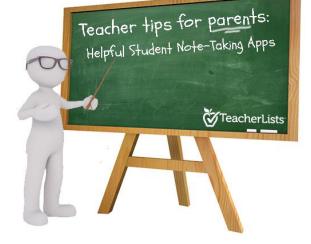# Helpful Apps for Classroom Note-taking and Homework.

These days many middle school and high school students have trouble keeping up with everything they are supposed to do each day: school, homework, jobs, volunteering and extracurricular activities overwhelm their calendars. As teachers, we see this happening more when students transition from middle school to high school and are expected to become more independent and manage their in-class and at-home work themselves. The fundamental skill that can challenge them at the onset, is taking proper notes in class. Successful note taking can mean the difference between really grasping a subject matter and struggling with it.

Taking notes the traditional way with pen and paper works just fine for some, but using a note-taking app can be helpful for all students, especially for those who struggle with time management. The good news is there are technological solutions to help students.

At TeacherLists, we understand there are dozens of student productivity apps available and sorting through them all can be a daunting task. We have taken the guess-work out of selecting the right apps for your students and have listed some helpful tips when deciding on the most appropriate apps for note-taking proficiency.

myHomework Student Planner by Instin

myHomework Student Planner is a free app for iPhone, iPad, and Android. It allows users to set up their schedule of classes, enter assignments, assignment types (test, project, paper, etc.), due dates, reminders, and priority levels. The account will sync to a phone (or tablet) with a simple command. You can view upcoming as well as late assignments.

Videonot.es

Some students have trouble learning from watching videos. Videonot.es is an open source app and a tool that can help when students are asked to watch videos (from YouTube, Vimeo, or Khan Academy, for example) for homework. How it works: While watching a video on the left half of the screen, a student types notes on the right side. The notes he takes are time-stamped so that when he clicks on what he wrote, the video will jump to that exact place he was watching when he wrote the note. Later, when he is studying for a test or doing his homework, he can easily find the place in the video by using the notes he took.

AudioNote by Luminant Software

AudioNote is similar to Videonot.es except it is for use in the classroom or at a meeting instead of when watching a video. AudioNote is available for iOS, Windows, and Android operating systems. As AudioNote records the sounds in the room, the student types her notes. It does not matter if she misses writing something, because she can later click or touch her screen where she has missing notes, and the

software plays whatever the teacher was saying at that time. During playback, the app highlights the portion of the notes she wrote and if necessary, she can add more information as she listens.

Table of Contents Tool for Taking Notes

Students who type their notes on a tablet or computer often save each day's notes in a separate file. When they need to use the notes to study or do homework, they often can't remember where they saved them. Using the table of contents feature in a word processing program can solve this problem very easily. All of your child's notes for one class can be typed in the same document. The table of contents will make it easy for him to find what he needs. This way, there is only one file for each class, and that is much easier for him to organize and find.

Livescribe Smartpen

For students who cannot keep up when taking notes yet need to write with a pen in order to learn, the Livescribe Smartpen is a good solution. Like AudioNote, the Livescribe records the sounds in the room while the student writes notes. The difference is that the pen requires a special type of paper to work. In playback mode, your child taps the page where he wrote notes, and the pen plays back what was going on in class at the time. The notes can be saved and shared with others who do not own the pen. Students can write as little or as much as they want while in class because it is easy to go back later to add more information.

Swype Keyboard by Nuance

Swype Keyboard is a useful app for students who use an iPad or tablet in class. Typing on a tablet can be slower than using a laptop's keyboard, and most students need to be able to type faster. The Swype Keyboard allows your child to slide her finger across the digital keyboard from letter to letter until she spells a word. It is great at predicting words and it learns words that she frequently types. As soon as the word appears on the list it shows, she can simply touch the word and it is inserted in her typing. Once she gets used to using it, she can type much more quickly on her tablet. It is great to use on a smart phone, as well.

5 Keys for Choosing an App

You may wonder what you should look for when choosing an app or tool to help with learning. If the purpose of the app or tool is to help with organization or note-taking, there are several important key elements. Evaluate each of the following:

- Does the student like to use the app? It should be easy to figure out how to use. If not, look for another.
- It should be easy to store and find the files created with the application. Students need to be able to find quickly where they were last working, so that when class starts they are ready to go.
- Time management apps should be easy to maintain. If it takes a great deal of effort to update information, add classes, update assignments—students will not want to use it.
- It should protect the student's privacy. The app does not need access to a student's social networking page or telephone contact list to work. Check the permissions the app requests before installing it.
- If the app will be recording classes, make sure it is OK with the teacher. Most teachers are fine with it, but it is a courtesy to let them know.

It takes a little effort to find apps and tools that promote proper learning, but the time is well spent when you find a helpful learning tool!