

SOS – Start Organizing *before* September

A Guide for Grade 7 Students and their Parents



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Dear Secondary I Students,

Welcome to Royal West Academy! We are looking forward to getting to know you better as you begin your high school adventure with us.

To help you with your transition into high school, one of your classes each month will be replaced by a **MindPOP** check-up class. These classes will take place on the last Monday of every month (or sometime during that week) – please check the school calendar for specific dates. Over the course of the year, various topics will be presented that will support you in your new environment.

These topics include:

- School work organization
- Home filing system
- Prioritizing
- Time management
- Goal setting
- Attitudes and Mindset
- Exam preparation
- Test taking strategies
- Mindfulness & Coping with Stress

Enclosed in this package, you will find very important information about: our **MindPOP** program, **required school materials**, as well as details regarding **ESSENTIAL seminars** for your parents. This material is meant to give you an overview of topics that will be explored in greater detail during the check-ups. Please read the details carefully with your parents.

Wishing you a great start to your first year of high school,

Mr. Tony Pita

Principal, Royal West Academy

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is ...

“being aware of what is happening while it’s happening.”

Susan Kaiser Greenland

Why is Mindfulness important?

- Introduces you to practices and attitudes that will help you improve your ability to focus, calm yourself and manage stress.
- It emphasizes the importance of being present in the moment with kindness, curiosity and acceptance.



“Wherever you are – be all there.”

Jim Elliot

Planning

Planning Now

Make a **To-Do list** *before* you start your school work each evening and on weekends. This will ensure that your tasks will be completed in a timely manner.

“Homework Hour”

Each evening, your “Homework Hour” (a designated period of time that you set aside for school work) should include tasks such as organizing your agenda, cleaning out your school bag, and tackling your **To-Do list**. This hour is a minimum, and by no means a maximum, during which you should have no distractions, especially electronic devices. You should be able to carry out your “Homework Hour” independently, but your parents are welcome to remain nearby should you require their assistance. Ideally, you should work in an open space, with all necessary, school-related items easily accessible. If all your homework is completed in under an hour, you should find something else that is school-related to complete. Perhaps you could update your calendar or clean out your schoolbag?

Planning Ahead

Use the weekly and monthly views in your agenda to plan for upcoming assignments. When you write a due date for later in the month, break the task down into smaller steps and record a few reminders in your agenda leading up to the due date.

- For example, “Summer reading notes are due the first week of school. Since I need to read and write notes for 3 books, I plan to read my first book by July 10th, my second book by July 24th, and my third book by August 7th. I plan to complete all of my notes by August 21st.”

Having all of these smaller steps written in your agenda will help you to stay on top of your work and allow you to spread out your workload. Also, it is possible that something may come up that does not allow you to follow your pre-determined goals, i.e. completing notes by August 21st. Be flexible and re-work your timeline for smaller priorities that may come up.



“Living your life without a plan is like watching television with someone else holding the remote control.”

Peter Turla

Organizing School Materials

All **Secondary I** students must follow the requirements indicated below for the purchase of their school materials. A **ONE binder** system will be used to eliminate bulk and prevent you from lugging too many binders around. You will need to purchase a traditional three-ring durable binder, no more than **1½ inches wide**. **Pocket dividers** are added to organize every subject's material, accompanied by a **HOME filing system** for additional storage. This filing system will hold accumulated tests, quizzes, assignments, and notes to be used for future studying and exam preparation.

One Binder Set-Up

- Purchase ONE 1½ inch binder and a set of pocket dividers similar to:
 - Avery® Durable Slant D-Ring View Binder, 1 ½":
 - http://www.staples.ca/en/Avery-Heavy-Duty-One-Touch-D-Ring-View-Binder-1-1-2-Black/product_436626_2-CA_1_20001
 - Avery® 11903 Big Tab Insertable Plastic Dividers with Pockets, Multicolour, 8-tab set:
 - http://www.staples.ca/en/Avery-11903-Big-Tab-Insertable-Plastic-Dividers-with-Pockets-Multicolour-8-Tab-Set/product_851632_2-CA_1_20001
 - Place the pocket dividers into your new binder.
 - Assign each divider to one class, but group some together as follows:
 - Français
 - English
 - Math
 - Science
 - Géographie
 - Histoire
 - Drama/Music/Visual Arts
 - Ethics/Computers/Gym
- 
- Papers handed to you throughout the school year should be placed into the appropriate section. With your teacher's guidance, the papers no longer needed on a daily basis should be transferred to your home filing system.
 - Slide your schedule into the clear pocket on the front of your binder. Consider colour-coding each class on your schedule to match the dividers in your binder.
 - Next, you'll need to label the two pockets on the inside covers of your binder. The first should be called *Homework* while the second should be called *Miscellaneous*.

- The *Homework* pocket is used to place homework papers that require your attention after school. Once the homework is complete, the assignment can be placed back into the appropriate subject divider in your binder.
- The *Miscellaneous* pocket is used to place papers unrelated to your classes, like ones that your parents need to sign.
- You have set-up your binder! To keep it organized, it is important to **take 30 seconds each day** to sort through it to be sure all papers are in the right place.

Home-filing System

- Choose a system that you believe will work best for you. For example:
 - A separate binder for each subject
 - A large envelope for each subject
 - Accordion folder
 - A drawer in a filing cabinet
 - Hanging folders such as:
 - Fellowes® Desktoppers®, File Holder, Legal Size
 - http://www.staples.ca/en/Fellowes-Desktoppers-File-Holder-Legal-Size-Black/product_228689_2-CA_1_20001?externalize=certona
- Within each subject’s section, create a minimum of 2 subcategories:
 - Class notes
 - Tests and Assignments
- Your Science and Math teachers may have specific requirements regarding the set-up of your home filing system for their subjects, so be sure to follow their guidelines.
- Create a MindPOP folder for all of the information you will receive throughout the year, such as this package.



**“Organizing is what you do before you do something, so that when you do it,
 it is not all mixed up.”**

A.A. Milne, author of the *Winnie-the-Pooh* books.

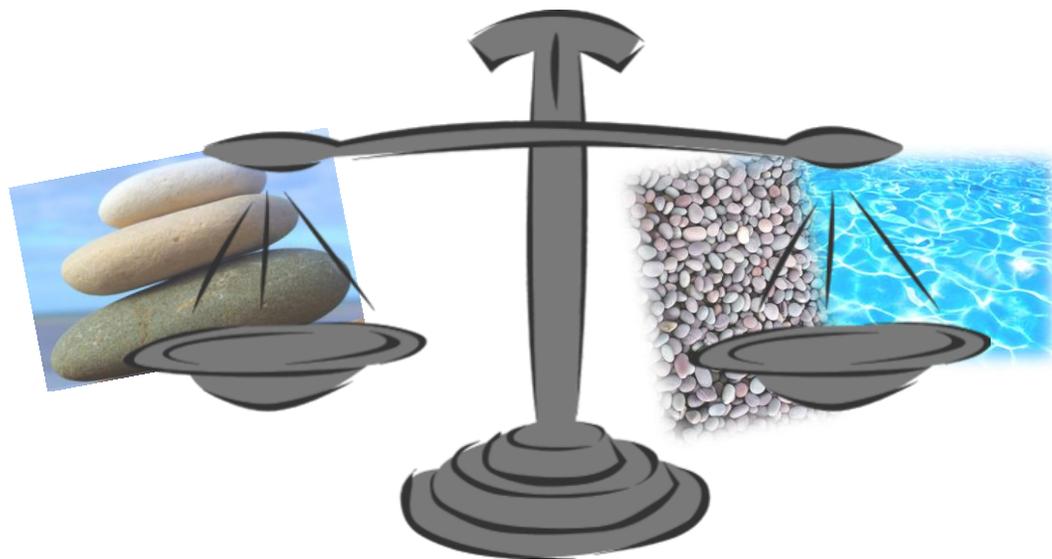
Prioritizing & Time Management



Priorities

You need to have a clear sense of your priorities and give attention to the most important tasks first. The “rock, pebble, and water” analogy demonstrates the importance of balancing priorities and tackling them in the appropriate order. See the day ahead of you as an empty jar. The key is to first fill the jar with the rocks, then the pebbles, then the water. If the jar is first filled with water, by the time the rocks are added, it will have overflowed.

- Rock priorities are the things we have to do (i.e. family commitments, sleep, eating, school/school work). There are usually serious consequences if these things are not done (i.e. bad grades, being too tired, etc.).
- Pebbles represent the things that you enjoy and would like to spend more time doing (i.e. sports, music, hobbies, socializing with friends, etc.). These things add “spice” to our lives. These priorities are “smaller” because there may be less of a consequence if not done. However, smaller does not mean less significant – you need to have a good balance between rock and pebble priorities in order to lead a healthy life and maintain motivation for the “larger” priorities.
- Water represents the little activities that you enjoy doing but do not necessarily need to schedule into your day (i.e. TV time, texting, internet surfing, video games etc.). There is no significant consequence if you do not have time to do these things.



**“The key is not to prioritize what’s on your schedule, but to schedule your priorities.”
Stephen Covey**



Essential Seminars

We are pleased to inform you that there are three new events on the RWA calendar this year. They can be identified by the title “**Sec 1 Parent Seminar**.” These workshops provide information that is **essential** for your success at Royal West Academy; therefore, your parents’ attendance is highly recommended.

ESSENTIAL SEMINARS for Secondary 1 Parents

7 pm. Auditorium at Royal West Academy

- **Thursday, October 1**
Surviving - & Thriving: A Parent’s Guide to Early Adolescence
Offered by: RWA Student Services

- **Tuesday, November 3**
Texting, Sexting, & Social Media: What Parents Need to Know about their Teens and Technology
Offered by: Alissa Sklar, PhD.

- **Wednesday, January 13**
Stress & Resilience: How You Can Help your High-Achieving Child
Offered by: RWA Student Services

We look forward to seeing your parents there!

Testimonials from your Peers



This program...

...is like organizational rehab.

...teaches us everything we need to stay organized.

...helps me feel more positive towards school.

...helps me understand that school isn't what makes life.

...teaches us skills will help us in the long run and that we can use in the future.

...takes time out of my day to make me calm and more organized.

...teaches me to reflect on myself.

...lets us know that we are not alone in the school world.

Some material from MindPOP was inspired by:

Kabat-Zinn, J. (1990) Full catastrophe living. Delta Publishing.

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2005) Wherever you go, there you are. New York, NY: Hachette Books.

Kruger, S. (2013) SOAR® study skills. Grand Blanc, MI: Grand Lighthouse Publishing.