

10 Ways for Teachers to Support Planner Usage

1) Explicitly telling students “Write this in your planner” and waiting for all students to do it

Rather than saying “Your homework tonight is...” say “Get out your planner and write your homework...” It’s helpful to write this into your lesson plans as a way to help you remember to explicitly say this.

2) Building routines wherein students use their planner

Start each week by having students write in the schedule for your class for the week. Or start each class period by having students write the objective or essential question of the lesson in their planner.

3) Model planner usage by having a weekly planner on the wall

Students will benefit greatly by being able to see exactly what you expect them to write down in their planner for your class, especially at first while you are helping them to build the habit. Often companies that sell school planners have laminated wall calendars available for teachers.

4) “Backwards Map” major assignments together as a class

Any time your students have a major project or major test coming up, have them write down the due date in their planner. Then help them through the process of brainstorming the components of the project, the time they need for that part, and their goal of when they should have it done.

5) Using the planner as a hall pass for trips to the restroom, nurses, office, etc.

This is a great schoolwide initiative to get all students to use their planner. Students are not allowed to leave the classroom without their planner. This also allows teachers an easy way to track how many times students are leaving their class and other classes.

6) Having periodic “planner checks” and giving students a grade for their planner usage

Many teachers use the planner for quick-writes and bell-ringer activities. This can then be collected for a grade in your class. Another variation on this is having students do their “exit tickets” for your class in their planner and showing it to you on the way out.

7) Support struggling students by having their parents or another adult view the planner

Having parents or another adult sign the student’s planner is a great way to create home accountability for assignments. The planner can be a great tool for communicating with parents to make sure that they are aware of assignments and upcoming deadlines.

8) Start the year with a planner “scavenger hunt”

If your school has a standard schoolwide planner, there are probably many resources included in it that students never know about, such as the motivational quotes, Periodic Table, maps, and lists of U.S. Presidents. Take a few minutes with your class to show them all the things that are available to them in their planner. This can also be revisited periodically throughout the year.

9) Design a planner that works for your school’s unique needs

Many AVID site teams have designed a planner that comes already filled in with school holidays, football games, and other major school events. It can also be designed to correspond to the schedule of your school. This also allows schools to create planners with holes that fit in binders, or any other shape or size that is desired.

10) Find fun ways to incorporate the planner into your class

Have the class write down everyone’s birthday in their planners. Add obscure holidays such as “National Share a Smile Day” (March 1). Count down the days until the end of school.

The Agenda/Planner

Objectives:

- To foster a “plan-ahead” mentality
- To increase a student’s responsibility
- To increase home/school communication
- To build self-advocacy
- To increase involvement in school activities
- To increase a student’s organizational ability

Expectations:

- Agendas/planners are filled out at the end of each class/subject and at the end of the day.
- “No homework” is written if no homework is given.
- Color-coding or any visual reminder is encouraged to identify homework.
- Self-monitoring is evidenced by a student’s check, or signature placed after completing each homework assignment.
- Daily family signatures, Teacher signatures or behavioral comments are all optional components.

What to include:

- Backwards mapping of upcoming projects
- “To do” items, both in and outside of school
- Personal reminders for items outside of school
- Extracurricular activities or schedules (sports, Scouts, student council, community service, etc.)
- Recording of weekly goals and self-monitoring progress
- Schoolwide events (dances, pep rallies, college fairs, etc.)
- Birthdays, anniversaries and school holidays