Module 2 Part 4 – Creating a Long-Term Planning Calendar

This section corresponds with Module 2 Activity 2 in the STEPP classroom transition resources.

Introduction

Objective: The student will create a long-term planning calendar to assist with planning and organization skills that features at least three of the following: assignments and routines, extra-curricular activities, basic appointments (e.g., doctor, dentist), social engagements, and personal goals.

This lesson is designed to teach you the basics of how to set up a long-term calendar and to help you plan effectively for your time in college.

Estimated time needed: 30 minutes

Materials included:
- Samples of completed calendars

Additional materials needed:
- Long-term calendar in preferred format (e.g., day planner, smart phone, online, paper calendar, etc.)
Learn About It

Although you may or may not need to use a planner to keep track of things in high school, consistently using a planning tool like this is essential to success in college. There are many ways you can complete this activity, so you will have a good deal of flexibility in deciding the specifics of how your planning calendar will look. However, first we will discuss the key elements of planning with a long-term calendar.

Parents Chime In

- Parents, take some time to share your experiences with using a planner and the strategies you have found to be most helpful. If possible, show example of the planner you are currently using, or the method you use to keep up with appointments and reminders.

What is the Purpose of a Calendar?

Consider the purpose of a calendar and why using one may be important in college. Some purposes that come to mind may be to stay organized, to track due dates and exam dates, to plan your time, to remember events and activities, etc.

Why might it be important for a college student to use a calendar?

Think about why you think it’s important to use a calendar in college. You will probably think of things like to prevent missing deadlines, to make sure you’re in the right place at the right time, to help you prioritize based on what’s coming up next, to help you see whether you’re overcommitted or have time available, to help you remember things when people aren’t reminding you, etc.

One of the primary purposes of a calendar is to remind people about things. Since you will have many things to remember once you’re in college and will not have your parents there to constantly remind you about those things, the reminder function is an important purpose that your calendar will need to fulfill.
What do you need reminders for?

Brainstorm the types of things that you may need reminders for, especially those that may be listed on a long-term or daily calendar/planner. Make sure to consider all the different activities, assignments, and events that you need to be reminded to attend, to work on, to complete, to turn in, etc. Some examples include:

- Homework
- Tests
- Paper Due Dates
- Sports Practice
- Taking care of pets
- Permission Forms
- Club Meetings
- Application Deadlines
- Medication Refills

Parents Chime In

- Each student is different in terms of how much supervision s/he currently has with assignments and responsibilities. Discuss that in college the demands and workload students juggle increase as the amount of supervision significantly decreases. Therefore, having a backup reminder system (like a planner/calendar) is extremely important. Comments like, “I don’t need to write it down,” or “I’ll remember” often lead to missing a meeting, missing a deadline, or forgetting to turn in an assignment. Remind them that these are the types of things that they may want to include on their planning calendar.
Tips for Effective Calendars

• The type of calendar you use is much less important than how effectively you use it. A calendar only works when you’re consistent about updating and using it.
• Keep only one calendar & put everything on it
• If in doubt, include it...even if you think you’ll remember it!
• Color code

When creating your calendar, keep in mind that the type of calendar you use is not really important. What matters is how effectively and consistently you use it. Using a slick calendar app on your smartphone isn’t necessarily more effective than a simple sheet of paper with the month printed on it.

You need to take into consideration what you will be most comfortable with, most likely to remember, and most likely to use. For example...

• If you’re not really into technology, steer clear of apps, PDAs, and online calendars; but if you have your phone by your side 24/7 then an app might be perfect.
• If you tend to lose everything that isn’t glued to your hands, an online calendar that can’t be misplaced may be your best bet.
• If you like to have complete flexibility in the format of your calendar, printing your own planning pages or customizing a printable calendar in a word-processor or online program will allow you to personalize more.

Don’t keep multiple calendars. Have one master calendar where you enter every piece of information you need so that you only need to keep up with one item. For example, if your part-time job gives you a copy of your schedule each week, enter that information into your calendar and throw away the schedule. The same goes for sports practices, reminder cards about appointments, and any other information you have floating around. The idea is to ensure that everything you need to know is kept in one location.

It’s important to ensure that everything you need to know is included on the calendar. Don’t rely on your ability to remember. Even people with excellent memories get distracted or forget sometimes, so get in the habit of writing things down, even if you probably won’t need a written reminder.

Since you’ll have everything written down in one place, color coding is a great way to differentiate between types of activities, events, deadlines, etc. Again, the specifics of how you do this aren’t what matters – the important thing is that you are consistent and that your color coding system makes sense to you.
Click on this link to see an example of a calendar that is set up to include one week at a time and is color coded. It includes some details about specific things to complete as well as events, activities, and due dates.

Sample Calendar 1

Here’s another example of a sample calendar (click the link to view it). This one is set up to include an entire month at a time. It also uses a color code, but this one codes by importance instead of by type of activity. In addition, this one has less detail than the other one, which may mean that it’s planning further into the future – before the student knows all the details of his schedule for certain activities like studying. Or it may also be that this student simply includes less detail on his calendar by preference.

Sample Calendar 2

Create Your Calendar

• Using the tips and guidelines in this lesson, create your own long-term planning calendar.
• You may use any format you prefer, as long as you can demonstrate that it is effective.
• Include as much information as you have available for the remainder of the school year.

Parents Chime In

• Think through a typical week or month for your family. Brainstorm together the kinds of things you do together, the activities of the student, and the times when the student often needs reminders. Record things such as: homework assignments, birthdays or anniversaries, upcoming tests, due dates, sports practice, permission forms, pet care duties, medication, extra-curricular activities, work schedule, family plans, special events, etc.
• Research together several different calendar systems. This may involve:
  o a trip to an office supply store
  o exploring different phone apps
  o reviewing some software options
  o developing your own with the computer or paper/pencil based on the features you like best

Parents Chime In

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  o a trip to an office supply store
  o exploring different phone apps
  o reviewing some software options
  o developing your own with the computer or paper/pencil based on the features you like best
Have you accomplished today’s objective?

**Objective:** The student will create a long-term planning calendar to assist with planning and organization skills that contains prompts for at least three of the following: assignments and routines, extra-curricular activities, basic appointments (e.g., doctor, dentist), social engagements, and personal goals.

*If so, congratulations!*

*If not,*

- Ensure that everything you need to know is included on the calendar. Don’t rely on your ability to remember – even if you have an excellent memory. A calendar can serve as a resource for planning, time management, and documentation, even if you will not need reminders.
- Color coding is also a great way to differentiate between types of activities, events, deadlines, etc.
- When recording items on your calendar – use detail when possible. For example, instead of just typing “study math” go ahead and list the assignment you will be working on (e.g. Chapter 5 review problems). Instead of just noting “work on English paper,” break the paper down into manageable steps and record each on the calendar until the due date of the assignment. For example, entries might read “Read 3 sources and make notes,” or “write rough draft.” If you use a calendar system that breaks each day down by the hour, you can monitor how much you are anticipating getting done in a single day and ensure that you are setting realistic daily plans.

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**Parents Chime In**

- Once the student has selected the type of calendar that s/he prefers, give it a try for a month. During this month parents may want to hold off on providing reminders, and let students experience consequences (when reasonable) for anything that is missed from not monitoring the calendar. However, parents may want to closely monitor the student’s use of the new system.

- At the end of the month sit together and evaluate (a) the format your child selected and (b) the consistency with which s/he used the calendar resource. Determine modifications for the following month, and experiment with different formats and routines until you find a calendar style and monitoring system that works for your child.
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<th>Monday</th>
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<td>April 8</td>
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<td>Soccer game @ 9am</td>
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<td>New Year’s Day</td>
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<td>Student Council mtg @ 3:30</td>
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<td>ECU application deadline</td>
<td>US History exam</td>
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<td>Student Council mtg @ 3:30</td>
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