

Academic Skills Group

Grade: 8th

Dates: 2/18/19 – 4/5/19

Leader: Alexis Thompson

Session 1: Introduction

School Counselor: Alexis Thompson (Intern)

Date: 2/14/19 and 2/15/19

Activity: Icebreaker: Growth Mindset Jenga

Grade(s): 8th

ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors:

Domain: Academic

M5: Belief in using abilities to their fullest to achieve high-quality results and outcomes

B-LS7: Identify long- and short-term academic, career, and social/emotional goals

B-SS6: Use effective collaboration and cooperation skills

Learning Objective(s):

1. Students will determine and discuss their expectations for the group and for each other.
2. Students will discuss growth mindset topics, scenarios, and consider new approaches to problems.
3. Students will practice goal-setting

Materials:

Pre-Surveys

Pens/Pencils

Table

Jenga

Notecards with questions (prepared)

Procedure:

1. Introduce self to students and have each student introduce themselves and one thing they're good at.
2. Explain purpose of group: "the point of this group is to focus on study skills and work together on ways to improve our grades. Middle school is really hard academically, and I want to help you improve your study skills so you can move on to high school and succeed. This group can go in many different directions, and I want to give you guys as much say in that as possible. Today, we're just going to talk about what each of you want to get out of this group and get to know each other a little."
3. Open the floor for norms – "The first thing we need to decide is what norms we're going to follow during group. Norms are standards that everyone agrees on to make the group as much of a pleasant experience as possible. So one example is 'one person talks at a time.' What norms would you like to suggest for the group?" Write down everyone's norm and add "what we say in here stays in here" – "as always with counselors, what you say is confidential unless you mention that you're getting hurt or someone else is getting hurt. In this group, I'd like it to be similar for you guys – if someone mentions something in group, we don't go talk about it later or tell your best friend or anything like that. How does that sound to you?"

4. Provide the pre-survey: "I'd like if everyone could fill out this brief survey so we can think about what's going well in school and what's not going so well. We'll take a similar one at the end of group to see how we've grown and whether this group was helpful for you. Please let me know if you have any questions about it."

5. After students have finished the pre-survey, introduce the activity (Growth Mindset Jenga): "Since today is our first session, we're going to start really easy with a game. Has everyone played Jenga before? (explain if anyone hasn't). For this version of Jenga, each block is a different color. We're going to take turns pulling out the blocks. When you pull out a block, look at what color it is and pick up a notecard that's the same color. Read and answer the question on the notecard."

6. After the game is done, give students a piece of paper and ask them to write down a goal for the week – "A lot of the questions we answered today were about trying new things, trying again and motivating ourselves. Before we go, let's each write down one goal for the week. Next week, we'll talk about the goal and how it worked out."

Plan for Evaluation: How will each of the following be collected?

Process Data: Count/sign-in of students present. **(6 present A, 4 present B)**

Perception Data: Pre-survey

Outcome Data: By Quarter 3 report cards (3/28), grades will improve by at least one letter grade (E's to D's/D's to C's) for 4 out of 6 (66%) of group members.

Follow-Up: Next session, group members will discuss norms, reflect on last week's activity, and share with the group how their goal setting went.

Session 2: Note Taking (Group A)

School Counselor: Alexis Thompson

Date: 2/28/19

Activity: Taking Clear Notes (Passage from [Mrs. Thomas's OWLstanding Class Blog](#))

Grade(s): 8th (Academic Skills Group)

ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors (Domain/Standard):

Domain: Academic

M-5: Belief in using abilities to their fullest to achieve high-quality results and outcomes

B-LS 3: Use of time-management, organizational and study skills,

B-SS 1: Use effective oral and written communication skills and listening skills

Learning Objective(s) (aligns with competency):

1. Students will be able to identify at least 2 note-taking strategies
2. Students will be able to determine which note-taking strategies will work best for them
3. Students will apply their note taking skills and evaluate where they could improve.

Materials:

2 – 4 Passages (Passage from [Mrs. Thomas's OWLstanding Class Blog](#))

Relevant class passages

Writing Utensils

Clipboards

Example pages of note taking styles

Blank sheets of paper

Procedure:

1. Check in with group members about the goals they set last week – how did they go? What did they do to try to accomplish them? What impact did they have?
2. One key part of study skills is taking good notes. You use notes to study what you discussed in class, understand what the teacher is saying, and remembering details. What is your current note taking strategy? How well is it working for you?
3. Today, we're going to talk about a few note taking methods. You are welcome to use them in class, or stick to your old method, but we're also going to try out at least one of them during group today.
4. Explain each of the four types: Mapping, Outline, Charting, and Cornell
5. Cornell: "For the Cornell method, you divide your page into three parts like this. The biggest section is the notes section. Use the notes section to write what the teacher is covering in class. After class, read over the notes and write in the margin column the

main ideas about what you wrote. At the bottom, you write a summary of the lesson or page. Review the benefits listed below and ask if anyone has questions about this type.

- Helpful later for quick study (can scan the margin for the topic you want to go over/use it to quiz yourself)
 - Neat
 - Lets you study a little each day/review the lesson after class
 - Allows you to pull out major themes, ideas, and concepts
6. Mapping: For mapping, the page is organized by topic, like this. The main topic branches out into a subtopic and detailed information about each. See if anyone has any thoughts or questions
- Great for visual learners
 - Shows the connection between topics
7. Charting: For charting, you divide the page into columns, which are labeled by category. Then, you put the details that go with each category in its column. See if anyone has any thoughts or questions
- Separates topics for quick review
 - Highlights key information for each topic
 - Organizes facts
8. Outlining: For outlining, each section starts with a main topic and the subtopics go underneath and are indented. This is a bullet point method and easy for in-class note taking
- Easy to organize (don't need to prepare before class)
 - Usually lines up with teacher's PowerPoint presentations
 - Neat
 - Shows how topics are related
9. Have students look over each type of note taking style and consider which they like best.
10. Split the group in half or let members work individually. Give each group/member a passage to take notes on. Each person is allowed to use any of the note taking styles.
11. Set a timer for 5 minutes as they take notes
12. After 5 minutes have passed, have the groups/individuals trade notes. Read the notes.
13. Have each group or individual explain what the other group read about.
14. Discussion: What was clear in this activity? What was harder to understand? Do you see yourselves using any of these note-taking styles? Encourage students to try one for the week if they'd like

15. Scaling up: Now we're going to apply this to a more difficult passage. I spoke with your science teacher and she gave me this passage that relates to the material you are working on in class. We're going to take another 5 minutes to practice. You can use the same method as before or try a new method.

16. Discussion: How was this different from the first time we tried it?

17. Let's finish by making an organizational goal for this week. Write it down on this paper, hold onto it, and we'll check in on how it went next week.

Plan for Evaluation: How will each of the following be collected?

Process Data: Tally of how many group members are in attendance **5 out of 6**

Outcome Data: By Quarter 3 report cards (3/28), grades will improve by at least one letter grade (E's to D's/D's to C's) for 66% (4 out of 6) of group members.

Follow-Up: Students will be asked the following week what they recall from this session and how they applied what they learned.

Session 2: Organization (Group B)

School Counselor: Alexis Thompson

Date: 3/1/19

Activity: Backpack Organization Game (Found at [School Counselor Blog](#), Adapted from *Creative Approaches for Counseling Individual Children in the School Setting* by Diane S. Senn)

Grade(s): 8^h /7th (Academic Skills Group B)

ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors (Domain/Standard):

Domain: Academic

M-5: Belief in using abilities to their fullest to achieve high-quality results and outcomes

M-6: Positive attitude toward work and learning,

B-LS 3: Use of time-management, organizational and study skills,

Learning Objective(s) (aligns with competency):

1. Students will be able to identify the key components to being organized
2. Students will be able to explain the steps it takes to organize a messy backpack.
3. Students will develop a plan for applying organizational skills to their routine

Materials:

Two backpacks filled with supplies (one neat, one messy)

Two pieces of paper with X's on them

Organization tips handout

Procedure:

1. Before: Prepare two backpacks, one organized, one disorganized. Put a piece of paper with a big "X" marked on it in each backpack. Zip the backpacks so no one can tell they are different inside
2. Check in with group members about the goals they set last week – how did they go? What did they do to try to accomplish them? What impact did they have?
3. Introduce today's topic: A few of you mentioned you would benefit from discussing organizational skills. Before we start today, let's have a few people share their organizational strategies.
4. Choose two volunteers to play the game. Choose a third person to time the activity. Ask the remaining member(s) to take note of what is going on, how each person is reacting or feeling, what strategies each person used, etc.
5. Ask the two volunteers to each choose a backpack. Explain that the students will be racing to look through their backpack to find a piece of paper with an "X" marked on it.

Students will not know before opening the backpacks that one is organized and the other not. Have students predict who will find the paper first.

6. Start the timer and watch the students search for the papers. The messy backpack will have it shoved at the bottom, while the neat backpack will have it in a binder or folder.
7. Discuss with the group their impressions of the game. What did you notice? Who had the easier time? How did each person seem to feel – relaxed? Anxious? Why is it important to be organized? How does it affect study skills? **Which backpack looks more like yours?**
8. Discuss how we can start to organize the messy backpack. Have the last group member(s) begin to organize the messy bag as the group directs.
9. Distribute a handout with organization tips: “I am handing out some organization tips so you can remember what we talked about today. For next week, I’d like you to take time to organize your backpacks like we did in group. If you can, bring in a picture of your neat backpack.
10. Discuss: What is one organization habit you are going to start this week?
11. Wrap up question: What did you learn today? How do you plan to apply it?
12. Let’s finish by making an organizational goal for this week. Write it down on this paper, hold onto it, and we’ll check in on how it went next week.

Plan for Evaluation: How will each of the following be collected?

Process Data: Tally of how many group members are in attendance (2 out of 4)

Outcome Data: (Group goal) Quarter 1 grades will improve by at least one letter grade for 75% (3 out of 4) of group members.

Follow-Up: Students will be asked the following week what they recall from this session and how they applied what they learned.

Session 3: Homework Completion/Don't Take the "L"

School Counselor: Alexis Thompson

Date: 3/7/19 and 3/8/19

Activity: Grade Marble Jars

Grade(s): 8th (Academic Skills Group)

ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors (Domain/Standard):

Domain: Academic

M-5: Belief in using abilities to their fullest to achieve high-quality results and outcomes

B-LS 1: Demonstrate critical-thinking skills to make informed decisions

B-LS 7: Identify long- and short-term academic, career, and social/emotional goals

Learning Objective(s) (aligns with competency):

1. Students will develop a plan for meeting the necessary criteria in their classes
2. Students will be able to identify the necessary criteria for success in their classes
3. Students will be able to set goals for academic improvement

Materials:

Two small jars

Three sets of marbles in different colors

Sandwich bags

Slips of paper with scenarios on them

Whiteboard and markers

Goal Sheets

Procedure:

1. Preparation: Obtain two small jars and marbles in three different colors (or more, depending on grade criteria). One jar will be the 'example' jar for if a student got 100% in a class. Each marble represents 1% with the example jar having 100. If grades for a class are decided by 15% homework, 45% classwork, and 40% assessment grades, the example jar would have 15 marbles of one color (red), 45 of a second color (blue), and 40 of a third color (clear/white). On the second jar, mark a line where 60 marbles hit. When the marbles reach this mark, it means a student would pass their class.
2. Preparation: Create possible scenarios for different ways a student might perform in class (does no homework, does all homework, etc.). Type these scenarios and print them out. Attach each scenario to a sandwich bag and put the equivalent amount of marbles in the bag.
3. Ask about last week's topic
(Group A: How many people can recall three of the four note taking methods we discussed? How many used one this week?)

Group B: How many people used an organization skill this week?)

4. Check in with group members about the goals they set last week – how did they go? What did they do to try to accomplish them? What impact did they have?
5. Introduce topic: So progress reports came out recently and today we're going to talk about grades and what they're made of. Every class is made up of 3 components – homework, classwork, and tests. Every class is different in terms of how much each one matters. Today, we're going to use that to our advantage and see all the different possible ways we can pass a hard class.
6. Before handing out the bags, explain that each bag has a different set of marbles that matches to the scenario on it. The amber/brown marbles are for homework, the clear marbles are for tests or exams, and the blue marbles are for classwork. All of the examples are for science class.
7. Optional: Using a white board, write the percentages for science classes (15% Homework, 40% Assessments, 45% Classwork)
8. Show the example jar, explaining that this is what it would look like if a student earned 100% in science. Show the empty jar. This is the jar that we will use. The painted line represents 60%, or passing.
9. Give each student one plastic bag with the appropriate scenario and marbles inside. Instruct them that it is important that they keep the exact number of marbles they were given and not mix them with anyone else's.
10. Ask for a group member to volunteer to read their scenario to the group. Ask the group whether they think that student will pass or fail based on what they heard.
11. Instruct the student to put the marbles in the jar, layering them by color if they can. As the student does this, write out the number of marbles on the white board.
12. Ask the group whether the person passed. If they did pass, what was the biggest factor? If they didn't pass, what should they have done differently?
13. Put the marbles back in the first student's plastic bag and repeat for remaining scenarios.
14. Which scenarios were surprising for you? (Examples: you can get 100% on all your tests and still fail the class, you can fail every assessment and still pass if you do all your homework and classwork) What did you learn from this activity?
15. Discuss: Based on your grades right now, what do you think your jar would look like?

16. What are some things you can do to make sure you pass the green line by the time report cards come out, especially if you have E's from previous semesters?
17. Hand out Grade Breakdown worksheet. To remind you throughout the quarter, I'm handing you these worksheets that physically show you how important each part is for different classes. We focused today on science, but homework counts for more in social studies and less in math, so pay attention to which class you're studying for.
18. Hand out goals sheet: Based on our discussion today, write down one thing you plan to do this week to get closer to passing your hardest class. Make it something specific that we can check back in about next week.

Plan for Evaluation: How will each of the following be collected?

Process Data: Tally of how many group members are in attendance

Group A: 3 Students

Group B: 4 Students

Perception Data: How many group members met their goals over the next week

Outcome Data: By Quarter 3 report cards (3/28), grades will improve by at least one letter grade (E's to D's/D's to C's) for 66% (4 out of 6) of group members.

Member classwork completion on grades

Follow-Up: Students will be asked the following week what they recall from this session and how they applied what they learned.

Session 4: Self-Advocacy (Group A)

School Counselor: Alexis Thompson

Date: 3/14/19

Activity: Role Playing: Talking to Teachers

Grade(s): 8th (Academic Skills Group)

ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors:

Domain: Academic, Social

B-SS 1: Use effective oral and written communication skills and listening skills

B-SS 3: Create relationships with adults that support success

B-SS 8: Demonstrate advocacy skills and ability to assert self, when necessary

Learning Objective(s) (aligns with competency):

1. Students will be able to use clear communication skills
2. Students will be able to approach teachers to discuss their needs
3. Students will apply self-advocacy skills to present and communicate their academic needs

Materials:

Chart Paper

Paper for each student

Writing Utensils

Clipboards

Goal Sheets

Procedure:

1. Preparation: On a piece of chart paper, write out the acronym "SHARE – Sit up straight, Have a pleasant tone, Activate your thinking [participate, pay attention], Relax, Eye contact"
2. Check in with group members about the goals they set last week – how did they go? What did they do to try to accomplish them? What impact did they have?
3. Introduce topic: "Today we're going to talk about 'self-advocacy' – that is a big weird word that people don't use every day. What do you think it means?"
4. Wait for a few students to answer with possible definitions, repeat the parts that are correct or on the right track
5. "Self-advocacy means speaking up for yourself and asking for what you need. How does this apply to school and academic skills?" (talking to teachers to raise grades – because like we talked about last week, asking to make up missed work is important)

6. Direct the group to the posted SHARE chart paper. Self-advocacy is an important skill but can be difficult if you're not used to doing it, so here are some tips on how to self-advocate.
7. Go through each of the letters.
 - a. S – Sit up straight. Sitting up straight tells the other person that you're confident in what you're asking for.
 - b. H – Have a pleasant tone. People respond better if they're asked to do something rather than being ordered to do something. The nicer you are in asking, the nicer they will be in answering
 - c. A – Activate your thinking [participate, pay attention]. This one's a little clunky, but all it means is that you follow through. If you're asking to make up work, make sure you're paying attention in class moving forward and completing any new assignments. It also means that if you expect the teacher to listen and pay attention to your question, you need to listen and pay attention to their answer.
 - d. R – RELAX. It can be intimidating to talk to teachers or ask adults for something, but they truly want what's best for you. Practice what you want to say and relax knowing that the teacher wants you to be successful too.
 - e. E – Eye contact. This one can be hard, especially being a teen today because it can just feel awkward. However, it's important because it tells the other person you're listening to what they're saying. If looking the person directly in the eye feels weird for you, look at the middle of their forehead, just above their nose. To them, it looks exactly the same as making eye contact.
8. Ask – which of these do you think would be the most difficult? Discuss everyone's answers
9. Hand each student a piece of paper. "With this in mind, we're going to do some of the legwork so you can feel prepared to self-advocate. Write down your teachers' names and leave some space under each name. Rank the teachers by how comfortable you are speaking with them. Under each name, write down factors to consider when asking them to change a grade. For example, are they in a better mood on A Days or B Days? Mornings or afternoons? Before class or after class? Do they have a policy on making up work? We want to keep all of these things in mind because the easier you make the conversation for the teacher, the more generous they're going to be in letting you make up work."
10. Now that we've decided which teachers are most approachable and what to keep in mind when talking to them, we're going to practice using the skills we talked about. Get into pairs and practice what you are going to say to your teacher. Take turns pretending to be the teacher and yourself. Give each other feedback after each time you finish.
11. If there is an odd number of group members present, rotate practicing with each student

and provide feedback.

12. Discuss: What did you learn from our discussion and activity?

13. Hand out goals sheet: Based on our discussion today, write down one teacher you are going to talk to about making up work. Write which day and time you are going to talk to them and which skills will be most important in meeting it.

Plan for Evaluation: How will each of the following be collected?

Process Data: Tally of how many group members are in attendance: 3

Outcome Data: By Quarter 3 report cards (3/28), grades will improve by at least one letter grade (E's to D's/D's to C's) for 66% (4 out of 6) of group members.

Follow-Up: Students will be asked the following week what they recall from this session and how they applied what they learned.

Session 5: Focusing Attention

School Counselor: Alexis Thompson

Date: 3/28/19 and 3/29/19

Activity: Memory and Distractions

Grade(s): 8th (Academic Skills Group)

ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors (Domain/Standard):

Domain: Academic

B-LS 4: Apply self-motivation and self-direction to learning

B-SMS 2: Demonstrate self-discipline and self-control

B-SMS 4: Demonstrate ability to delay immediate gratification for long-term rewards

Learning Objective(s) (aligns with competency):

1. Students will be able to identify barriers to paying attention
2. Students will be able to develop a goal and plan to improve their focusing skills
3. Students will apply focusing skills to their academic success

Materials:

Two word lists (from Franklin Institute) printed on separate pieces of paper

Paper for each student

Writing Utensils

Clipboards

Optional: A cellphone and an associate

Goal Sheets

Procedure:

1. Before the session, enlist an ally (another counselor preferably, or a friend) to send text messages during the second part of the activity. Have your cellphone sound and notifications on and turned up.
2. Check in with group members about the goals they set last week – how did they go? What did they do to try to accomplish them? What impact did they have?
3. Introduce topic: A good amount of you mentioned that focusing and paying attention was something you wanted to work on. Which definitely makes sense because focusing is really hard, so today, we're going to talk about strategies and do an activity related to that.
4. For the next activity, we're going to test our attention and memory skills. First, I am going to show you a series of words. After, I am going to give you one minute to write them down. Whoever remembers the most will get a small prize or a piece of chocolate.

5. Conduct the activity, reading the word aloud and ensuring everyone can see the word and picture. Give students a minute to write down the words they remember. Review the words and determine who recalled the most
6. Start with the next set of words, cuing the ally to start sending text messages, emails and general alerts quickly and frequently and/or talking on the phone/turning up walkie-talkie volume as you're showing the words and as the students are trying to recall afterwards.
7. Review the words and see how student recall went.
8. Discuss the activity – which round was easier? Why was it easier? What strategies did you use to remember the words? Which strategies did you use to shut out the distractions? How could we apply this in class?
9. Hand out Attention Tips Sheet: Here are some additional strategies and ways to help you stay focused. Which jump out at you as something reasonable to try?
10. Optional: We are going to apply your new attention skills in one more activity called “Last Three Words.” In this activity, I am going to read a passage and when I stop, your job is to respond with the last three words I said.
11. Discuss: How was this compared to the earlier activity? What skills did you use?
12. Hand out goals sheet: Based on our discussion today, write down one attention goal for yourself for the next week. Make sure that your goal is Specific and can be measured, so you know whether or not you met it. Hold onto the paper, and we will discuss your progress next week.

Plan for Evaluation: How will each of the following be collected?

Process Data: Tally of how many group members are in attendance

Outcome Data: By Quarter 3 report cards (3/28), grades will improve by at least one letter grade (E's to D's/D's to C's) for 66% (4 out of 6) of group members.

Follow-Up: Students will be asked the following week what they recall from this session and how they applied what they learned.

Session 6: Termination

School Counselor: Alexis Thompson

Date: 4/4/19 and 4/5/19

Activity: Post-Survey/Creating a Game Plan Moving Forward

Grade(s): 8th (Academic Skills Group)

ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors (Domain/Standard):

B-LS 7. Identify long- and short-term academic, career, and social/emotional goals

B-SMS 1. Demonstrate ability to assume responsibility

B-SMS 5. Demonstrate perseverance to achieve long- and short-term goals

Learning Objective(s) (aligns with competency):

1. Students will be able to identify their goals and growth edges moving forward from group
2. Students will be able to work independently toward their academic success independent of the group.
3. Students will be able to reflect on and utilize the study strategies that work best for them.

Materials:

Post-group surveys

Writing utensils

Clipboards

Slips of paper

Optional: treats for the group (pizza, if goal was met)

Procedure:

1. Check in with group members about the goals they set last week – how did they go? What did they do to try to accomplish them? What impact did they have?
2. Today is our last session. We are going to focus this session on looking back, looking forward, and saying goodbye.
3. To help us look back, I am giving everyone a few questions to fill out. Please answer them honestly and thoroughly. Notice that it asks for two things that you learned and two things you plan to work on moving forward.
4. After everyone has completed their surveys, ask the group: what did you learn from this group? What are you taking with you moving forward?
5. What do you plan to work on for your study skills after this group ends? What obstacles might get in the way of that?
6. Provide students with slips of paper. “Each of you has grown and improved a lot since

our group began. Write down at least one thing that you did to bring up your 3rd quarter grade that you would like to continue doing. Under that, write one thing that you will start doing to make sure your 4th quarter grades stay strong from the beginning.” Optional: Discuss answers.

7. Now that our group has ended, is there anything else you would like to share about your experience?
8. Collect post-surveys and end the group