” as the truism reminds us. The process of producing, approving and distributing news releases can take so long as to render them utterly useless to the news media. And then people wonder why their news was not covered.

It is because the tortoise rarely wins in the battle for media coverage. The importance of the time element — immediacy — is drilled into fledgling journalists and honed by veteran journalists. News is called “news” because it’s new; otherwise, it would be called “olds.”

To illustrate the case for timeliness, I’ll offer examples from a different public institution: state government.

My state’s legislature has ended its 2019 session. For the past five months, whenever a significant bill was passed or defeated, its supporters and opponents would issue a press release within minutes. They understood the sacred element of timeliness.

Granted, those lawmakers and interest groups might have the advantage of sole-purpose communication staffs. Still, the takeaways are relevant: They anticipated what could happen, they had their information ready — much of it probably pre-written — and they were ready to go.

That is akin to releasing information immediately after a school board meeting, instead of waiting days or more. In contrast, a few days ago I received a series of press releases from a well-known state agency. The releases discussed significant actions taken by the agency’s governing board ... the previous week. As I perused the news, those press releases resulted in minor mentions, if at all. The agency’s lack of urgency undercut any claim of importance.

News media have so much to cover that they rarely have time for old news. If they covered tardy events and announcements, they would come across to their readers, listeners, viewers and competitors as outdated and irrelevant.

It is our responsibility not only to recognize that reality but also to capitalize on it. For example, news media websites try to post new content every few minutes during their peak viewing hours. A clear, concise and significant press release might quickly get posted — if sent to the right person — whereas a longer one might lie dormant until the web producer, reporter or editor had time to go through it.

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For whatever reason, agencies and organizations seem especially slow in sending press releases about awards banquets. If someone is honored that night, the press release should go out that night.

Communications staffs sometimes make the mistake of relying only on social media to get the word out. Social media are important, but don't count on journalists to be constantly monitoring your social media accounts.

Timeliness is essential, but so is time of day. Get to know when your local media outlets prefer to receive information. Pay attention to their news cycles but also meet with them — at their convenience — to get their suggestions. Some days inherently are busier than others.

In general, the more complicated the issue, the earlier in the day to alert the media so they have time to dissect, understand and interview people about it. Late afternoon interviews are less helpful because there is less time to edit the video or finish writing the news story.

Releasing bad news at 6 p.m. Friday or on a weekend used to be a common way to avoid “negative” coverage. As a journalist, I broke numerous stories simply because I recognized that possibility and deliberately worked later on Fridays — just in case. With the explosion of social media, the public jumps on announcements regardless of the time or day. Solid news coverage is needed to set the record straight from the start.

Rarely is it a good idea to sit on bad or controversial news, regardless of the day or time. The word will leak, social media will go crazy and delays will be cast as a cover-up. A longtime newspaper columnist used to tell me, “If two people know something, one of them will talk.”

Good timing also entails being aware of what else is going on, so your news will not be ignored. Each media outlet has only a certain number of staff people and a certain amount of news space or broadcast time. Even online space is at a premium when the media and the community are focused on something else. In this case, you may need to time your press release or press event earlier or later than planned.

If you are delayed in releasing news, figure out how to make it newsworthy. That is what journalists call “spinning the story forward.” That is, focusing on what lies ahead and downplaying the past time element.

For example, it would not be newsworthy that the school district started a new program a month ago or that it saved millions of dollars last week by selling construction bonds at low interest rates. Instead, tell what the program achieved during its first month and what happens next. Talk about when the school construction projects start, what they will entail and how they are expected to come in under budget, explaining farther down in the press release that the savings will arise from the favorable bond sales.

Overall, there are three questions to constantly keep in mind: Why would people care about this, what would they want to know, and when would they want to know it?

If you always think about news coverage from the community's viewpoint, even when the consequent timing is not most convenient for the school district, you generally will make the right call.

Contributed by Dick Hughes, a communications consultant who receives dozens of press releases each week from schools, governments, nonprofits and businesses. Contact him at TheHughesisms@gmail.com.

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What are the school rules and how do you share them?

The start of a new school year is exciting and stressful. Interactions with parents and school visitors can set a good or bad tone for the whole year. Schools need to be clear about rules and expectations to ensure a smooth start with all parties on the same page, but the way they do it can affect the perception of the school and staff — both positively or negatively.

Rules are rules

Schools can be both welcoming and firm about following rules. It's about how you state the rules and whether your school community understands why the rules are important. Before school starts, schools and the district need to review and agree upon standard rules that will be enforced consistently at each individual school and among schools in the district.

Setting district and school policies: Rules are in place to ensure order, fairness and safety. Establishing rules and policies should be process-based and include perspectives from a variety of education partners. This is generally not a process that is undertaken at the start of school unless the policy is a response to an incident that arose unexpectedly. Setting or revising new policies are typically part of official school board or school site council action.

New rules and policies should be shared upon passage, and existing policies should be shared or made available regularly. Staff are key audiences for these updates. They should be clear about the rules to ensure that they can enforce them.

Sharing why the rules are in place: If a rule is important to the orderly and safe operation of your school, staff should be able to say that if there are questions. They should never respond that they don't know or they don't agree with the rule. All staff are part of the communications team, especially when it comes to sharing district-approved policies.

In addition to having an understanding of the rules and why they exist, staff should have access to the official board policy when more information is requested. They can keep an office hard copy on the shelf or refer questions to the policy library on the district website, which should be easy to find and updated regularly.

Setting the tone for positive compliance

Parents are the most important audience for your school rules. They are the most frequent visitors, and they are role models for their children. While parents largely want to follow the rules, some will bristle if they feel they are treated inconsiderately or the rules are not enforced consistently. If they must follow the rules, they should be able to expect that other parents will comply as well.

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Ask nicely: Does your school post signs on the door that say, “Visitors must report to office!” or does it say, “Welcome! For school safety, please check in at the office.”

Do staff set a positive tone by greeting people courteously and offering help in a timely manner? Do they respond to questions brusquely or in a friendly, helpful tone? If staff see visitors wandering the halls in a confused manner without an ID badge, they should politely direct them or offer to guide them to the office. Staff in the office are often overwhelmed with demands, but the default greeting and response should be helpful and polite — even when the visitor is not. This basic customer service training can be included in professional development events throughout the year.

Be clear: Is it apparent where the office is? Schools often have many doors, and sometimes it isn’t clear which one is the main entry. Additionally, some school offices are buried deep in the building. School signage is essential to minimize frustration over direction and help visitors comply with the rules.

Be firm and consistent: Signing in is a standard requirement at schools. It is important to know who is in the building at any given time, and the visitor log is a useful record. This is the kind of rule that can be overlooked for frequent visitors, especially those who volunteer regularly. Everyone, even school or district staff, should be required to sign when they visit a school. Rules that are enforced and followed consistently become habits that visitors will follow without resistance or questioning.

Sample visitor policies

When setting the tone for following the school rules, start with your visitor policies. It is an essential policy for order and school safety. It is also a helpful policy for embedding rule compliance in your school visitors. Most parents will visit their child’s school during the school year. Observing this rule in action will help them feel confident about safety, security and fairness in the building.

Visitor Check-in Policies and Procedures, Hurst, Euless, Bedford Independent School District, TX

<http://bit.ly/2KWxrmT>

Sample district policies

Review your district and school policies and remind staff about them before the new school year starts. If the policy is unclear or lacking, get ideas for updates from other districts. Here are a few sample policies:

School Visitors, McFarland School District, WI

www.mcfarland.k12.wi.us/community/Comm-Visit.cfm

School Policies

Adlai E. Stevenson Elementary School, Cleveland Metro School District, OH

www.clevelandmetroschools.org/Page/10967

Saranac Elementary School, Saranac Central School District, NY



School Success Tips



**August
2019**

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.

Another school year is starting, which brings another opportunity for students to improve and succeed academically. Here are some tips for students who could use some guidance to help them do their best work in the coming year.

Most of the recommendations for school success are common sense advice or a repeat of advice students have already heard. Nonetheless, share them with your child. He or she may hear something that will make a difference for them during this fresh start for a successful new school year.

Practical tips for students

The following list from writer, speaker and student coach Daniel Wong is from "40 Ways to Be Successful in School: Practical Tips for Students." This partial list of recommended systems can help pave the way for all students to be more successful. "I've come to realize that successful students aren't more intelligent than other students. They are just more disciplined and focused, and they have developed winning habits," he said.

This list is aimed at older students, but parents can use many of the tips to help guide younger students as they develop good school habits. Find the complete list at www.daniel-wong.com/2018/01/30/be-successful-in-school.

- 1. Rely on systems, not motivation.** Successful students rely on systems to ensure that they get the work done, even when they don't feel like it.
- 2. Review any new information you've learned on the same day.** This daily review won't take long to complete, but it's a vital step that ensures you stay on top of the material.
- 3. Write everything down.** This includes homework, test dates, project deadlines, etc. Don't assume that you'll be able to remember.
- 4. Keep a weekly schedule in a planner.** Include school, activities, family events and detailed homework plans.
- 5. Eliminate distractions, especially digital distractions.** Don't depend on willpower. Here are tips to minimize disruptions from mobile devices:
 - Turn off notifications on your phone/tablet.
 - Delete all the apps that distract you.
 - Put your phone/tablet in another room before you start work.
 - Set a really, really long password to unlock your phone/tablet.
 - Restrict your Internet access.
 - Have only one tab open in your browser at any one time.

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6. Don't multitask. There's no such thing as multitasking, just switching between tasks. Focus on one subject at a time.

7. Cultivate the belief that intelligence isn't fixed. Research has proven that students who believe that they can become smarter actually become smarter. Belief is powerful. Intelligence can be developed over time.

8. Work in short blocks of time. Most students can't maintain a high level of focus for more than 45 minutes. Study blocks should be 30-45-minutes, followed by a 5-10 minute break.

9. Exercise regularly. Physical activity promotes memory and concentration. Schedule regular exercise each week for at least 20 to 30 minutes.

10. Be organized. Avoid wasting time looking for lost items and forgetting tasks. Here are tips to be more organized:

- Set a daily reminder for homework assignments.
- Set reminders for tests preparation.
- Use a planner or Google Calendar
- Clear your desk at the end of every day

11. Break big tasks into smaller ones. Big tasks can seem overwhelming, which can lead to procrastination. Break each assignment into smaller chunks: read, research, outline, write.

12. Get at least eight hours of sleep every night. Research shows that sleep boosts memory and enhances learning. Go to bed at roughly the same time every day.

13. Create an effective studying environment.

- Keep your desk neat.
- Ensure that you have necessary supplies.
- Have adequate light.
- Use ear plugs to block out noise if necessary
- Get a comfortable chair

14. Take notes during class. Notetaking helps you to pay attention and to learn the concepts. If you aren't sure how to take notes, ask your teacher for help.

15. Ask lots of questions. Ask your friends and teachers questions for clarification and to help you stay engaged.

16. Eat a healthy diet. Research shows that the better your nutrition, the better your brain function.

17. Drink plenty of water. Stay hydrated. Avoid sugary beverages and too much caffeine.

18. Take a few minutes to prepare for each class. Every night, think about your classes the following day. Briefly review your notes and materials, so you will be prepared. This process won't take long, but it will pay off in the long run.