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Helping to organize kids

By TRACY STEPP

"Let's see what's going on in your notebook," Anne Blumer said to Robert Gray Middle School seventh grader Ryley Johnson.

"It's like a zoo," Johnson replied as he pulled his overstuffed binder from his backpack. Blumer is here to help



Blumer, a Robert Gray parent and a professional organizer, is volunteering once a month to coach Robert Gray students basic organizing and self-management skills. Blumer will try to help kids organize their homework, school projects and research assignments and learn to manage their schedules.

On Oct. 16, Blumer started by helping three students with their notebooks and assignment scheduling. She suggested choosing a specific place to keep homework, using homework planner sheets and visual reminders such as notes on a bathroom mirror. She also recommended using a zipper or velcro-fastened binder rather than an open three-ring bin so papers won't fall out and get lost, and adding tabs to separate class sections.

Blumer has a notion for how teachers can help kids organize, too. She said it might help if teachers could three-hole-pun assignments and handouts for ease of putting in notebooks, and perhaps use a consistent mode of communicating homework assignments. She also suggests that kids get help compiling a list of everything needed for an activity, such as swimming or volleyball, which the students can then refer to to assemble their own items.

"Kids will have a sense of independence with the more that parents give them to do on their own," she said.

All in all, Blumer said the students who came for help on her first day were in pretty good shape.

"It's awkward at first, but overall those kids are doing fine," she said.

Blumer said she volunteered at Rieke Elementary School when her son was going there, helping with math, reading and field trips. Once he moved on to Robert Gray, Blumer still wanted to help, and wanted to use some of her other skills. She said she had heard from parents who were concerned their kids were losing homework, and she said that teaching students at this age will give them organizing skills they can use throughout their educational years and in their professional careers.

Blumer is available the third Thursday of each month in the Robert Gray library between 8:15-9 a.m. For information on getting organized, children or adults, call Anne Blumer, SolutionsForYou, Inc., at 503-706-3502.