

The Notebook Doctor

Your Organizational Emergency Room

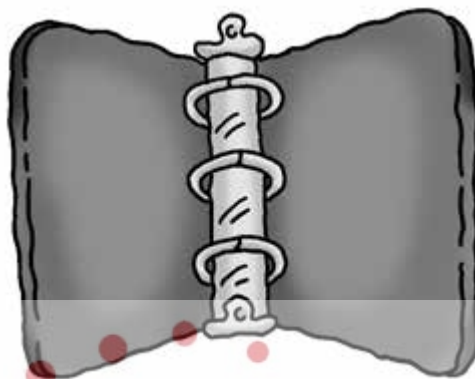


**A Program To Help
Upper-Elementary
And Middle School Students
Achieve Academic Success**

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The Notebook Doctor

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THE NOTEBOOK DOCTOR

Your Organizational Emergency Room

At 8 o'clock on a Wednesday morning, a sixth-grade student enters homeroom. The binder he's carrying is obviously in distress. Loose, crumpled papers are falling out of it. The rings are busted. Science, math, and language arts materials are jumbled together. Given this notebook's poor health, it's unlikely that the student will be able to find his homework or retrieve important papers when he needs them. This binder needs *The Notebook Doctor*!



What Is The Notebook Doctor?

The Notebook Doctor is an organizational workshop designed to help upper-elementary and middle school students succeed academically. It answers the pleas of parents and teachers concerned with students losing papers and spending too much time trying to locate what they need. Over the years, most students who have visited *The Notebook Doctor* have fit one of the following profiles:

1. The Flipper (see poster, page 7)

When asked to produce a certain assignment, this student flips back and forth through his binder in search of the paper. At first, the teacher thinks the student knows just where it is. After 20 minutes, the teacher wonders if the paper is even in the building.

2. The Stuffer (see poster, page 8)

Those fancy new zip-up binders fly off the shelves at back-to-school time. But the popularity of zip-up convenience and the fast pace of middle school schedules may have created more student *stuffers*. Rather than place papers in the designated section, stuffers shove each page into the zip-up binder and away they go. Papers get crumpled, torn, and misplaced. *Stuffers'* binders are full. But nothing's attached by the rings.

3. Ring Pops (see poster, page 9)

Ring pop students have the gravest condition known to notebook owners. It occurs when binder rings don't close completely or don't align correctly when they do close. Students with these binders go out of their way to avoid using the rings, for fear papers will tear at the holes or that the notebook will pop open, spilling papers

The Stuffer



Working This Program Into Your School Schedule

Few teachers and fewer administrators have ever challenged me about presenting this program during the school day. Middle-schoolers' need for organization is so great that the benefit of pulling a student from class is rarely contested unless a major test or quiz is scheduled for that time. I've been fortunate to have about 40 minutes in the morning to meet with small groups of students prior to the time class sessions begin. As with all programs, it is important that you meet with your school administrators, explain *The Notebook Doctor* concept, and develop a schedule that will work for everyone.

How Many Patients?

The number of patients you invite will depend upon several factors.

Do you want to mix grade levels? On-task behavior improves when I do. More concentration and less socialization! However, the presence of a grade-level peer might make a shy student more comfortable.

How bad is the diagnosis? If I know a notebook disaster is headed my way, limiting the number of patients enables me to provide more individualized care.

Do you have nurses? *Notebook Nurses* (or assistants) can significantly increase the number of patients you're able to serve (see page 25).

How much time do you have? Consider how much one-on-one care your notebook patients will need and how much time you have before they return to class. In 40 minutes, you can usually provide individual assistance to three or four students.

Are the students repeat patients? Or first-timers? A student who has been to an initial *Notebook Doctor* appointment should have a copy of *Steps To A Cure* (page 22). Many of my students come at their own request. They sit quietly and work independently. They're familiar with the *Steps To A Cure*, and they buy into the *Notebook Doctor* process. To serve your groups as efficiently as possible, consider mixing established and new patients.



Special Notebook Doctor Celebrations

Turn cleaning or some other task into a party. You'll be amazed at how many enthusiastic patients participate. I've thrown several binder-cleaning celebrations over the years. Some are described here:

A Halloween Binder Bash:

Eliciting the help of fellow faculty members, I began by distributing invitations. Most of those invited had been to *The Notebook Doctor* at least once, and this celebration was somewhat in appreciation for their continued business. Scary music helped set the scene. I crafted cardboard tombstones, labeled them with phrases like: "Here Lies Miss Lucy-Leaf Binder" or "R.I.P., Mr. Rings R. Popped," and placed them on cafeteria tables where the binders would soon be spread out. I purchased goofy masks and headbands for helpful colleagues whose assistance enabled me to invite about 20 students. Bowls of sweet treats were placed on the tables for all to enjoy. Students were told to place their binders on specific gravesites and begin working. The spooky theme made everyone smile, and students felt proud to be selected to receive help with notebook organization.

Winter Holiday Binder Gala:

Highlights of this celebration included raffles and door prizes. I labeled eight single-hole punches with familiar names of eight holiday reindeer. Each student received a ticket, and matching tickets were drawn to award the coveted hole punches. Other prizes included decorative folders, highlighters, and dividers. My *Notebook Nurses* wore labels identifying themselves as *elves*. Gingerbread cookies and snowman centerpieces completed the scene. Most importantly, while some notebooks arrived looking like they'd weathered a snowstorm, they left looking bright as spring!

Thanksgiving Turkey:

A notebook dressed like a turkey sat in the school's main lobby. A sign on it read:

"Feeling overstuffed lately? Visit *The Notebook Doctor* this Friday in the cafeteria. We'll have dividers, paper, and all the trimmings!"

