

# THE USE OF A PAPER PLANNER WITH GRADE 6 STUDENTS

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## Introduction

As World Languages teachers, my department and I observed that Middle School students often fail to retain material from one lesson to the next, resulting in reteaching due to gaps in recall and mastery. To address this issue, I collaborated with my line manager at the time to introduce a paper planner for students.

The aim of this initiative was to encourage students to record what they had learned during lessons, along with any extended or home learning tasks. This strategy was intended to promote independent learning across all subjects, support identifying what they needed to review and foster a greater sense of responsibility for their education.

## Literature Review

I opted for a physical planner based on the belief that it would better support the development of executive functioning skills; skills that students could carry forward throughout their educational journey. Holmes (2024), in his article Paper vs. Digital Planner? 10 Reasons to Choose Printed School Planners, highlights how the act of sight and touch of using a paper planner stimulate the brain, enhancing memory, creativity and engagement.

Similarly, the article Homework Planners: Why Students Need to Use One (Engage the Brain, 2024) outlines several benefits of using a planner, including the establishment of routines leading to higher homework completion rates, improving performance on standardized tests and the acquisition of essential life skills.

## Methods

I used action research as I had to develop the planner with the needs of the school community in mind and then involve the same stakeholders: students, parents and teachers to evaluate its use. The goal was to ensure the planner was adapted and used across the community.

### Methodology and participants

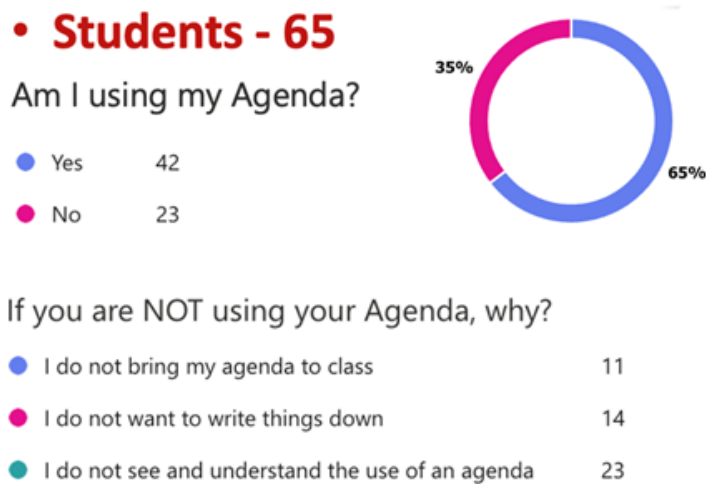
After liaising with the Al-Futtaim Digital Marketing & Design person to create the paper planner, I recorded a short video explaining its use which was then sent to the community. After the October break, the planner was distributed to Grade 6 students, with the expectation that students, teachers and parents would use it daily to support organisation and home-school communication.

### Data Collection

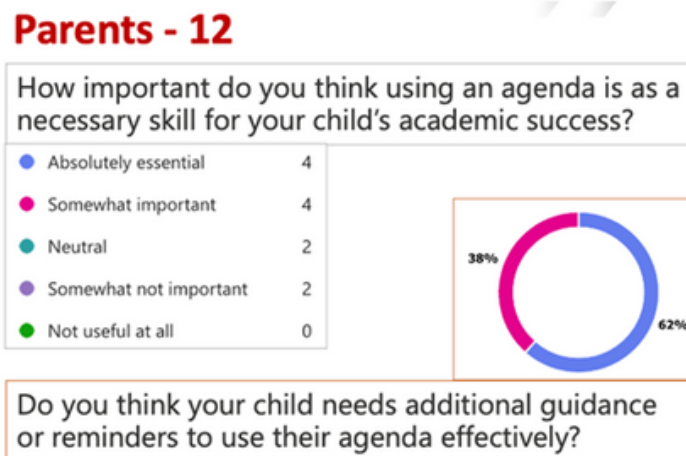
In the spring of 2024, I had sent some surveys to the community to better design the paper planner. To assess the planner's impact during the school year, I used it in my Grade 6 French lessons and encouraged other teachers to do the same. I gathered informal feedback from students and staff from October 2024 onwards.

In February 2025, I once again distributed a specific and differentiated survey to each stakeholder: students, parents and teachers to, this time, gather insights into their use of the paper planner and to identify effective practices. However, the overall response rate was limited: only 65 students, 12 parents and a small number of teachers completed the survey (see **Figure 1 and 2**). This low level of engagement suggests a need for more targeted communication before the launch of any new initiative so there is a buy-in from every group involved and perhaps alternative methods for gathering feedback in future initiatives.

**Figure 1**  
**Main students' survey results**



**Figure 2**  
**Main parents' survey results**



## Results

The results showed that high-performing students used more the paper planner consistently, while the majority either used digital tools or nothing at all (see **Table 1**). Teachers cited a lack of time during lessons, limited school-wide consistency and unclear expectations as barriers to proper implementation (see **Table 1**). Parents expressed support for the paper planner but suggested it should be introduced earlier, ideally starting in Grade 5 to bridge the gap between Elementary and Middle School (see **Table 1**). They also valued having a clearer explanation of both, the use of the planner and Schoology, a digital tool used by UAS to download lessons and grades for students.

**Table 1**  
**General conclusion of the stakeholders' results surveys**

Students	Teachers	Parents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good students =&gt; paper planner</li> <li>• Majority =&gt; digital or no planner at all</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of time</li> <li>• School initiative</li> <li>• School expectations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start in Grade 5 since it was only used for Grade 6 this year</li> <li>• Paper planner</li> <li>• Clear use of paper planner and Schoology</li> </ul>

## Discussion and Reflections

The inconsistent use of the planner across classrooms underscores the need for clear and consistent communication of its purpose and intended use to all stakeholders in order to secure meaningful buy-in. Embedding structured routines within lessons to model and reinforce its benefits is essential, while supported and reinforcement of the expectations to students, parents and teachers would have helped its sustained and effective use over time.

## Conclusion

The paper planner is a valuable tool that supports students not only in managing their academic responsibilities and progress but also in developing essential long-term organisational skills that contribute to lifelong learning. Its structured, tactile format encourages reflection, planning and accountability; skills that extend well beyond the classroom. However, the effectiveness of such a tool depends heavily on how it is introduced to the community and embedded into daily practice. For any new initiative to succeed, it must be accompanied by a clear rollout strategy, consistent messaging and well-defined expectations to ensure meaningful stakeholder engagement and buy-in.

Additionally, developing new habits; whether for students, teachers or parents, requires time, reinforcement and consistency across the school community. Despite the potential of the paper planner, UAS has chosen to pursue a different direction for the upcoming academic year. This also highlights the need for flexibility and to do what is best for the education of the students.

## References

- Holmes, B. (2024, July 4). *Paper vs. digital planner? 10 reasons to choose printed school planners*. The School Planner Company. <https://www.schoolplanner.com/paper-vs-digital-planner/>
- Engage the Brain. (2024, August 12). *Homework planners: Why students need to use one*. Engage the Brain. <https://engagethebrain.org/homework-planners-why-students-need-to-use-one/>