

OTMP as a Lesson for Life

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It is an age-old student complaint: “Why do I have to know this?”

The truth is not all of the facts we teach our students will have applicability in their later lives. Knowing about ancient Egyptian burial practices may be helpful for the student who goes into archeology, but have little practical use for the student who grows up to be an accountant. For the future botanist, knowing the stigma from the style may be important, but perhaps not as much for the future salesperson. We continue to teach our students these things, however, because we know the larger lessons students receive while learning these facts are important. Critical thinking, meta-cognition, analysis, and many other skills are woven into lessons every day, and these skills are essential for every student, no matter what field they choose.

Skills in organization, time management, and planning (OTMP) are an important addition to the big-picture skills critical to a student’s education. These skills certainly carry a student through the school day: they allow students to accurately record what they need to do, keep track of all of their materials, get homework and projects done in an efficient and timely manner, and arrive at school fully prepared to meet the day’s challenges. OTMP skills will continue to serve students, though, far beyond their school careers.

When we think of effective and successful people, many of the traits we associate with them are rooted in OTMP skills. The time-management skills that allow a student to plan for homework completion around after-school activities, family dinner, and a favorite TV show are the same skills that let an executive juggle multiple projects or a parent manage a litany of competing demands. The foundation that allows a student to sort and organize his papers is the same foundation that allows a warehouse manager to effectively organize his inventory or a professor to parse and structure course topics into a curriculum. The project planning a student engages in for a science fair is a small-scale representation of the type of planning required to be a project manager or an event planner. The complete and accurate assignment list maintained by a student evolves to become every efficient adult’s running to-do list.

OTMP skills instruction imparts lessons on how to be an efficient and successful adult, regardless of one’s chosen career path, and these lessons can make a tremendous difference in the lives of students. OTMP skills are consistently named among the most important factors employers consider when hiring, and they have been found to be critical components of success on the job once hired. This is true at

any career level – research has even found OTMP skills to be a key factor differentiating successful and non-successful CEO's.

It is the degree to which such larger lessons are taught that makes the difference between a good school and a great school. Schools that provide students with instruction in OTMP skills are educating students to be successful long after they walk out the classroom door. OTMP instruction helps students grow into adults prepared to tackle challenges they meet throughout their lives – the hallmark of an excellent education.