

Student or Honeybee? **Essential Education Skills for all Students**

(Excerpted from *A-Academics' Simplified Organizational System*)

By *Mick Rosenblum*

Have you ever taken a moment to watch a honeybee in action? Did you marvel at the way she methodically drifts from flower to flower collecting her "basketsful" of pollen, only to navigate unerringly back to the hive? Did you ever wonder where she learned to do her job so well and to navigate so precisely? The answer lies with Mother Nature, herself. Honeybees are born with all of the necessary skills to do their specific jobs in a precise, prescribed manner. Honeybees never need to be trained; they go right to work the moment they are born. This remarkable system works beautifully, indeed . . . for honeybees! The downside of this "hardwired" arrangement, however, is that each honeybee is capable of performing only a limited number of specific tasks. She neither ponders nor analyzes her situation; she simply responds to cues from her environment and her genetic programming.

Fortunately for us, Mother Nature has neglected to outfit human beings with such a predisposed pattern of behavior. I say "fortunately," because humans possess the genetic freedom to be creative, innovative, and adaptive. As a result, our children are blessed with the ability learn many different skills, but these skills must be taught (and reinforced) if students are to process information in an efficient manner. Never forget, however, that human beings are capable of assimilating inefficient processing and organizational behaviors just as easily as they can efficient ones!

To understand the importance of proper training, let's consider an employment scenario for just a moment. Anyone who has worked for a living is certainly familiar with the phrase "job description." This phrase refers, of course, to the specific duties that a particular job entails. Naturally, if an employee is unaware of these duties or lacks the skills necessary to carry them out, his or her employment is in serious peril. Furthermore, if an employee has not been properly trained, an employer would be unreasonable to expect exceptional job-performance.

What, you may ask, has any of this to do with scholastic performance? The answer is simple . . . *everything*. Students can be thought of as employees of a sort. They have specific jobs to do and, if they do them well, they are well compensated. This compensation comes in the form of education, grades, grade point averages and, most importantly, opportunities.

I realize, of course, that many students, especially those in elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools, find it difficult to perceive, let alone appreciate, the non-material, deferred rewards of a successful academic career. But, this phenomenon comes under the heading of motivation and is not what I am referring to by my employment analogy. I am, instead, simply acknowledging the sad truth that school systems (both public and private) across the nation routinely give children explicit job descriptions, but fail to train those children to do the jobs!

Let us examine, for a moment, the fundamental duties of the average student. From the day the student begins his or her “job,” a student is presented with a certain amount of new information. In turn, he or she is expected to process that information in a specific, efficient manner. This “processing” includes organizing, note taking, studying, test taking . . . the student’s “job description.” But who teaches the student to perform that job in an efficient manner? Not the schools, I am sad to say! The schools seem to believe that our “honeybees” are born with the ability to learn efficiently and to organize themselves appropriately.

Although the schools, arguably, do a fairly good job of presenting information (data, if you will), they do relatively little to help the student develop and perfect processing and organizational skills. Indeed, it has been my observation that most students waste roughly fifty-percent of their study time on inefficient study techniques, expend far too much energy (and transpose far too little information) via poor note-taking skills, and lose valuable test points by failing to employ some very simple test-taking techniques. Last, but certainly not least, is the typical student’s absolute lack of effective organizational skills. This is one of the reasons why most adults (including professionals), for that matter, operate in a frighteningly disorganized and inefficient manner; it is not because they want to, but simply because they were never taught the basics of organization.

Therefore, as both an educator and a parent, I have considered, in some detail, several important topics in an effort to help you to help your student to help himself (or herself). Within these pages, I will address each of the aforementioned issues in detail. I am confident that you will appreciate the very simple modifications that you and your student can make to implement the tools necessary to function in a relaxed, efficient, and successful manner in the years to come.

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