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Academic Coaching and Study Skills Instruction for 8th Graders

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Abstract

Emotional effects of lacking and obtaining study skills were discussed, followed by social effects, cognitive effects, and behavioral effects. Academic coaching was described and discussed in regards to study skills instruction for students. Next, various factors and traits influencing positive study skills instructions were explained, followed by a discussion about counseling for students developing their study skills. The role of the school counselor in study skills instruction was detailed. A study that implemented an adapted study skills curriculum was discussed and evaluated.

Academic Coaching and Study Skills Instruction for 8th Graders

The purpose of this intervention program is to increase study skills knowledge of 8th graders. This project is adapted from the Academic Advisement Program. The Academic Advisement Program was developed by Lisa King, a school counselor, to meet the needs of academically at-risk students (King, 2006). Study skills and test taking skills are skills that can be learned (Rozakis, 2002). The study skills are taught through group and individual academic coaching sessions. The topics include: organization/time management; learning styles; note-taking; reading strategies; study and test-taking strategies; and stress management and reducing test anxiety.

If students are going to be expected to have organization, study skills, and learning strategies, these have to be taught ahead of the time (Newton, 2003). Newton (2003) reasoned that by middle school, students require specific instruction, demonstration, sufficient practice, and close monitoring to become proficient with learning strategies and to apply them when necessary.

When students have increased their knowledge of study skills and study strategies, they truly relish in their improved performances (Bruns, 1992). Increasing study skill knowledge will provide students with tools and resources to use when doing their school work. By establishing a good foundation for school success with increased knowledge of study skills, students are more likely to continue being as effective in future school grades and beyond (Bruns, 1992).

Review of the Literature

The following review of the related literature was categorized into the different issues that were raised in the literature regarding study skills instruction. A purpose of

this review is to examine the current literature on study skills curriculum, academic coaching, and increasing students' skill knowledge to link the various components of this literature. In other words, drawing conclusions from and combining the ideas in this related research in an effort to provide a useful and structured way for counselors to deliver study skills instruction and provide academic coaching to a small group of students.

Much of the research focused on the effects of study skills in the lives of middle school students. The research discussed the negative effects of not having the skills and strategies to strive for success in school. The research also addressed the positive effects of students gaining study skills instruction and the impact on various aspects of their lives. Emotional effects of learning study skills were discussed, followed by social effects, cognitive effects, and behavioral effects. There were several factors and traits identified that contribute to positive study skills instruction. These were followed by a discussion of academic coaching in study skills instruction. Counseling needs and implications for students learning study skills was described. The description of the role of the school counselor in teaching study skills concluded the literature review.

Emotional Effects

Lacking study skills and struggling academically can have destructive emotional effects on students (Du Plessis, n.d.). Persistent failure leads to distress, embarrassment, and frustration (n.d.). It is terrifying for children to be sitting in a class dreading being called on and knowing they will not be able to answer a question posed by their teacher.

Poor self-esteem is very often attributed to students who do not possess knowledge of study skills and study techniques (Bruns, 1992). Students do not have faith

or trust in their ability to complete assignments and prepare for exams. They feel inferior, incapable, or inadequate (Bruns, 1992).

Many middle school students are anxious and worried about different aspects of their young lives and this distracts from their ability to function well as learners (Georgiady & Romano, 1994). In other words, emotional stress can negatively impact learning and academic success.

Students in middle schools often complain about the stresses they experience in their everyday lives (Gerler, 1991). The transition from elementary school to middle and junior high school can be stressful for practically all children (Eccles, 2003). The transition includes many changes, such as puberty and concerns about body image; increased responsibility; increased independence and decreased dependence on parents; classroom structure; and an increased focus on achievement and performance (Santrock, 2006). Students in middle and junior high school reveal the following stressors as impactful on their lives: academic performance anxiety, social exclusion, familial strains, and personal development (Hitchner & Tiff-Hitchner, 1996).

Students that do not well with their studies often become discouraged and their self-esteem suffers (Georgaidy & Romano, 1994). Increased study skills knowledge may contribute to increased self-esteem. Higher self-esteem will lead to the development of self-respect and self-confidence (Bautista, 1991). Self-respect and self-confidence are so necessary in becoming a successful student and successful human (Bautista, 1991).

Social Effects

Peer relationships can suffer or be hindered when a student does not have the study skills and strategies to propel academic learning forward (Heacox, 1991). Students

struggling with study skills and academic success have a stronger need for peer approval, yet they sometimes are socially outcast and have fewer friends (Mufson, Cooper, & Hall, 1989).

If a student finds himself or herself in a peer group with positive school attitudes, school achievement is valued and the student will find encouragement from the members of peer group (Rimm, 1986). A student may be motivated to tackle a challenging or difficult academic task if it provides an opportunity for social interaction (Wright, 2006).

If students fail to make the social adjustment and maturity transition in middle school, they will be socially and academically immature for the remainder of their lives (Hough, 1995).

Cognitive Effects

When counselors help students develop an awareness about their own thinking and learning processes, students begin thinking about the effectiveness of the strategies they use in reaching goals they have set for themselves (Barell, 1995). In other words, counselors are guiding students to think about their thinking which will help students take more control of their thought processes (Barell, 1995). In teaching students to think about their thinking, they are developing a course of action to take when studying for a subject and they will maintain it over time (Newton, 2003). When students realize they have more control over their thoughts and actions, they can positively affect their own beliefs, motivations, and academic performance (McCombs, 1991).

Learning suffers when students do not concentrate and do not put the required effort into studying (Georgiady & Romano, 1994). Students with poor or little study skills fall behind in their work (1994). As the work piles up, it becomes more difficult

for them to concentrate and there is more for them to remember (1994). As students transition from middle to high school, they are expected to rely less on the teacher and put more attention into becoming self-managed learners (Wright, 2006). In order to do this, students would benefit from learning essential study and organizational skills to enable them to function as independent learners (2006).

Behavioral Effects

Students lacking study skills and not completing their work demonstrate dependence on the presence of their teacher and/or parents to complete their work (Bruns, 1992). In other words, students are more likely to complete their work, including studying, when their teacher is standing over them (Bruns, 1992). They are not self-sufficient (Bruns, 1992). Dependent children are aware that they are not keeping up with their peers (Rimm, 1986). The children do not possess the confidence to complete their work independently (Rimm, 1986).

Patterns of dependency often begin in the primary grade levels (Rimm, 1986). Students are identified as struggling with their class work and not completing it. The work is then sent home to be completed where the parents provide undivided attention and support. As time goes by, more and more work arrives at home. Students have entered a pattern of behavior where they learn to need and rely on their parents to accomplish any work (Rimm, 1986). In the primary grades, this work is class work that wasn't finished in school. As the student moves through the grade levels, the quantity of work increases and also includes homework. The student is stuck in this pattern of dependency. Their achievement falls behind and they work effectively only in a one-to-one setting (Rimm, 1986).

Students who are inattentive avoid calling any attention to themselves and may seem distracted or preoccupied (Finn & Rock, 1997). They avoid calling attention to themselves from teachers because they aren't paying attention and worry about giving inappropriate or incorrect responses if they are called upon (Finn & Rock, 1997).

Students who are not attentive and on task can potentially be disruptive influences in the classroom (Holland, 1998). These students can impede the learning of others as well as their own (1998).

Behavior problems can result from the negative academic experiences children undergo (Du Plessis, n.d.). The strain and frustration from not doing well in school can cause them to be reluctant to go to school, throw temper tantrums before school, or just skip school all together (n.d.). Students' worry and concern about school work may cause them to begin to lose interest in school or even skip school (Georgiady & Romano, 1994). Some students may resort to destructive behaviors to win the attention they so desperately seek (1994). Previously, what may have been a good girl or boy, can become intolerable (Bleuer, 1987).

Behavior problems can intensify to the point where children cheat, steal, and even begin experimenting with drugs, all in reaction to children viewing themselves as failures (Bruns, 1992). Peer group behaviors can influence academics, positively and negatively. Behaviors that can impede school performance include truancy or drug use. Although a peer group that displays behaviors that support and value education, can be a model and a source of inspiration for students (Greenberg, 2003).

Factors Influencing Study Skills

There were a number of situational factors that were suggested to influence how a student learns study skills. Among these factors were: the study setting at home and school; teachers; families; peers; and previous school and academic experiences.

Study setting at home and school.

The appropriate study setting will contribute to effective learning and use of study skills. To have an encouraging and productive experience when studying and doing homework, the environment must be one that allows for full concentration (Malter, 2006). An open area where a student can spread out books and papers will minimize frustrations (Malter, 2006).

A home setting that offers a supportive and caring structure will influence the student to acquire and apply study skills (Greenberg, 2003).

Teachers.

Teachers and counselors should focus on promoting student success, not only academically but also emotionally (Mayberry, 2005). Students need a well-designed and thorough study skills program that delivers the essential skills and also motivates students to use them (Newton, 2003). Positive teacher attitudes can have a significant impact on students achieving academically and gaining study skill strategies (Greenberg, 2003).

Teachers can impact study skills by helping students to apply the learning strategies they have learned to different learning situations (Weinstein, 1998). It is not enough for students just to know about learning strategies. Teachers have a valuable role in the instruction and application of study skills (Greenberg, 2003). A teacher can reinforce strategies within the classroom.

Families.

Families that are motivated and attend school meetings have a positive impact on study skills and student learning success (Bleuer, 1987). It may be necessary for the school counselor to conduct parent education groups to encourage and support family involvement (1987). Parents can influence positive study skills if they are aware of their role in helping their child succeed in school and if they are capable of helping their child to succeed in school (Greenberg, 2003).

The home environment created at home by families can promote positive self-esteem and achievement (Heacox, 1991). This environment can have a profound effect on a child's learning.

Peers.

Peers can be a powerful influence on study skills. Group counseling has been shown to be more effective than individual counseling in treating academic problems (Bleuer, 1987). In the group setting, students learn from each other and support each other (1987). When a student's friends or social group rejects school, it is likely a student will acquire similar attitudes towards school (Greenberg, 2003).

As with families, peers groups that support and value education can influence a student to embrace similar values. The student often chooses to adopt the values and attitudes of their social group, especially in the middle grades (2003). Peers that exhibit an interest in schoolwork can be a strong social influence on academic motivation and success (Brier, 2006).

Previous school and academic experiences.

Patterns of achievement established in early adolescent years can predict school achievement through twelfth grade and beyond (Crockett, Peterson, Graber, Schulenberg,

& Ebata, 1989). Attribution theory attests that the way a student approaches a new learning task depends on what he/she feels were the causes of past successes and failures (Bleuer, 1987). Thus, it is important for counselors to explore these feelings with students to understand patterns and develop new habits.

Students' expectations are commonly based on their interpretations of past successes and failures (Brier, 2006). If a student attributes his/her successes and failures on the amount individual effort, the student might experience increased hope and more interest in school (Brier, 2006).

Traits Influencing Study Skills

In addition to factors, there were a number of traits personal to children and students that appeared to influence how well students learn study skills. These traits included: attitude, self-confidence, motivation, dedication/commitment, desire, and self-esteem.

Attitude.

Studying requires the correct attitude, being calm, and patient (Malter, 2006). Thinking negatively and beating one self up, will only hinder the studying process (Malter, 2006). Students who struggle in school and lack study skills demonstrate negative attitudes toward school, along with passive-aggressive behavior (Bruns, 1992).

A negative attitude toward school can contribute to below level achievement and academic struggles (Greenberg, 2003).

Self-confidence.

The nature of motivational change for students in middle school is dependent on the learning environment they find themselves in (Anderman & Midgley, 1999).

Increased learning and improved grades are seen as enabling goals that lead to empowerment and strengthened resilience (Bleuer & Walz, 2003). Empowerment and strengthened resilience feed back into the student through increased academic ability and improved self-concept (2003). This feedback loop demonstrates how increased achievement and academic success can recycle itself to continued achievement in the future (2003).

Motivation.

Motivation is a major component in academic achievement (Dweck, 2002). While as, lack of motivation to academically succeed can contribute to below level achievement and academic struggles (Greenberg, 2003).

Dedication/commitment.

Covey (1989) considers self-directedness a habit that characterizes highly effective and productive individuals. As students gain strength in their study skills and techniques, they may increase their academic effectiveness (Barell, 1985). Students who possess dedication to their academic pursuits will develop self-direction and motivation (Barell, 1985). Strategic learners need to be aware of their motivation and the context in which they are learning (Weinstein, 1998). Knowledge and awareness of these two variables will help the student make effective and efficient strategy choices (1998).

Counselors can be integral in helping students develop a personal commitment by developing behavior contracts with specific goals (Bleuer, 1987). To reinforce determination and encourage accountability, post these goals for the student and study skills group members to see on a regular basis (1987).

Self-esteem.

The higher students' self-esteem, the more ambitious and enthusiastic they will be to set goals to pursue their dreams (Bautista, 1991). A sense of achievement will build self-confidence (Rimm, 1986). To build self-esteem, provide opportunities for students to experience success (Heacox, 1991). A student may be caught in a failure cycle and it would be beneficial to create a success situation. For example, asking the student to do something he or she is almost guaranteed to do successfully. After the task has been completed, provide positive feedback, support, and encouragement to foster self-esteem development (Heacox, 1991).

Self-confidence comes from accepting and conquering challenges (Rimm, 1986). Challenges such as not possessing study skills knowledge. Students will feel more that they are entitled to success and happiness (Bautista, 1991). Students learn self-confidence through struggle (Rimm, 1986).

Self esteem is generally higher when school success is defined by the amount of effort exerted (Brier, 2006). Study skills instruction provides students with the skills and resources to put their best and most productive effort forth. A child's self-esteem can significantly influence his or her ability to be successful in school (Heacox, 1991).

Academic Coaching and Teaching Study Skills

Children can learn appropriate academic behaviors more easily if they have an effective model to imitate (Rimm, 1986). An academic coach can be this model for students to imitate and learn from. The role of the person teaching study skills is actually more similar to that of a coach rather than a teacher (Newton, 2003). Struggling students have a better chance of managing their academic work and study requirements when they

can have regular meetings with an adult mentor such as an academic coach (Wright, 2006).

Programs that provide additional learning opportunities for students, such as after-school study skills groups, have the potential to improve student learning and can prompt numerous other positive outcomes (Miller, 2001). Particularly, outcomes were noticed in the areas of psychosocial and youth development (McComb & Scott-Little, 2003). Some of the outcomes have included positive attitudes toward school, lower incidence of aggressive behavior, and pro-social attitudes (2003). Academic outcomes included more regular attendance in school and better grades (2003).

Teaching study skills in an after-school setting allows for more students to participate because it avoids schedule conflicts within the regular school day (Miller, 2001). After school programs should be essential aspect of a school's academic and student development program (McComb & Scott-Little, 2003).

If middle school students are going to be able to get the greatest benefit from their education, certain steps and interventions need to be taken to help them study more effectively (Georgiady & Romano, 1994). Coaching students to seek help when they need it is important for them to be successful at performing school tasks (Brier, 2006). Academic coaching includes study skills strategies and helping students to recognize when to reach out for help and support.

Counseling for Students Learning Study Skills

Collaboration, empowerment, and respect for a child's unique strengths and resources are essential for effective counseling (Murphy, 1997). Some students may require counseling in order to self-direct their learning (Barell, 1995). This counseling

may include helping students develop an awareness of their beliefs about their abilities and the role they play in choosing to learn or not to learn (Barell, 1995).

Some counseling activities that will contribute to helping children develop their awareness include thinking journals, graphic organizers, peer interviews, and group discussions (McCombs, 1991). Group counseling can be a potentially powerful tool for counselors to use in helping students develop critical academic (Campbell and Brigman, 2005). Group counseling tends to enhance the comfort level of the participating group members and students might be more willing to share and learn from each other (Drucker, 2003). Counseling children in a group setting has been shown to be an effective technique for encouraging change in school-age children (Ehly & Dustin, 1991). Group counseling can help students become better problem solvers, improve their decision-making skills, and enhance their learning skills (Drucker, 2003).

Individual and group counseling can be very effective with middle school students because their intellectual development can enable them to understand the objectives of counseling and they are able to communicate effectively (Shelton & James, 2005). Since school counselors are in a position to deliver group counseling, they are also in a situation to develop and evaluate group counseling programs that target student learning needs (Campbell and Brigman, 2005). Learning to think occurs within a social context such as a counseling group (Barell, 1995).

Role of School Counselor in Teaching Study Skills

School counselors are well qualified and prepared to help students improve their academic performance (Bleuer & Walz, 2003). For a long time, academic support has been considered a major part of the school counselor's role (Hanson, 2002). This is

further supported in the American School Counselor Association's National Model for School Counseling Programs in which the authors state, "Today, in a world enriched by diversity and technology, school counselor's chief mission is still supporting the academic achievement of all students so they are prepared for the ever-changing world of the 21st century" (Bowers & Hatch, 2002, p. 7).

Schools are seeking counselors who employ a personal commitment to assisting administrators, teachers, and other school members in helping young adolescents as they become acclimated to middle school and the academic rigors (Mayberry, 2005). Counselors should collaborate with teachers to implement programs that help students develop an appropriate and reasonable work ethic (Gerler, 1991). The school counselor's role should first be an educator, and support students in their progress through school (Bleuer, 1987). The counselor's role is to facilitate students' development of time management skills and solid work habits so students can successfully complete homework assignments (Mayberry, 2005). The counselor's role is not only to facilitate appropriate skill building but also to be an advocate for students (Dundee, 1998).

The school counselor should assume the role of as leader in the school to help teachers and administrators increase student achievement (Dundee, 1998). As part of the school counselor's role to address the academic needs of all children, he/she should routinely review each student's progress on regular basis (Bleuer & Walz, 2003). This will allow the counselor and student to make revisions to their study plan as changes occur. Counselors are relied on to plan programs that make schools inviting places for everyone to study, learn, and grow (Georgiady & Romano, 1994).

Participants

Four students had initially agreed to participate. When the study skills program began, there were just 2 participants. These participants were both eighth grade students. They were both males. The students were both enrolled in academic intervention services for performing below level on state assessments in seventh grade. The students were also recommended by teachers and the counselor.

Setting

Churchville-Chili Central Junior High School is located within a suburb of the city of Rochester in upstate New York. The school serves students in grades seven through nine. The Junior High School is physically connected to the Intermediate School and the Senior High School. In the fall of 2007, the school consisted of 1150 students. Of these 1150 students, 608 were male and 542 were female. The ethnic breakdown of these students was as follows: Asian/Pacific Islander: 36; Black (not Hispanic): 90; Caucasian: 984; and Hispanic: 40 (VanHousen, C. Personal Communication. November 26, 2007).

Method

After Institutional Review Board and school district approval was granted, letters of invitation to participate in this study skills group instruction were given to 5 students. The students were selected based one of the following criteria: 1 or more core subjects with an F; teacher, administrator, or counselor recommendation; or participation in summer school. Four students agreed to participate. Consent forms were distributed to students and parents/guardians.

After the consent forms had been completed and collected, the first session was held. The sessions were held after-school so that it would not interfere with regular

instruction during the school day. Thursdays were chosen because it is the one day of the week when teachers are already committed to team meetings, and therefore, unable to meet with students. A late bus was available for transportation services. Reminder sheets were distributed to the students on Wednesdays (Appendix B). At the beginning of each session, the counselor intern provided an after-school snack in order to begin to establish a comfortable environment.

Session One

At the first session, the pre-test questionnaire (Appendix A) was given to the students to complete. Confidentiality and rules of the group were discussed and established. The group facilitator distributed copies of the Getting To Know You activity (Appendix C). The students interacted with one another to complete their forms. There was some discussion after the activity as students reflected on getting to know each other better. The final activity for the first session was the Learning Styles activity and lesson (Appendix D, E, F, and G).

Session Two

The focus of session two was on organization and time management. At the beginning of session two and all remaining sessions, the students were given the opportunity to share current happenings in their lives and to discuss any specific academic issues that may have arisen in the previous week. The students each created individualized study schedules keeping in mind regular occurring activities (Appendix H). Time was spent evaluating their school agendas and how they used them. The students were frequently using their agendas to record assignments. The students

participated in the Turning in Assignments activity (Appendix I and J). For the next session, the students were asked to bring a text book with them.

Session Three

The focus of the third session was on note-taking strategies and strategies for reading textbooks. The students reported on how well their daily study schedule was working for them and if anything had changed. The students were in agreement that their schedules were working out for them. As a group and guided by the counselor intern, the students completed the Taking Notes activity (Appendix K). Following this, the students completed the Reading Textbooks activity (Appendix L). Coincidentally, all of the students brought their social studies textbooks. For the remaining portion of the session, students worked together to practice the note-taking and reading strategies they were taught. For the next session, students were asked to bring any review material for upcoming quizzes or tests.

Session Four

In the fourth session, the focus was study and test-taking strategies. The counselor intern distributed copies of the Ways to Study activity (Appendix M). Individually, students listed their academic subjects and specified which strategies they would use to study each subject. As a group, the students were given the opportunity to share their lists with the group. The students completed the Test-Taking Strategies activity (Appendix N) with the counselor intern.

Session Five

The focus of the fifth session was stress management and reducing test anxiety. The students completed the Test Skills and Test Anxiety activity (Appendix O) as a

group. The students discussed their feelings when they think about or hear they have a test. This discussion was followed by the final activity of the session, Test Anxiety and What I Can Do About It (Appendix P).

Session Six

The final and sixth session began with a celebratory snack of root beer floats and seasonal cupcakes. After the students finished their snacks, the counselor intern reviewed the previous sessions and went over the handouts. The students were administered the post-test questionnaire and the self-reflection. The students reflected on their time in the study skills group and discussed what they found most helpful. The students were given their study skills worksheets to keep for reference.

Results

The students in the study skills instruction group were previously acquainted with each other. This familiarity seemed to contribute to the overall comfort level of the group. As the group sessions progressed, the students shared more easily with each other. The students offered support and suggestions to each other in regards to different ways to study, how to approach a teacher, and how to prepare for a test. All students completed the post questionnaire and self-reflection. The table below details the responses the students provided on the pre and post questionnaires.

		Pre-test Response	Post-test response	Change
Statement #1	Student 1	4	5	+1
	Student 2	3	4	+1
Statement #2	Student 1	3	4	+1
	Student 2	2	1	-1
Statement #3	Student 1	2	5	+3
	Student 2	5	5	0
Statement #4	Student 1	1	4	+3
	Student 2	5	5	0
Statement #5	Student 1	3	3	0

	Student 2	3	3	0
Statement #6	Student 1	2	3	+1
	Student 2	1	5	+4
Statement #7	Student 1	2	4	+2
	Student 2	4	3	-1
Statement #8	Student 1	4	3	-1
	Student 2	2	4	+2
Statement #9	Student 1	3	3	0
	Student 2	3	5	+2
Statement #10	Student 1	4	4	0
	Student 2	3	4	+1
Statement #11	Student 1	2	4	+2
	Student 2	5	4	-1
Statement #12	Student 1	2	4	+2
	Student 2	5	5	0
Statement #13	Student 1	3	2	-1
	Student 2	3	3	0
Statement #14	Student 1	5	3	-2
	Student 2	5	3	-2
Statement #15	Student 1	3	5	+2
	Student 2	3	3	0
Statement #16	Student 1	3	5	+2
	Student 2	2	5	+3
Statement #17	Student 1	4	5	+1
	Student 2	4	4	0
Statement #18	Student 1	3	4	+1
	Student 2	5	3	-2
Statement #19	Student 1	1	3	+2
	Student 2	2	3	+1
Statement #20	Student 1	3	4	+1
	Student 2	4	4	0

The table provides the responses that the students provided for the pre and post questionnaire (Appendix A). The items that both students reported a higher response in the post questionnaire were item #1, item #6, item # 16, and item #19. The items that a student indicated no change in their response were item # 3, item # 4, item #5, item #9, item #10, item #12, item #13, item #15, item # 17, and item #20. Overall, student #1 indicated increased responses to 14 of the 20 items from the pre to the post questionnaire.

Student #2 indicated increased responses to 7 of the 20 items. The items on the questionnaire can be broken down into different topic focuses correlating to the different session topics.

The items related to organization and time management included item #1, item #2, item #3, item #4, item #5, and item #11. In general, the students indicated a higher response on these items. One student indicated a lower post response on item #2 and item #11.

The items related to taking notes and reading strategies included item #6, item #7, item #8, item #9, and item #10. For the most part, the students indicated increased responses on these items. One student indicated a lower post response on item #7 and item #8.

Study and test-taking strategies were assessed in item #12, item #15, item #16, and item #17. The students either indicated an increase in their responses or no change at all.

The items related to stress management and reducing test anxiety include item #14, item #18 and item #19. The responses to these items varied greatly. The students both indicated decreased responses to one item and both indicated increased responses to another item. For the third item, the students were split.

The students answered four questions on the Self-Evaluation form during the final group session. When asked what their favorite thing was about coming to the group meetings, their responses included: getting food, learning new ways about studying, sitting in comfy chairs, finishing homework, and working on study strategies. When asked about their least favorite thing, the students reported that learning and staying after

were not their favorite parts of the group. The students were then asked to indicate how the group was helpful to each of them. The students indicated that the group helped them to learn ways to study, learn ways to address and reduce test anxiety, and helped them to get their homework in on time. Lastly, the students suggested ways to improve or change the group. They suggested having cards and games for interaction when the group instruction was complete for each session.

Discussion

Through an analysis of the group discussions and participant comments, the author affirmed that the students revealed many of the emotional, social, and cognitive effects as described in the review. The specific emotional effects include distress, embarrassment, frustration, and poor self esteem. In particular, one student mentioned that he felt embarrassed when he was not able to participate in a classroom discussion due to having not prepared properly for the class. He was frustrated when he didn't know the answers to the questions posed by the teacher. The students said they often compared themselves to their peers and felt inferior and incapable. These feelings are consistent with the work of Du Plessis (n.d.) and Bruns (1992). As discussed in literature by Du Plessis and Bruns, lacking study skills and struggling academically can have a significant emotional impact on students. It was not surprising to the author that the students felt emotions such as embarrassment, frustration, and low self-esteem.

One student discussed his anxiety and nervousness prior to taking a test. He said he gets so nervous that he visibly shakes and his palms get so sweaty that he constantly needs to dry them on his pants during the test. He mentioned that a peer in class commented on his behaviors and it made him embarrassed. This stress and anxiety is

consistent with the work by Gerler (1991), Santrock (2006), and Bautista (1991). The students frequently described academic situations they caused them stress, frustration and embarrassment. This student who expressed such stress and anxiety over taking tests reported that the strategies he learned in the group helped to ease some of his concerns.

During the study skills instruction program, the students received five week interim reports and ten week report cards. The students reported that they were excited and proud to see the many positive comments from their teachers. The students mentioned that they had made adjustments in their study habits as a result of what they had learned in the group. Similar to what Georgiady and Romano (1994) discovered in their research, it was evident that the students in this group benefited from the positive regard they received the counselor intern teaching the study skills strategies. The author

In regards to the social effects, the students mentioned that their peers performed at about the same level or a little better than them. The students reported that it encouraged them to do better and it supported their efforts in the classroom. As described in the literature by Rimm (1986) and Wright (2006), students will be motivated and will find encouragement from their peers with positive school attitudes and academic achievement.

The students' words spoke to a sense of personal control over their learning and academic success. With the completion of the study skills group, the students felt empowered and more confident in their academic abilities. With a renewed conviction, the students said they believed they could positively impact their future academic performances. This confidence and sense of ownership over their own learning is in line with the work by McCombs (1991) and Wright (2006).

The students mentioned that it is easier for them to complete their school work in a setting such as their AIS (Academic Intervention Services) class. They reported that this class is small in size and their teachers often offer help and support. The positive regard and support they mentioned they received from their teachers is consistent with research conducted by Bruns (1992) and Rimm (1986). Bruns and Rimm found that teachers who positively supported students with feedback and comments contributed to the students' academic performance. The students reported that they are looking forward to not being in this class and having more room in their schedule for electives and other classes they are interested in taking.

The author found that the students referred to specific factors that influenced their study skills improvement. For example, the students reported that teachers who inspired and motivated and took the time to understand them greatly influenced their effort and academic performance. These feelings and thoughts are consistent with the work by Mayberry (2005), Newton (2003), and Greenberg (2003) in which they found students feeling similarly when they struggled academically due to the lack of study skills.

The results from the study skills group suggest that the students increased their study skills knowledge through their involvement in the group. It was apparent to the author that the students felt comfortable and supported in the group. It was likely the group felt natural as they were in a familiar environment and they were together with other students that struggled with study skills. It was evident that the students discovered there were other students like them that had similar anxieties with test-taking and feeling inadequate with certain study skills.

Through the group, students were encouraged to apply the learning and study strategies beyond the group. Their interactions in the group helped them to understand that they could help and support each other and other students who struggle with school and struggle with learning and study strategies. It is possible this experience empowered them as students to strive for school success. The students were able to identify specific problem areas and learned strategies to overcome some of their struggles.

Some students who had expressed interest in the study skills group decided not to participate. The students who did participate remained in the group through the final session. This suggests the students found the group helpful and beneficial. It is possible that the students who did participate were motivated and vested in improving their academic performances.

The students' responses on their favorite and least favorite things about the group were contradictory. The students expressed a favorable response to learning new strategies while one student indicated a least favorite thing about the group was learning.

Their suggestion to have cards and games suggested to the group facilitator that the students really enjoyed being together and wanted to further enhance this interaction with a fun and more informal experience. The author agrees with the students' opinion. In the future, the group facilitator might check in with group mid-way through the program to assess the students' feelings and thoughts. Changes and adjustments can then be made to benefit the students and their learning.

As a counselor and someone personally dedicated to helping students, there is no greater reward than helping struggling students become successful. As a counselor intern running this program, it was rewarding and frustrating. It was rewarding because it

provided a much-needed intervention to the students. It was frustrating because the author would have liked to offer the program to every student who wanted and needed it.

In conclusion, the students who participated in the group were actively involved in each group session and discussion. Their involvement contributed to the flow and evolution of each session. The results from this group are promising and encouraging for the author to continue developing the study skills instruction program.

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Appendix A: Pre/Post Questionnaire

Read each statement and think about it. Please circle the number that best describes your current level as it relates to the statement.

	Rarely		Sometimes		Often
1. I use my agenda to write down assignments.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I do my assignments the day they are assigned.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I keep my locker neat and organized.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I prepare for the next school day by getting everything ready before I go to bed.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I follow a plan for my time when not in school.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I take notes as I read my textbooks.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I know a variety of strategies to take notes.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I take notes during my classes.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I look over headings, pictures, charts, questions, summaries, and words in bold print before I start reading.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I know strategies to understand what I read in a textbook.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I have a quiet and organized place to study.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I complete all review materials to prepare for a test.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I go to the teacher for extra help when I don't understand.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I feel anxious and nervous before a test.	1	2	3	4	5
15. When taking a test, I skip over the questions I am unsure of. I continue the test and return to the ones I didn't answer.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I know key words to look for in True/False					

questions.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I know techniques to answer multiple-choice questions.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I check over all of my answers before turning in a test.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I feel comfortable about taking tests.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I feel excited about this school year.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix B: Meeting Reminder

Don't Forget...

We are meeting Thursday after school in the 8th Grade Office for our Study Skills group. We will be in the Conference Room. Please bring your agendas and any homework you have with you. A special snack will be provided.

Thanks!

Miss Chamberlin

Appendix C: Getting To Know You Activity

Getting To Know You

Name _____

DIRECTIONS: Try to find at least ONE classmate in the room who fits into the following categories. When you find someone, have that classmate put his/her initials in the correct box. The object is to get as many boxes filled as you can.

I have more than one brother or sister.	I have a pet.	My favorite food is spaghetti.	I like to read.	I have read at least one <i>Harry Potter</i> book.
I was born in a state other than New York.	We have birthdays in the same month.	I enjoy drawing.	I hate vegetables.	I can play a musical instrument.
I can make a basket from the free-throw line.	I wear contact lenses.	I enjoy swimming.	I like to use a computer.	I want to do better in school.
I am involved in an after-school activity.	Someone in my family is a twin.	I know what a prime number is.	I have hit a home run.	I have been in a play.

Appendix D: Introduction to Learning Styles

Introduction to Learning Styles

Materials: Worksheet (page 58) which has been previously completed by students, page 65-66, highlighters

Procedures:

1. Ask students, "What is a learning style? What are the three learning styles?"
2. Use page 65 as a visual in teaching the three learning styles.
3. Students should review the inventory (page 58) that they filled out during the individual session.
4. Go around the group and have everyone share what learning style they most identify with. Ask students if they agree with what the inventory surmised.
5. Distribute 'Tips for Learning Styles', page 66.
6. Ask students to cut out the section on page 65 that applies to them and glue/tape these 'tips for learning' to the outside of their advisement folder.
7. Students can highlight one or two tips that they plan to use in the next week.

Appendix E: Learning Styles Inventory

The Learning Styles Inventory

Name _____

Date _____

Directions:

1. Fold the paper lengthwise down the dotted line. Check the boxes beside the sentences that describe you.

	auditory	visual	kinesthetic
<input type="checkbox"/> I remember something better if I write it down.		X	
<input type="checkbox"/> I need to take a lot of study breaks.			X
<input type="checkbox"/> Writing is difficult for me.	X		
<input type="checkbox"/> If there is music or noise around, I can't concentrate.		X	
<input type="checkbox"/> I learn well by using math cubes, counters and acting things out.			X
<input type="checkbox"/> I like to hear directions told to me rather than reading them.	X		
<input type="checkbox"/> I hum or talk to myself when I am bored	X		
<input type="checkbox"/> To remember something better, I get a picture of it in my head.		X	
<input type="checkbox"/> I use my hands when I am talking.			X
<input type="checkbox"/> I learn well by reading things out loud.	X		
<input type="checkbox"/> I like to see what I am learning better than hearing it explained.		X	
<input type="checkbox"/> I like to do things myself to really understand things.			X
TOTAL			

2. Unfold the paper and circle the x on the same line of your check marks.
3. Next, add up the number of circled x's in each column and mark the totals.

What type of learner are you?

- auditory visual kinesthetic

Appendix F: Explanation of Learning Styles

Explanation of Learning Styles

LEARNING STYLE refers to the process in which one understands information.

The three basic learning styles are:



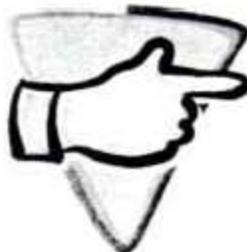
Visual Learning

Learning through seeing



Auditory Learning

Learning through hearing



Kinesthetic Learning

Learning through movement or touch

Appendix G: Tips for Your Learning Styles

Tips for your learning styles



Tips for studying using your VISUAL learning style

Coordinate notebooks for each subject in a different color

Use post it notes, checklists, and reminder cards

Use pictures, charts, graphs to reinforce information



Tips for studying using your AUDITORY learning style

Leave important reminders on tape recorders

Discuss daily outline of schedule and tasks out loud

Study in groups for tests

Use "Books on Tape"

Read aloud

Edit your work out loud



Tips for studying using your KINESTHETIC learning style

Use computers to do written work

Play with a stress ball or silly putty while working

Place post it notes on important parts of work

Highlight main ideas

Appendix H: Daily Time/Study Schedule Form

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Date					
Day					
2:30pm					
3:00pm					
3:30pm					
4:00pm					
4:30pm					
5:00pm					
5:30pm					
6:00pm					
6:30pm					
7:00pm					
7:30pm					
8:00pm					
8:30pm					
9:00pm					
9:30pm					

Appendix I: Turning in Assignments Activity

Turning in Assignments

Materials: Worksheet, page 83, signs on construction paper that say:

Always, Sometimes, Never

Procedures:

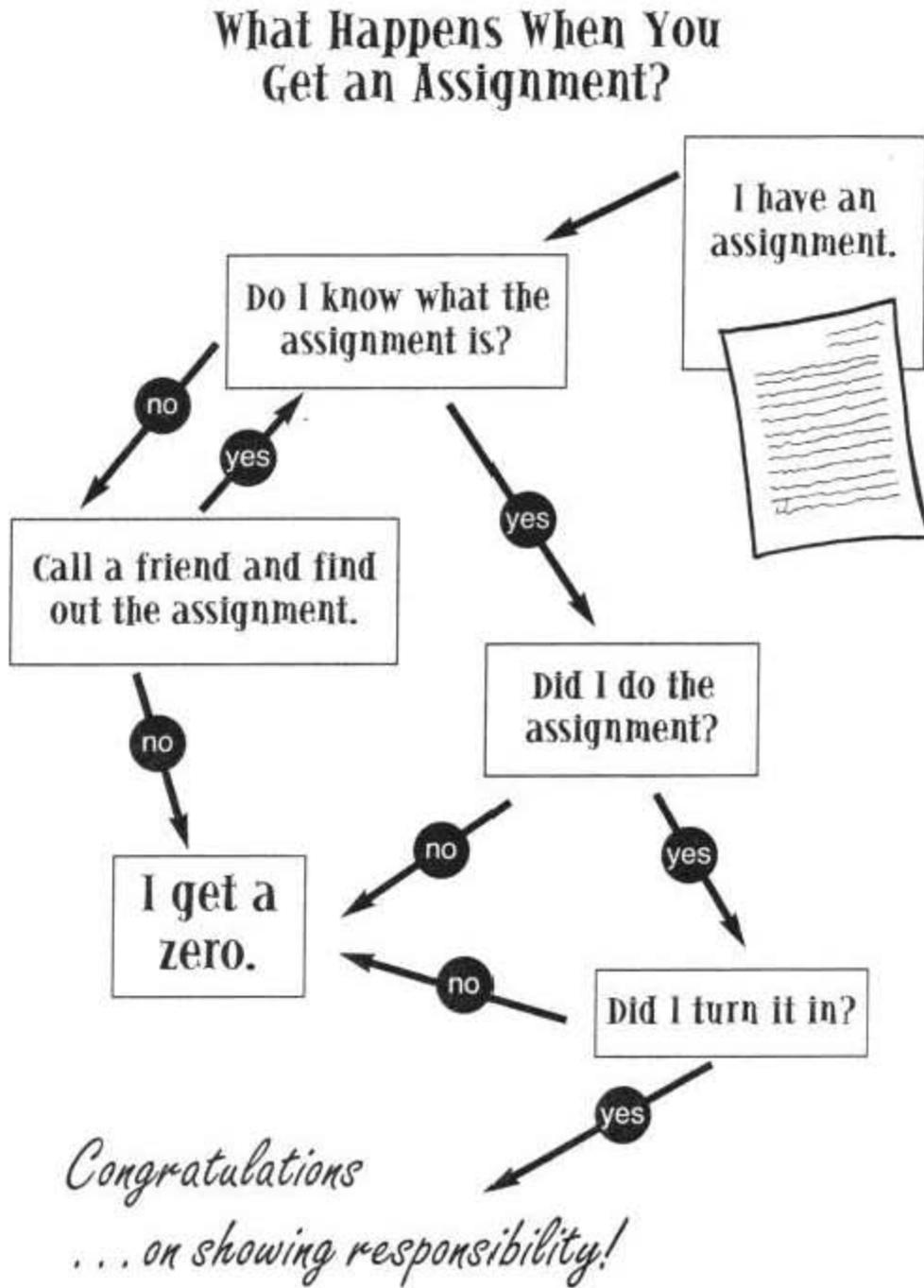
1. Counselor should put the three signs: "Always," "Sometimes," "Never" in three separate areas around the room.
2. Ask the students to travel to the sign that would be their best response for the following statements:

ALWAYS — SOMETIMES — NEVER

- *I know what I should be doing for homework assignments.*
- *I do my homework at home.*
- *I remember to bring my homework from home to school.*
- *I turn my homework in on time.*
- *I finish my class work.*

3. How is homework different from classwork?
4. Distribute page 83 and go over this visual flowchart of what happens to an assignment once it is assigned.
5. Discuss the effect of what a zero does to a class grade.

Appendix J: What Happens When You Turn in an Assignment?



Appendix K: Taking Good Notes

Taking Good Notes

1. Where do you think teachers get the material for tests and quizzes?

Being an Active Listener

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Taking Notes Help You Pay Attention

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

When taking notes remember to:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Appendix L: Reading Textbooks

Reading Textbooks

Learning Tools Provided by the Authors

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

Scan

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Read

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Appendix M: Ways to Study

Ways to Study

Please review the different ways to study. Think about which techniques you can use for each of your subject areas. I encourage you to try different ways for each subject to find those that work best for you. List each of your subjects. Under each one, list the techniques you plan to use to study that subject.

1. Practice with flashcards
2. Ask someone to quiz you
3. Read
4. Reread
5. Highlight your notes
6. Summarize
7. Read your notes
8. Read your notes aloud
9. Organize your papers so you are working with everything you need
10. Outline or make a graphic version of written work (lists, columns, Venn diagrams, etc.)
11. Quiz yourself
12. Write memory work over and over until you feel confident
13. Use a worksheet as a quiz by covering over the answers and re-doing it
14. Look over old quizzes and try to figure out why you're making mistakes
15. Look over the returned assignments for the unit
16. Answer study guide questions
17. Tell someone else what the topic is about
18. Look up the parts of the assignments that you didn't understand the first time

Appendix N: Test-Taking Strategies

Test-Taking Strategies

In order to do well on any test, you must study hard and be prepared. Having done that, you can improve your performance on a test by using these test-taking strategies.

Get Off to a Good Start

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Develop a Plan

1. _____
2. _____

Multiple-choice Questions

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

True/False Questions

1. Statements are usually false if they include: _____

2. Statements are usually true if they include: _____

Know How to Approach Essay Questions

- Read each question and begin with the easiest one.
- Before doing any writing, brainstorm key words and jot them down.
- Begin writing using clear, concise, complete sentences, and legible writing.
- Reread your essay and make any necessary corrections.
- If you don't know the answer to an essay question, write down what you do know about the subject. (You may get partial credit.)
- If you don't have time to complete an essay question, write a note to the teacher or see the teacher after the class ends. Be honest and sincere.

When taking any test, always remember to:

* CHECK YOUR ANSWERS!!!

Appendix O: Testing Skills and Test Anxiety

Testing Skills and Test Anxiety

Materials: Post-its, binder, day planner/agenda book, worksheet page 92

Procedures:

1. Ask students what words come to mind when they think of "tests."
2. Discuss how you can have fear and excitement at the same time (for instance on a roller coaster), which sometimes happens on a test.
3. Look at page 92 and have students work in pairs to discuss and fill out this worksheet on how they intend on avoiding test stress.
4. When the group comes back together, have group members share their ideas with the group.
5. Next, the counselor should ask the group to focus on # 2 on page 92. Discuss how organization can reduce stress.
6. Have students get with a different partner and discuss
 - *How does their desk organization effect their work?*
 - *How is their room organized and how does this effect them?*
7. Bring out: back pack, post-its, binder, day planner/agenda book. Have students brainstorm how each of these items can assist with organization. (For instance, putting your binder in front of your backpack or putting your backpack near the door can help you remember these items.)

Avoiding Test Anxiety



TIPS TO AVOID TEST STRESS	HOW ARE YOU GOING TO DO THIS?
1. Maintain good sleeping habits, especially during the week of the test.	
2. Stay organized.	
3. Come to school on time.	
4. Maintain a healthy diet and exercise.	
5. Wear comfortable clothes during the test and maintain a comfortable and relaxed body posture during the test.	
6. Be aware of time given for the test.	
7. Read directions carefully.	
8. Don't compare yourself to other students while taking the test.	
9. If you get stressed, attempt to regain a calm attitude.	

Appendix P: Test Anxiety and What I Can Do About It

What is test anxiety?

Too much anxiety about a test is commonly referred to as **test anxiety**. It is perfectly natural to feel some anxiety when preparing for and taking a test. In fact, a little anxiety can jump start your studying and keep you motivated. However, too much anxiety can interfere with your studying. You may have difficulty learning and remembering what you need to know for the test. Further, too much anxiety may block your performance during the test. You may have difficulty demonstrating what you know during the test.

How do I know if I have test anxiety?

You probably have test anxiety if you agree to four or more of the following:

1. I have a hard time getting started studying for a test.
2. When studying for a test, I find many things that distract me.
3. I expect to do poorly on a test no matter how much or how hard I study.
4. When taking a test, I experience physical discomfort such as sweaty palms, an upset stomach, a headache, difficulty breathing, and tension in my muscles.
5. When taking a test, I find it difficult to understand the directions and questions.
6. When taking a test, I have difficulty organizing my thoughts.
7. When taking a test, I often “draw a blank.”
8. When taking a test, I find my mind wandering to other things.
9. I usually score lower on a test than I do on assignments and papers.
10. After a test, I remember information I couldn’t recall during the test.

What can I do about test anxiety?

Write *before*, *during*, and *after* before each technique to determine when you should use the technique in reducing your test anxiety.

_____ Use good study techniques to gain cognitive mastery of the material that will be covered on the test. This mastery will help you to approach the test with confidence rather than have excessive anxiety.

_____ Maintain a positive attitude as you study. Think about doing well, not failing. Think of the test as an opportunity to show how much you have learned.

_____ Go into the test well rested and well fed. Get enough sleep the night before the test. Eat a light and nutritious meal before the test. Stay away from junk foods.

_____ Stay relaxed during the test. Taking slow, deep breaths can help. Focus on positive self-statements such as “I can do this.”

_____ Follow a plan for taking the test such as the strategies we described in Test-Taking Strategies. Don't panic even if you find the test difficult. Stay with your plan!

_____ Don't worry about other students finishing the test before you do. Take the time that you need to do your best.

_____ Once you finish the test and hand it in, forget about it temporarily. There is nothing more you can do until the graded test is returned to you. Turn your attention and effort to new assignments and tests.

_____ When the graded test is returned to you, analyze it to see how you could have done better. Learn from your mistakes and from what you did well. Apply this knowledge when you take the next test.

You have to know the material to do well on a test. You have to control test anxiety to show what you know.

Appendix Q: Self Reflection

Self Reflection

1. What was your favorite thing about coming to the group meetings?

2. What was your least favorite thing?

3. How was the group helpful to you?

4. If you could have changed something about the group, what would you have changed?
