A GROUP COUNSELING TOOL TO IMPROVE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT
IN MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

A graduate thesis project in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Science in Counseling,

School Counseling

By

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May 2013
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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis project to my grandparents, Hermelinda and Ramon. For always being there for me when everything else seemed to be falling apart. For always encouraging me, believing in me, and showing me that I have the strength to pick myself up when I fall down. I will be forever grateful for everything you two have done for me, all the values you instilled, and unconditional love that allowed me to always be myself.

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ABSTRACT

A GROUP COUNSELING TOOL TO IMPROVE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

By

Cassie Barajas

Master of Science in Counseling,
School Counseling

The purpose of this project was to develop a group counseling curriculum using study skills to enhance academic achievement in middle school students. Students who are transitioning from elementary school to middle school often see a drop in their grades. This project consists of a ten week counseling group that enhances the skills necessary to succeed academically. Students will learn organization, effective time management, and goal setting for school work. Students will learn how to be successful in school with emphasis with being on time to class, how to adapt to different teachers, being prepared for each class, being aware of body language, and participating in class and in groups. They will also learn how to take notes, how to read a textbook effectively, how to study for tests, as well as ways to alleviate test anxiety. In order to bring a connection between school and career there will be a brief introduction to possible careers, schooling necessary, and ways to attain those career goals.
Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

Many students enter sixth grade and struggle with the academics. Sixth grade students experience a major change in their education due to the shift from having one teacher all day to six teachers for their various subjects throughout the day. Sixth grade students must also adjust to new social situations, making and losing friends, and less one on one time with a teacher. Unlike elementary school, teachers are unable to get involved with every student and understand why they are not succeeding academically. Middle school is the age when teachers and parents expect students to be more independent and responsible for themselves and yet, some students are ready for this next step, while others struggle to learn how to manage all the new changes.

Middle school years play a significant role in how students perceive their abilities for later academic performance (Usher & Pajares, 2006). When students have poor academic performance it can lead to a lack of motivation for success. This literature review will cover study skills related to achieving higher academic performance. It will also touch upon motivation, risk factors that contribute to academic failure, and how student-teacher relationships play a vital role in school success. It will examine effective methods for instructing study skills groups and evaluate additional influences that can enhance academic success.

Schools are overflowing with students who need additional help and attention from teachers and counselors (Alspaugh, 1998; Gazda, 2007; Hudley, 1997; Marin & Marin, 1991; Wentzel, 1997). Students and teachers are struggling to keep up with the many demands of ever changing curriculums. Academic failure happens more often than not, especially at the middle school level (Alspaugh, 1998). Many factors play a role in academic failure. Bailey (2009) discusses four domains: individual, family, school and community. Another risk factor discussed by Alspaugh (1998) is the transition from elementary school to middle school. Most students are
already entering school with more than one risk factor and the transition from elementary to middle school alone increases a child’s chance for academic failure. Upon entering middle school, teachers and parents expect students to be more responsible and independent without preparing those students with the necessary skills to be successful in school. Consequently, students struggle to navigate through course work with the lack of one on one time with a teacher.

High motivation could undermine any risk factor a student may have, and help increase academic achievement. According to several completed studies, an individual’s motivation for academic success comes from various places (Hodis, Meyer, McClure, Weir, & Walkey, 2011). Students are more motivated to learn if they feel that their teachers care about them (Alspaugh, 1998; Gazda, 2007; Hudley, 1997; Marin & Marin, 1991; Wentzel, 1997). Lack of motivation was related to school failure, underachievement, and dropping out of school (Hodis, Meyer, McClure, Weir, & Walkey, 2011). Students who believed that they could succeed in school showed more resilience when facing difficulties, set higher goals and showed more interest in academics (Usher & Pajares, 2006). In each piece of literature there was at least one reference highlighting the importance of the student teacher relationship (Alspaugh, 1998; Gazda, 2007; Hudley, 1997; Marin & Marin, 1991; Wentzel, 1997). Students spend the majority of their day with a teacher, so it should go without saying, that a positive relationship with a teacher is vital to academic achievement. Students need support, respect, and to feel cared for by their teachers in order to succeed.

With the immense amount of new responsibilities that school counselors have, group counseling is an effective way for counselors to support multiple students at once. Group counseling has been shown to be more effective than individual counseling for adolescents
Helpful elements incorporated into group counseling are peer modeling, validation, and new insights that a student cannot receive in individual counseling (Yalom, 1985). When working with at-risk students, group counseling has been shown to improve their achievement scores and interpersonal relationships (Bemak, Chung, & Siroskey-Sabdo, 2005).

**Statement of Problem**

Economic hardship has been felt throughout the country, and students are no different. With parents losing jobs, siblings not being able to attend college, many students are preoccupied with their personal and familial hardships and may be unable to fully focus and participate in the classroom environment. Students possessing no risk-factors have a difficult time during the transition from elementary school to middle school (Alspaugh, 1998). Students who are in crisis need more support, which is typically unavailable. The students lack the skills necessary to achieve academically. Teachers are often too busy teaching the curriculum to spend time on teaching study skills. Groups have been shown to improve academic achievement with at-risk students.

In group counseling students are given the attention they need to learn new skills and receive feedback from peers on how to handle new issues when they arise. During the middle school years the frontal lobe of students is still maturing, the frontal lobe regulates behavior. The most effective way to teach students during these years is through modeling (Thorpe, 2010). Being able to participate in a group provides the much needed social interaction and peer modeling students require (Bemak et al., 2005). Counselors must be aware of risk-factors that students have in order to work effectively with them. With the remedial classes that are used in many school systems today, students become disengaged and lose motivation. Students need to
learn how to take notes, how to prepare for and take tests, how to listen effectively, and how to manage their time. Given the necessary study skills, students have been shown to achieve at higher rates (Bemak, Chung, & Siroskey-Sabdo, 2005).

**Purpose of Project**

The purpose of this project is to develop a group counseling curriculum using study skills to enhance academic achievement in middle school students. Students who are transitioning from elementary school to middle school often see a drop in their grades. Due to larger classroom sizes, teachers might not notice that a student is not taking effective notes or struggling with how to study for a test. With the present research it is believed that middle school students who participate in a study skills group will obtain higher grades than those who do not participate in a group.

**Terminology**

Academic achievement: is the outcome of education; the extent to which a student has achieved their educational goals.

Adolescents: a period in development that occurs between the beginning of puberty and adulthood.

Academic motivation: is academic drive, attitudes toward school and learning. Academic drive is defined by students' performance in grades, standardized tests and involves completion of homework. Attitudes toward school and learning involve students’ opinions of the teachers and school environment.

Parent/Care-giver: a person who provides direct care; guardian.

Risk factor: something that increases risk or susceptibility; possibility of loss; the chance that an investment will lose value.
Self-efficacy: the measure of one's own ability to complete tasks and reach goals.

**Summary**

The literature review focuses on adolescent development in the social and developmental areas, as well as struggles with independence from parents and additional responsibility from the middle school level. Academic achievement can be linked to several risk factors, as well as motivation, and student-teacher relationship.

Study skills groups have been shown to increase academic achievement, and allow for more students to be reached than the traditional counseling methods. Parent/care-giver involvement is also discussed in the literature and has been linked to students' engagement in school.
Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The literature review focuses on adolescent development in the social and developmental areas, as well as struggles with independence from parents and additional responsibility from the middle school level. Low academic achievement can be linked to several risk factors, as well as motivation, and student-teacher relationship.

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Adolescent Development

The adolescent years, ages 10-14, are a time of searching for an identity, and can be extremely lonely ones for many (Corey & Corey, 2002). One of the most important needs for adolescents during this time is the need to experience success that will lead to the sense of individuality, which then will lead to self confidence and self-respect concerning their uniqueness and sameness (Corey & Corey, 2002). During adolescence, young people develop the ability to understand abstract ideas, develop moral philosophies, such as rights and privileges, establish and maintain relationships, experience sudden and rapid physical changes, and develop a need for independence (Mannheim, 2011).

According to Erikson, social and emotional development consists of eight stages. An individual may go back and forth between these stages, and unsuccessful resolution of a previous stage can affect development negatively (Sternberg & Williams, 2002). Based on Erikson's theory, the stages adolescents would experience in middle school, sixth through eighth grade,
would be Industry versus Inferiority (stage four: competence), and Learning Identity versus Identity Diffusion (stage five: fidelity). In stage four, adolescents either develop a sense of competence with a variety of tasks or believe they are not capable of success (Sternberg & Williams, 2002). During stage five, adolescents explore their identity and either develop a sense of who they are or continue to be confused about who they are and what they want from life (Sternberg & Williams, 2002). The core concept of Erikson's theory is the attainment of an identity, which is the most essential characteristic of adolescence. Reluctance to work on identity development can result in a lasting sense of isolation, confusion, self-doubt, and indulgence in self-destructive activities (King, 2004).

Erikson states that during adolescence there is a rapid social change, where adolescents tend to reject parents or care-givers as suitable role models and gravitate towards peers for social feedback (King, 2004). The sudden changes adolescents experience, physically and emotionally, make them extremely self-conscious, sensitive, and worried about body changes. Peer groups give adolescents a safe haven to test new ideas and participate in the same activities (Mannheim, 2011). During adolescence when young people put more importance on relationships with peers, peer pressure can persuade adolescents to conform to the standards of friends (Corey & Corey, 2002). A strong need for peer approval is typically stronger than the need for self respect. Due to the need for approval, adolescents tend to look to others to tell them who they should be and may take part in risk taking behavior (Corey & Corey, 2002; Mannheim, 2011).

During adolescence the struggle for independence from parents becomes a central task, however, adolescents also long for security (Corey & Corey, 2002). Care-givers should be available as a sounding board for their adolescent's ideas, without harming the child's independent identity. Pre-set rules and regulations about behavior should be made to provide safe
boundaries for young people to grow and function (Mannheim, 2011). In order to obtain a healthy identity, adolescents must receive consistent and meaningful acknowledgment of their achievements and accomplishments from caregivers (King, 2004).

"In sum, for most people adolescence is a difficult period, characterized by paradoxes: they strive for closeness, yet fear intimacy and often avoid it, they rebel against control, yet want direction and structure" (Corey & Corey, 2002, p. 307). Adolescence is a time of exploration, performing to others' standards, and the need for freedom to gain independence, while having support from caring adults. School transition from elementary to middle school also takes place during adolescence, which creates more struggles and can contribute to academic failure. Students have to become more responsible and attend six classes, with multiple teachers instead of one. The need for structure and support from adults is critical during this time to avoid achievement loss in school.

**Risk Factors for Academic Failure**

There are numerous risk factors that contribute to academic failure for students. These risk factors have been classified into four domains: individual, family, school and community factors (Bailey, 2009). Some of the individual factors included: Learning disorders, emotional disturbance, early adult responsibilities (pregnancy, parenthood), social attitudes, values and behavior. Early adult responsibilities often made school a secondary responsibility, which led to low socioeconomic status. The family domain included: Socioeconomic status, family mobility, education level of parents, number of siblings, not living with both parents, and family commitment to education (siblings dropped out, low expectations, and no family contact with school). Without a high level of education most parents cannot help with homework or even afford to buy the necessities for school. This provides a challenge for students to succeed. These
students may also move from home to home, and school to school while missing important lessons. School factors that caused academic failure were: Low achievement, retention, poor attendance, low expectations, lack of effort, early aggression, and misbehavior. Community factors consisted of: Racism and high rates of violence (Bailey, 2009). Unfortunately, there are few interventions to reduce academic failure for students and more need to be created by school counselors, teachers, administrators, psychologists and parents to help failing students attain high academic achievement and personal well being (Bailey, 2009).

Another risk factor for students, discussed by Alspaugh (1998), is achievement loss associated with the transition from elementary school to middle school. In this study, Alspaugh used three groups of students from 16 school districts. The first group had grades K-8, and 9-12. The second group was made up of districts with one elementary school, one middle school, and one high school. The last group had two or three elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. The school districts were located in rural small town communities. Alspaugh described the goals of elementary school as task oriented, and middle school goals as focused on performance. The time spent with teachers changed during the transition as well. In elementary school, students spent their school time with one teacher where they were able to have one on one time and developed a positive relationship. In middle school, students are shuffled around to more classes and are often unable to form personal relationships with their teachers. From this study, Alspaugh (1998) stated how students’ self-perception and self-esteem declined in areas such as feelings and knowledge about their skills, abilities, and social acceptance, which lead to achievement loss due to this transition. The achievement loss was predominately in mathematics, science, and social studies. The size and organization of the school district also played an important role in the achievement loss (Alspaugh, 1998), such as taking students from multiple
elementary schools to one middle school was described as a factor to increase the transition achievement loss. Additionally, students who enrolled in larger middle schools had more difficulty transitioning than students in smaller schools (Alspaugh, 1998). During transitions to middle school, students need more support and one on one time to avoid the achievement loss seen with many students since students spend less time with teachers individually and are expected to be more independent.

Bemak et al. (2005) completed a study involving seven students from a Midwest inner-city high school, and found that students from those communities had higher rates of academic failure and behavioral problems because those students were preoccupied with issues involving their home life. This school was experiencing high rates of expulsion, absenteeism, poverty, teenage pregnancies, and poor academic records. In order to address student concerns, a group counseling intervention was used called Empowerment Groups for Academic Success (EGAS). The counseling group had African American girls from the 10th grade, who were identified at the highest level of risk for academic failure. These students faced problems with racism, poverty and violence. Unfortunately, the difficulties experienced at home had an impact on their social and emotional development, which then resulted in low academic achievement (Bemak et al., 2005). Inner-city students are often involved in gangs or drug use to cope with their dangerous community. These students were also found to act out in class, skip school, and experience academic failure and poor motivation (Bemak et al., 2005). The group was led by a university professor and co-facilitated by a school counselor. The group met once a week for 45 minutes starting in October and ending in June. The EGAS approach was designed so that the students would be in control, not the facilitators; this was different for the students who were familiar with being told what to do. Each week the group decided the topic for discussion, which created
a sense of group ownership and self-control. The discussion topics included family and peer relationships, death of loved ones, pregnancy and single parenting, smoking, poor relationships with teachers, and general school concerns. For the holidays, Thanksgiving and Christmas, the group decided to celebrate together in order to cope with the loss of loved ones together. The group ended with a trip to a university where they gave a presentation about what it was like being in the group. Data was collected at the end of the group sessions through letters from the girls to evaluate the group experience. Six months after the last session, the leader conducted a post-group taped interview to see how the group impacted their lives, as well as follow-up survey a year later. Some positive findings from their study were the effective use of group counseling with these at-risk students. When group counseling stressed self awareness and responsible behavior it was linked to enhanced achievement scores, interpersonal relationships and improved learning (Bemak et al., 2005).

In a study conducted by Hudley (1997) to assess relative levels of academic motivation, two classrooms with 780 adolescents throughout the school day from a southern California middle school were used. The students in these classrooms were provided services to help with low-achievement. The students in the two classrooms ages ranged from 12.8 years to 13.2 years. All students were proficient in English and were of average intelligence. Students were recommended to participate in this program by their guidance counselors. This program was targeted to students with below average achievement (classified as a grade point average of C- or lower and enrollment in at least one remedial class), who were having adjustment problems but did not have severe behavior problems, and were lacking engaging in the classroom environment. This class was offered as an elective and served eighth grade students (n = 23), 18 African American (10 boys and 8 girls), and 5 Hispanics (2 boys and 3 girls). Hudley (1997)
found that, “Among urban minority adolescents, persistence and achievement in school often are a function of meaningful choices made in the face of seemingly insurmountable barriers” (p. 134). The author concluded that students could do well in school despite issues at home and in the community, if they had the support of the school. Hudley described self-esteem and perception of competence as motivators in academic achievement. Students participating in the lower track in school showed low levels of interest in academics, this is a reason why tracking in schools is described as a risk for academic failure. Students who are put in lower track classes often received the message that they were incompetent which affected their academic achievement resulting in low motivation. Gazda (2007), wrote in agreement with Hudley's finding, that there is no flexibility in schools for students who are slow learners. These students were often retained for not mastering the information in the amount of time the school deemed as sufficient. The slow learners were repeatedly labeled as failures and eventually felt discouraged. Due to their academic failure, these students were at risk for behavioral issues in school or dropping out (Gazda, 2007).

Countless students often have more than one risk factor that contributes to their academic failure, and a study conducted by Lucio, Hunt, and Bornovalova (2012) indicated that “no single risk factor is more impactful than any other” (p. 421). The participants were chosen from the Educational Longitudinal Study (ELS:2002). The ELS:2002 study was conducted using a sample of 14,796 students, 50.2% were female and 49.8% were male students. The mean age of the students was 16.48 years (SD = 0.48). Of this sample 56.6% were White, 14.7% were Hispanic, 12.8% were Black, 10.2% were Asian, 4.8% were multiracial, and 0.9% were American Indian. The study used a five-step process to identify the number of risk factors for academic failure. Receiver operating characteristic (ROC) was used to identify the sufficient number of predictors.
for differentiating individuals at risk for academic failure. Lucio, Hunt, and Bornovalova (2012) found that academic failure depended on how many risk factors, such as family factors, peers, or socioeconomic status, a student possessed, not which risk factor was present. Lucio et al., went on to discuss the importance of early intervention (group counseling) for getting students to a better place in their academics.

Latinos have often been seen as a minority group whose low academic achievement has been caused by family factors and community factors (Sternberg & Williams, 2002). According to Sternberg and Williams, all racial groups have made progress in educational achievement during the past 30 years by completing high school and receiving an undergraduate degree at higher rates than previous years. Despite these gains, there are still large gaps in educational attainment by Latinos. The African American-White gap is centered on college completion, where as the Latino gap is apparent in high school graduation rates (Sternberg & Williams, 2002). From a national survey of 1,240 Latinos by the Pew Research Center, 74% of survey respondents who had to drop out or end their education at high school said they did so because they had to support their family. Other reasons were poor English, a dislike of school, or feeling they did not need more education for the careers they wanted (Lopez, 2009). A widespread misunderstanding is that most Latinos in public schools are immigrants with limited English skills who are unfairly draining resources from American students and have helped the passage of tough immigration laws. (Maxwell, 2012). However, within the past decade, more than 90% of Latinos under the age of 18 are American born (Maxwell, 2012). Research from the Pew Hispanic Center shows that immigration from Mexico to the United States has stalled (Maxwell, 2012). The Latino community is diverse, with Mexicans being the largest group Latino group, Puerto Ricans the second largest, with Cuban and Salvadoran the third and fourth (Maxwell,
The Latino education crisis is not simply a result of immigration; many of the problems are due to poverty (Nevarez, 2007). About 35% of Latino students live in poverty. Schools with high enrollments of poor students tend to be underfunded and staffed with non-credentialed teachers. As a result, it is no surprise that Latino students are at higher risk for problems with academic achievement (Nevarez, 2007).

There are several risk factors that contribute to academic failure for students. These risk factors include achievement loss associated with the transition from elementary school to middle school, behavioral problems because of issues related to the student’s home life, and little to no flexibility in schools for students who are slow learners. Unfortunately, there are few interventions to reduce academic failure for students. There is a need for such interventions to be created by school counselors, teachers, administrators, psychologists and parents to help failing students attain high academic achievement and personal well being (Bailey, 2009).

**Motivation**

Motivation could undermine any risk factor a student may have, and help increase academic achievement. According to studies done, motivation comes from various places. Teachers, school counselors, peers, parents, and a student’s resiliency can all have an impact on motivation. In a longitudinal study conducted by Wentzel (1997) a sample of 248 students was followed from sixth to eighth grade in a suburban middle school in a mid-Atlantic state. The initial data was collected at the end of sixth grade. The sample included 125 boys and 123 girls; 92% were White, 2% Black, 2% Hispanic, 3% Asian American, and 1% other ethnicities. All students participated unless they were absent on the day the questionnaires were given or parent permission was denied. Wentzel (1997) described the role of teaching and instruction as a source for motivation in students. Students would be motivated to learn if they felt that their teachers
cared about them. This motivation carried into positive social and academic activities (Wentzel, 1997). Students with poor motivation not only lacked the necessary skills to achieve in academics, but were also more prone to drug use (Bemak et al., 2005).

In a study on motivation and academic achievement, lack of motivation was related to school failure, underachievement, and dropping out of school (Hodis, Meyer, McClure, Weir, & Walkey, 2011). The study was composed of participants in tenth grade from 20 high schools demographically diverse in location, socioeconomic status of community, school size, and school type (mainstream schools and bilingual schools). Teachers from the schools provided the surveys to self-rate motivation orientation and approaches to learning, to students, return rates varied across schools. Participants (N = 1,532) completed a survey of motivation orientation and their achievement results were recorded at the end of 2005 the tenth grade year, 2006 for the eleventh grade, and 2007 for the twelfth grade. A comparable number of girls (766) and boys (762) participated, with four students that did not indicate gender. Of the participants, 53.8% were of European decent, 20.3% were Asian, 10.8% were Maori, 9.0% were Pacific, and 6.1% were of other ethnicity. Each year students reported their motivation level. Hodis et al., used a motivation orientation taken from previous research which resembled "performance-approach" achievement goal, "performance-avoidance" achievement goal, and positive and negative motivations identified by Martin (2007). A link was recognized with students’ motivation and their academic success. Hodis et al., found that low motivation was a useful predictor for students at risk for academic failure.

Self-efficacy also plays a significant role in motivation. In a study by Usher and Pajares (2006) 263 sixth grade students (140 girls and 123 boys) from a suburban middle school in the Southeastern United States were participants. Of the group, 180 were White, 52 African
American, 17 Hispanic, six Asian, and eight were of other ethnicity. The school was largely middle class, and the students were 10 to 13 years old. Students answered a self-efficacy survey that measured students' judgments of their ability to learn academic subjects and skills. Students were asked to rate from 1 (not well at all) to 6 (extremely well) how well they could learn mathematics, science, reading skills, writing skills, social studies, and computers. Students who believed that they could succeed in school showed more resilience when facing difficulties, set higher goals and showed more interest in academics (Usher & Pajares, 2006). From the study, Usher and Pajares (2006) described how boys viewed their accomplishments through achieving high grades in school, while girls viewed their accomplishments by messages they received from teachers, family members and significant others. Boys motivation would be high if they kept their grades up, while girls would maintain high motivation if they continued to get positive messages from others. Words and actions had the power to influence students’ effort towards school. When it had been expressed to a student that they were lacking abilities to complete an academic task, students showed less resilience (Usher & Pajares, 2006). Teachers, peers and parents have the ability to manipulate a student’s motivation through positive or negative messages given which can alter how students will handle their academics in the future.

Researchers are identifying the importance of school as a place for academic development and also for social and emotional development (Hudley, 1997). In her study, Hudley (1997) expressed how students in middle school described school problems as the main cause for crisis in their lives. In that environment, teachers gave messages that suggested the competence or incompetence of a student, which in turn affects student motivation. Placing a student in the tracking system also affected their motivation. Low tracking sent the message that the student was incompetent and those students became disengaged and lacked interest in class
(Hudley, 1997). Gazda (2007) stated that the love for learning has been destroyed because students are encouraged to work for rewards, which in turn, means they were better than someone else. Just as a slow learner did not fit into the traditional school system, neither does the rapid learner. The rapid learner did not progress to their full potential and only worked hard enough to earn A’s (Gazda, 2007). The traditional school lacked relevance of the schoolwork in how it related to the day to day, this was another reason for low motivation in schools (Gazda, 2007). In other words, without explaining how students will utilize and apply what they are learning in class to their daily lives, they lack the motivation to learn the material.

Thompson (1991) wrote that techniques of encouragement could increase motivation among students and diminish the idea of inadequacy. She suggested valuing individuals as they are, having faith in their abilities, giving recognition for effort, and how the use of a group could help a student develop academic success (Thompson, 1991). Bailey (2009) also described group counseling as a positive environment for building motivation in students. “Factors that motivate students were found in cooperative learning environments that provide strong support for low motivated students. In the environment of group counseling, it is permitted for students to be attentive to each other and give and receive feedback” (Bailey, 2009, p.32). Group environments are an area where peers played a vital role in each other’s academic development and developing coping skills.

Motivation could undermine any risk factor a student may have, and help increase academic achievement. According to studies done, motivation comes from various places. Students would be motivated to learn if they felt that their teachers cared about them. Lack of motivation was related to school failure, underachievement, and dropping out of school (Hodis, Meyer, McClure, Weir, & Walkey, 2011). Students who believed that they could succeed in
school showed more resilience when facing difficulties, set higher goals and showed more interest in academics (Usher & Pajares, 2006). The traditional school lacked relevance of the school work in how it related to the day to day, this was another reason for low motivation in schools (Gazda, 2007).

**Student-Teacher Relationship**

Teachers have the power to expand or weaken motivation for learning in students (Hudley, 1997). Rozalski (2008) wrote about how teachers often forgot what it was like to struggle to learn. Teachers have learned skills to overcome their learning weaknesses. Teachers in the traditional school system would tend to teach information as though students would be teaching the information instead of using it. Teachers often told students what to do, but not why it was crucial to learn this information for their day to day lives (Gazda, 2007). Instead of the student accepting responsibility for their learning, responsibility is solely on the teacher (Gazda, 2007).

Due to the transition from elementary school to middle school, the student-teacher relationship changes from small group instruction to a large group. This transition lead to less time to develop a relationship with a teacher, which caused students to believe that teachers did not care about them and lead to a negative effect on self-esteem, or feelings and knowledge about their skills, abilities, and social acceptance (Alspaugh, 1998). One way to build self-esteem and responsibility in a student was for the teacher to model skills such as organization, the use of an assignment log, and teaching time management (Gambill, Moss, & Vescogni, 2008). By teaching these skills in class, the teacher provided a positive interaction with the student and gave feedback and reinforcement. This modeling helped build self-esteem, motivation, and lead to higher academic achievement (Gambill et al., 2008).
A strong motivator for academic achievement was if the student felt the teacher cared about them. Caring was described as the teacher providing constructive feedback, making class interesting, listening, and making sure everyone understood (Wentzel, 1997). Students that found their teachers caring often related to the teacher's idea of competence and were better able to form relationships with others. Wentzel (1997) found that students who did not have friends in school were still highly motivated to achieve academically if they had a positive relationship with their teacher. Wentzel (1997) concluded that teacher support was of more importance for student academic achievement then peers and parents.

“The glue that binds students to school can be found in the quality of the relationships between teachers and students. Understanding the importance of relationships with teachers and seems to relate strongly to engagement, achievement, and expectations of future education” (Marin & Marin, 1991). In each piece of literature there was at least one reference to student teacher relationship (Alspaugh, 1998; Gazda, 2007; Hudley, 1997; Marin & Marin, 1991; Wentzel, 1997). Students spend the majority of their day with a teacher, so it should go without saying, that a positive relationship with a teacher is vital to academic achievement. Students need support, respect and to feel cared for by their teachers to succeed.

**Study Skills Group**

Group therapy was first introduced in the 1940's, and since then has taken on many different forms to meet the many needs of group participants. Yalom's therapeutic factors in group therapy include eleven primary factors. These factors are instillation of hope, universality, imparting of information, altruism, the corrective recapitulation of the primary family group, development of socializing techniques, imitative behavior, interpersonal learning, group cohesiveness, catharsis, and existential factors. Of these eleven factors, seven are particularly
relevant to working with adolescents in groups. The instillation of hope, hope that things will get better, is a crucial part of all therapies; it helps keep the participant in therapy. In group therapy, new members having contact with past members who have had similar problems and improved with group therapy, which helps new members mobilize hope for their own improvement (Yalom, 1985). Universality in group therapy helps participants realize that their feelings and problems are not unique to them, which gives them a sense of relief and connectedness to others that was not readily available before participating in the group (Yalom, 1985). Imparting information is suggestions, guidance or advice that group members receive from the therapist or group members. It is imparting of information is beneficial because it implies mutual interest and caring for group members (Yalom, 1985). Yalom (1985) describes altruism as an important part of group therapies. By participating in therapy groups, group members learn how to receive through giving. Many participants in group therapy often feel demoralized and possess a deep sense of having nothing of value to offer others. Group therapy helps them see that they can be of importance to others by offering feedback, support, reassurance, and share insight with similar problems. This helping others boosts self-esteem (Yalom, 1985). Yalom also discusses the importance of imitative behavior from group therapy. Participants often model themselves upon aspects of other group members as well as the therapist or group leader (Yalom, 1985). The importance of imitative behavior is hard to measure, but research suggests that it has been underestimated in the past. "Even if specific imitative behavior is short-lived, it may function to help the individual 'unfreeze' by experimenting with new behavior" (Yalom, 1985, p.18). Interpersonal learning helps members gain insight about their interpersonal impact through feedback from other members, while offering an environment where members can interact in a more adaptive manner for self-observation, concept of responsibility and risk taking (Yalom,
Group cohesiveness gives a sense of belonging, feelings of trust and togetherness. Many participants who attend group therapy have few opportunities for sharing and acceptance because of disturbed interpersonal skills, and value the acceptance they receive from other group members (Yalom, 1985). "Group cohesiveness results in better group attendance, greater participation of members, greater influenceability of the members, and many other effects" (Yalom, 1985, p.56).

Jacobs, Masson, and Harvill (2002) describe the efficiency of groups for children and adolescents. School counselors can meet the needs of many more students by incorporating groups into their programs. As Yalom (1985) described in his therapeutic factor of universality, many people have feelings that they think are unique to them, by participating in a group people can see that they are not the only ones going through situations or having certain feelings (Jacobs, Masson and Harvill, 2002). A group can provide more viewpoints and more resources, such as Yalom's imparting information. "Group members often relate that one of the most helpful aspects of being in a group is the variety of viewpoints expressed and discussed" (Jacobs, Masson and Harvill, 2002, p. 3). Many writers in psychology have pointed out the human need to belong; being in a group can satisfy this need. Groups are very popular in middle schools and high schools because teenagers experience the feeling of acceptance from group therapy, just as Yalom described the importance of group cohesiveness (Jacobs, Masson and Harvill, 2002). Commitment to change and work on specific concerns tends to be higher in group therapy. The combination of support, and the expectations and desire to not let the group down is often a participant's motivation for change (Jacobs, Masson and Harvill, 2002). The last argument that Jacobs, Masson and Harvill (2002) bring up for group therapy is that teenagers tend to find group
counseling more beneficial than individual one-on-one counseling because teens will often talk more to other teenagers than adults about personal issues.

Study skills groups have been shown to increase academic achievement in students (Bemak et al., 2005; Brigman & Campbell, 2003; Brigman and Webb, 2007; Zinck & Littrell, 2000). Study skills groups have incorporated exposure to many different study strategies instead of just one study skill. These study skills groups are made up of students with poor academic achievement and lead by school counselors, counseling interns, or teachers. They are 45- minute sessions held once a week, for ten weeks or more. Some of the skills taught in the group include cognitive, social, and self-management skills, how listen with your eyes, using positive self-talk, how to set goals, note taking (students usually write too much), memory skills, test taking skills, leaders modeling behavior, the use of binders, a daily planner, time management, which assignments have higher priority, color coding to identify sections quickly, and the significance in having a set study time and quiet area.

At the middle school level, students need more guidance from caregivers, teachers, and school counselors in order to develop and use study skills. During the middle school years students are still maturing and their frontal lobe, which helps regulate behavior, is not fully developed. Due to the development needed in the frontal lobe, many middle school aged children learn from the use of modeling by their teachers (Thorpe, 2010).

Thorpe (2010) conducted a study to find which study skills are most important for middle school students, as well as discover ways to integrate these skills into classroom instruction. The participants were 29 middle school teachers from rural and suburban schools in Central New York. Twenty-three participants completed a 27-item questionnaire about the importance of study skills and instruction of study skills, while six participated in individual or paired
interviews that addressed similar questions from the questionnaire. The participants teaching experienced ranged from two to 33 years (M = 11.4 years of teaching). Exposure to many different study strategies was key instead of just one study skill. By learning more strategies, students could pick which skill to use, which would lead to higher achievement (Thorpe, 2010).

Brigman and Campbell’s (2003) study was a two year project that included 180 students (30 from six different schools) selected randomly that scored in the 25th and 50th percentile on the Norm Reference Test (NRT) Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) in reading. Students were from four grade levels: fifth grade, sixth grade, eighth grade, and ninth grade. Comparison students were also selected randomly from those who scored in the 25th and 50th percentile on the NRT FCAT in reading. The comparison students were matched with the treatments schools according to geographic proximity, race, and socioeconomic status. Ten school counselors participated in the treatment schools and led skills group sessions for eight weeks for approximately 45 minutes each. The comparison schools were not aware of the study. The schools counselors led groups based on the Student Success Skills (SSS) curriculum that focused on: cognitive, social, and self-management skills. These three skills have been identified in previous research to be the most effective approach to improve academic achievement. Brigman and Campbell's study confirmed that study skills in a group environment improved achievement. The findings suggested that interventions with the school counselors caused positive change in achievement and behavior.

Webb, Brigman, and Campbell (2005) also discussed how counselor led intervention could improve academic achievement and social skills. In this study by Webb, Brigman, and Campbell (2005), 418 students (half from fifth grade and half from sixth grade) were involved from 20 schools and were randomly selected based on scoring between the 25th and 60th
percentile on the FCAT in math and reading. Approximately 85% of the students were White, 4% African American, and 9% Hispanic. Of these students, 45% were on free or reduced lunch. An equal number of students were assigned to participate in the SSS counseling intervention group and comparison group. The counselor led intervention focused on SSS curriculum and counselors were given a group manual that provided detailed plans for each session. The groups met once a week for 45 minutes, for eight weeks, followed by "booster sessions" which met once a month for 45 minutes each after group counseling sequence had ended. The booster sessions were meant to reinforce what the students had learned in groups. Webb, Brigman, and Campbell found that students performed higher when they attended schools with well-developed counseling programs, compared to students who did not have access to programs. Bailey (2009) described peer attitudes as playing a major role in student achievement. Students learned coping strategies from friendships and would tend to do well in school if their friends were earning high scores. If students associated themselves with friends who did poorly, they would also achieve at the same rate. A study by Zinck and Littrell (2000) to show that group counseling is effective with at risk girls, included 35 adolescent girls from 15 to 18 years old (M= 15.9; SD = 1.01). The girls were involved in one of four small groups conducted in a high school that was located in northwestern United States. Thirty-one girls completed a 10-week group experience. Four girls dropped out before three sessions. The girls in the study were described as being in high risk relationships as those with friends, boyfriend or girlfriend, family members and gangs. Students involved in high risk peer groups were more likely to run away, drop out of school, get pregnant, involved in abuse, chemical use, criminal activity and exploitation (Zinck & Littrell 2000). Many of the girls had families that could not meet their basic needs. They were often living away from home because they were kicked out and had family problems that often involved drug use.
Within these communities Zinck and Littrell (2000) found that there was limited counseling and public services available. Often times the students lived in rural communities with no public transportation and relied on friends for rides or hitch hiked to school. Zinck and Littrell (2000) also noted that disruptive behavior, truancy and disciplinary referrals were frequent with this group. Zinck and Littrell (2000), described group counseling as an intervention that allows counselors to meet with a greater number of students. “Not only is group counseling an efficient means of coping with increased students loads and responsibilities for school counselors, but research has shown that group counseling is successful with children and in school settings” (Bemak et al., 2005, p. 380). Group counseling was found to be more effective than individual services. Through group intervention, students could use peer modeling which helped students see what worked for other students and possibly for themselves as well (Bemak et al., 2005). Sink (2005) explained that making small groups in middle school with at risk students was great, but unfortunately the literature on this subject does not explain what works best.

Modeling was one skill in group counseling that was tied with higher academic achievement. Brigman and Webb (2007) suggested that the first group meeting should include how to listen with your eyes, look for small improvements, using positive self-talk, and learn how to set goals. Rozalski (2008) described problems with students who had behavioral issues because they were not typically the best listeners. Other skills necessary to help students included, note taking (students usually write too much), memory skills, and test taking.

Teachers also played a role in modeling study skills. In between group sessions teachers could model ideal behavior, having students use assignment books, the use of binders, a daily planner, time management and which assignments have higher priority (Gambill et al., 2008). Some important skills were teaching students how to use a binder, daily planner, pencil pouch,
and color coding to identify sections quickly. Students needed to know the significance in having a set study time and quiet area. One issue addressed by Richardson, Robnolt, and Rhodes (2010), is that web-based reading had been shown to be less efficient than reading from a book. With the rapid growth of e-books, this information would be vital to academic achievement. Numerous studies (Thorpe, 2010, Gambill et al., 2008, Sink 2005) stated that if middle school students were given the skills to achieve, they achieve at higher rates than their peers who did not participate in group intervention.

While group counseling is beneficial in helping students achieve academically, there are also risks in conducting groups with adolescents. It is important to consider state laws, as well as the rules and regulations for the agency or school the study skills group will be conducted at (Corey & Corey, 2002). Written permission from parents may not be a legal requirement, but is a good idea when working with anyone under 18. Confidentiality must be emphasized when working with adolescents because they tend to have more opportunities to reveal information. It is helpful to teach them how to discuss their group experience with others without breaching confidentiality (Corey & Corey, 2002). When working in a group members can be exposed to scapegoating, group pressure, breaches of confidence, inappropriate reassurance, and hostile confrontation. Although, it is the group leader's responsibility to inform prospective group members of the risks and ensure that precautions are taken to reduce potential risks (Corey & Corey, 2002).

Study skills groups have been shown to increase academic achievement in students (Bemak et al., 2005; Brigman & Campbell, 2003; Brigman and Webb, 2007; Zinck & Littrell, 2000). Study skills groups have incorporated exposure to many different study strategies instead of just one study skill. At the middle school level, students needed more guidance from care-
givers, teachers and school counselors so they could develop and use study skills. Interventions, such as a study skills group with the school counselors caused positive change in achievement and behavior.

**Parent/Caregiver Involvement**

"Theory and research have suggested that both school-based and home-based parent academic involvement are important contributors to youths' academic success" (McGill, Hughes, Alicea, & Way, 2012, p. 1005). A study was conducted by McGill, Hughes, Alicea, and Way (2012) with 345 Black and Latino students from New York City middle schools, ages 11 or 12 and in the spring of their sixth grade year. Of these 345 students, 51% were female. In addition, 163 participants identified themselves as Black (47%), 74 as Puerto Rican (22%), and 108 as Dominican (31%). Close to three quarters of participants (n = 245, 71%) had mothers who had at least some college or higher education. Almost half of the participants (n = 157, 46%) had parents who were married to each other or who were unmarried but living together, 77 (21%) had parents who were never married to each other, and 100 (29%) had parents who were divorced or separated. Fewer than half of the students (n = 153, 44%) attended schools in which at least two thirds of the students were eligible for free lunch. Surveys, with two sections requiring 80 minutes each to complete, were administered to students in the spring of their sixth, seventh and eighth grade years. The surveys asked questions regarding academic adjustment (grades, listening skills, etc.), public regard (people's expectations of them), and parenting practices. In their research McGill, Hughes, Alicea, and Way (2012) found a steep academic decline for students starting in sixth grade due to low parent involvement. Parents or other caregivers can help students make a positive transition to middle school by providing help with homework and becoming involved with the school.
Cheung and Pomerantz (2012) describe why student achievement is enhanced by parental involvement. In their study participants included 374 American students (187 boys and 187 girls; mean age = 12.8 years) and 41 Chinese students (240 boys and 211 girls; mean age = 12.69 years). All students either attended average achieving or above-average achieving public schools in working class or middle class areas. The American students attended one of two schools from a suburb in Chicago and where in the seventh or eighth grade. The Chinese students attended one of two schools in the suburbs of Beijing; one school was made up of seventh through ninth and the other was seventh through 12th grades. Students completed questionnaires during two 45 minute sessions, four times approximately six months apart. The questionnaire included questions about parent involvement in students learning, parent-orientated motivation in school, students motivation in school, learning strategies, and grades. From their study, Cheung and Pomerantz (2012) concluded that parental involvement in a students learning was predictive of the students' academic achievement. Parents motivation was linked to student engagement in school, heightened self-regulated learning, and enhanced achievement. Students who are motivated to meet parents' expectations appear to cultivate pride and self-worth (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012).

The day to day is hectic and filled with time consuming tasks, and more parents are being burdened with other responsibilities that do not allow time to be spent with their children. Research suggests that parent or care-giver involvement is the most crucial to academic achievement for students, and group therapy could provide the extra help that busy parents do not have the time to offer their children (Walker, Shenker, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2010). In order for group therapy to be administered, parents must find it beneficial and want their children to participate. Walker, Shenker and Hoover-Dempsey (2010) discuss how to get parents involved in
their children's education. They stress the involvement of the school counselor to bridge the home and school life, but to also recommend and develop strategies to help school leadership and staff to encourage families to support children's educational achievement. One factor that Walker, Shenker and Hoover-Dempsey (2010) say is the most motivational for parents involvement is parents' perceptions of invitations from children and teachers. A relationship between families and schools is important for student achievement. Clear role expectations for parents and school personnel need to be developed and publicized, as well as the school's efforts to establish and maintain trusting, respectful and responsive communication between school and parents (Walker, Shenker and Hoover-Dempsey, 2010).

Another suggestion to enhance parental involvement is hiring a welcoming staff and for school counselors providing in service training to foster sensitivity to nontraditional caregivers (Walker, Shenker and Hoover-Dempsey, 2010). Making parents feel comfortable and important in the school by using them as educators for career fairs or special interest assemblies is another way to promote involvement. Addressing barriers such as child care, work schedules, home languages other than English, can allow school counselors to develop flexible schedules for parents or holding meetings in the centers of community activities where parents already feel comfortable (Walker, Shenker and Hoover-Dempsey, 2010). By finding ways to include parents and meeting their needs, parents may feel more connected to the school and comfortable to allow their student to participate in school led group therapy interventions.

Parental involvement in a student's learning was predictive of the student's academic achievement. Parents motivation was linked to student engagement in school, heightened self-regulated learning, and enhanced achievement. Parents or other care-givers can help students make a positive transition to middle school by providing help with homework and becoming
involved with the school. Research suggests that parent or care-giver involvement is the most crucial to academic achievement for students, and group therapy could provide the extra help that busy parents do not have the time to offer their children (Walker, Shenker, and Hoover-Dempsey, 2010).

**Summary**

The literature on study skills approaches indicates that there are many basic skills to be taught. Sixth grade students experience a major change in their education due to the shift from having one teacher all day to six teachers for their various subjects throughout the day. Sixth grade students must also adjust to new social situations, making and losing friends, and less one on one time with a teacher. Unlike elementary school, teachers are unable to get involved with every student and understand why they are not succeeding academically. Middle school years play a significant role in how students perceive their abilities for later academic performance (Usher & Pajares, 2006). When students have poor academic performance it can lead to a lack of motivation for success.

Students and teachers are struggling to keep up with the many demands of ever changing curriculums. Academic failure happens more often than not, especially at the middle school level (Alspaugh, 1998). Many factors play a role in academic failure. Bailey (2009) discusses four domains: individual, family, school and community. High motivation could undermine any risk factor a student may have and help increase academic achievement. According to several completed studies, an individual’s motivation for academic success comes from various places (Hodis, Meyer, McClure, Weir, & Walkey, 2011). Students are more motivated to learn if they feel that their teachers care about them (Alspaugh, 1998; Gazda, 2007; Hudley, 1997; Marin & Marin, 1991; Wentzel, 1997).
Many students lack note taking skills and time management. Studies have shown that after teaching these skills, students achieved higher academically. It is necessary for school counselors to get involved and provide academic interventions to help middle school students adjust to their new academic environment. This project is intended to teach middle school students study skills that will increase their academic performance.
Chapter 3

Introduction

The purpose of this project was to develop a group counseling curriculum using study skills to enhance academic achievement in middle school students. Students who are transitioning from elementary school to middle school often see a drop in their grades. This project consists of a ten-week counseling group that enhances the skills necessary to succeed academically. Students will learn how to organize, effective time management, and goal setting for school. Students will learn how to be successful in school with emphasis with being on time to class, how to adapt to different teachers, being prepared for each class, being aware of body language, and participating in class and in groups. They will also learn how to take notes, how to read a textbook, how to study for tests, as well as ways to alleviate test anxiety. In order to bring a connection between school and career there will be a brief introduction to possible careers, schooling necessary, and ways to attain those career goals.

Development of Project

While interning at a middle school for my school counseling training, I noticed a great need for students to develop study skills. Although the students were given planners, they rarely used them. When going through students' backpacks, it was obvious the students had little to no organizational skills. Students who consistently failed tests would admit that they did not know what or how to study. Sixth graders were struggling academically and the counselor confirmed that sixth grade is a difficult transition period. This school site expressed a need for a study skills group curriculum for struggling students that could be used by counselors, interns, and administrators to ease the transition into middle school and give students the skills to succeed when they would transfer to high school.
Intended Audience

This group curriculum is designed for a group of ten students, ages 10-14, struggling academically. Administrators, school counselors, and teachers will be asked to identify students who are failing more than one class, unorganized, and could benefit from individualized time. Based on the literature, students will be taught skills that are deemed essential for school success. The materials used were created using information from study skills websites, published workbooks, and graduate level classes aimed at offering additional help to low achieving students.

Personal Qualifications

The person(s) facilitating this group could be an administrator, teacher, school counselor, counseling intern, or somebody who has worked in a school environment teaching students.

Environment and Equipment

The environment for this group would be a school setting in a small classroom or conference room, ideally in a room with a desk or table for all ten students to sit at comfortably together and to be able to write. A black board with chalk or a whiteboard with dry erase markers would be needed, as well as paper, pencils, highlighters, a planner, a three ring binder, a back pack (preferably student's personal back pack), textbooks, and a computer for each student participating in the group.

Formative Evaluation

For this project a committee chair was consulted with, as well as school counselors from two middle school sites. The information was reviewed and discussed about what would be valuable and useful for students, and what school counselors felt was most important for school success in middle school. This group was designed with information from and extant literature
review and from information gathered through meetings with parents who brought up skills they felt their students did not have, but needed in order to attain higher grades.

**Project Outline**

**Everyday Study Skills**

Designed for students who need a “boost up” in organization, test taking, and/or studying.

**Week one: Introductions**

Students will participate in an icebreaker and making of group rules. A pre-test survey will be given to measure students' previous knowledge of study skills.

**Week two: Organization**

Students will learn how to use their student planners, break down assignments, make use of 3 ring binders and folders, and how to keep their backpack neat.

**Week three: Time Management and Goal Setting**

Students will learn how to use time effectively, make a list of priorities and goals, create a study plan, and keeping track of time.

**Week four: Be Successful in Class**

Students will learn the importance of being in school and on time to class, how to adapt to different teachers, being prepared for each class, being aware of body language, and participating in class and in groups.

**Week five: Taking Good Notes**

Students will learn about active listening, recognizing important information, and how to take notes that are easy to read.

**Week six: How to Read a Textbook**

Students will learn how to stay focused while reading, and reviewing.

**Week seven: Study Smart**

Students will learn how to find a good place to study, how to get started, their personal learning style, organizing their study plan, how to study for tests, and how to write a paper.

**Week eight: Being a Good Test Taker, Reducing Test Anxiety and Asking for Help**

Students will learn how to mark questions to return to later, how to answer multiple choice questions, look for key words, know how to approach essay questions, how to take math tests, prepare for open book tests, checking answers, and looking over graded tests. Students will learn the importance of studying early, reviewing the night before, relaxation techniques, and how asking for help will get most problems resolved.

**Week nine: Career Exploration**
A brief introduction to possible careers, schooling necessary and ways to attain those career goals.

Week ten: Last meeting
Answering any questions and facilitating a post-test survey to measure for information learned throughout the weeks.
Chapter 4

Summary of Project

The purpose of this project was to develop a group counseling curriculum using study skills to enhance academic achievement in middle school students. Students who are transitioning from elementary school to middle school often see a drop in their grades. This project consists of a ten-week counseling group that enhances the skills necessary to succeed academically. Students will learn how to organize, effective time management, and goal setting for school. Students will learn how to be successful in school with emphasis with being on time to class, how to adapt to different teachers, being prepared for each class, being aware of body language, and participating in class and in groups. They will also learn how to take notes, how to read a textbook, how to study for tests, as well as ways to alleviate test anxiety. In order to bring a connection between school and career there will be a brief introduction to possible careers, schooling necessary, and ways to attain those career goals.

Recommendations for Implementation

The person(s) facilitating this group could be an administrator, teacher, school counselor, counseling intern, or somebody who has worked in a school environment teaching students. The environment for this group would be a school setting in a small classroom or conference room, ideally in a room with a desk or table for all ten students to sit at comfortably together and to be able to write. A black board with chalk or a whiteboard with dry erase markers would be needed, as well as paper, pencils, highlighters, a planner, a three ring binder, a back pack (preferably student’s personal back pack), textbooks, and a computer for each student participating in the group.
In order to implement this group it is important to develop a relationship with a school to determine if the school may need to teach study skills to students. This need could be revealed in students who have lower grades, difficulty succeeding on exams, or difficulty focusing in the classroom. After meeting with these students individually, the group facilitator would note the student’s need for help with organization, how to study for tests, developing school goals, and motivation.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

After reviewing the literature and research on this topic, it is clear that the transition to middle school is not an easy one for children. Future research would be useful at the elementary level to see if there is a way to ease this transition for children. It would be useful to understand how and why certain students are succeeding while others do not. Finding a way to make parents aware of the challenges associated with this time transition for students would be another recommendation. Parental involvement is difficult to get and maintain many. Determining an optimum way to get parental involvement is crucial for student success and would aid the progression with learning and maintaining effective study skills.

**Conclusion**

Many students enter sixth grade and struggle with the academics. Sixth grade students experience a major change in their education due to the shift from having one teacher all day to six teachers for their various subjects throughout the day. Sixth grade students must also adjust to new social situations, making and losing friends, and less one on one time with a single teacher. Middle school is the age when teachers and parents expect students to be more independent and responsible for themselves and yet, some students are ready for this next step, while others struggle to learn how to manage all the new changes. Middle school years play a significant role
in how students perceive their abilities for later academic performance (Usher & Pajares, 2006). When students have poor academic performance it can lead to a lack of motivation for success. Many factors play a role in academic failure.

Bailey (2009) discusses four domains: individual, family, school and community. Another risk factor discussed by Alspaugh (1998) is the transition from elementary school to middle school. Most students are already entering school with more than one risk factor and the transition from elementary to middle school alone increases a child’s chance for academic failure.

With the immense amount of new responsibilities that school counselors have, group counseling is an effective way for counselors to support multiple students at once. Group counseling has been shown to be more effective than individual counseling (Bemak, Chung, & Siroskey-Sabdo, 2005). Helpful elements incorporated into group counseling are peer modeling, validation, and new insights that a student cannot receive in individual counseling (Yalom, 1985). When working with at-risk students, group counseling has been shown to improve their achievement scores and interpersonal relationships (Bemak, Chung, & Siroskey-Sabdo, 2005).

It takes a lot of hard work and effort to raise children to succeed in life. Most families I have worked with are divorced or have one parent. Providing groups not only benefits the student by offering an extra person in their life to help and listen to them, but also benefits the parents who are unable to help their child. Groups are beneficial in the long run because they increase students positive self-image, as well as helping them to succeed. Being able to reach students at a younger age will prepare them for high school, and in turn, prepare them for college and provide a better future.
REFERENCES


Appendix

Introduction

Many students enter sixth grade and struggle with the academics. Sixth grade students experience a major change in their education due to the shift from having one teacher all day to six teachers for their various subjects throughout the day. Sixth grade students must also adjust to new social situations, making and losing friends, and less one on one time with a teacher. Middle school is the age when teachers and parents expect students to be more independent and responsible for themselves and yet, some students are ready for this next step, while others struggle to learn how to manage all the new changes. Middle school years play a significant role in how students perceive their abilities for later academic performance (Usher & Pajares, 2006). When students have poor academic performance it can lead to a lack of motivation for success. Many factors play a role in academic failure.

Bailey (2009) discusses four domains: individual, family, school and community. Another risk factor discussed by Alspaugh (1998) is the transition from elementary school to middle school. Most students are already entering school with more than one risk factor and the transition from elementary to middle school alone increases a child’s chance for academic failure.

With the immense amount of new responsibilities that school counselors have, group counseling is an effective way for counselors to support multiple students at once. Group counseling has been shown to be more effective than individual counseling (Bemak, Chung, & Siroskey-Sabdo, 2005). Helpful elements incorporated into group counseling are peer modeling, validation, and new insights that a student cannot receive in individual counseling (Yalom, 1985). When working with at-risk students, group counseling has been shown to improve their achievement scores and interpersonal relationships (Bemak, Chung, & Siroskey-Sabdo, 2005).
It takes a lot of hard work and effort to raise children these days. Most families I work with are divorced or have one parent. When a child has two parents, it is shocking because that is rarely the case these days. Providing groups not only benefits the student by offering an extra person in their life to help and listen to them, but also benefits the parents who are unable to help their child. Groups are beneficial in the long run by giving students a positive self image, as well as helping them succeed. Being able to reach students at a younger age will prepare them for high school, and in turn, prepare them for college and provide a better future.

**Purpose of Project**

The purpose of this project is to develop a group counseling curriculum using study skills to enhance academic achievement in middle school students. Students who are transitioning from elementary school to middle school often see a drop in their grades. This project consists of a ten week counseling group which enhances the skills necessary to succeed academically. Students will learn how to organize, effective time management, and goal setting for school. Students will learn how to be successful in school with emphasis with being on time to class, how to adapt to different teachers, being prepared for each class, being aware of body language, and participating in class and in groups. They will also learn how to take notes, how to read a textbook, how to study for tests, as well as ways to alleviate test anxiety. In order to bring a connection between school and career there will be a brief introduction to possible careers, schooling necessary, and ways to attain those career goals.

**Development of Project**

While interning at a middle school for my school counseling training, I noticed a great need for students to develop study skills. Although the students given planners, they rarely used them. When going through students' backpacks, it was obvious the students had little to no
organizational skills. Students who consistently failed tests would admit that they did not know what or how to study. Sixth graders were struggling academically and the counselor confirmed that sixth grade is a difficult transition period. This school site expressed a need for a study skills group curriculum for struggling students that could be used by counselors, interns, and administrators to ease the transition into middle school and give students the skills to succeed when they would transfer to high school.

**Intended Audience**

This group curriculum will be designed for a group of ten students, ages 10-14, who are struggling academically. Administrators, school counselors, and teachers will be asked to identify students who are failing more than one class, unorganized, and could benefit from individualized time. Based on the literature, students will be taught skills that are deemed essential for school success. The materials have been created using information from study skills websites, published workbooks, and graduate level classes aimed at offering additional help to low achieving students.

**Personal Qualifications**

The person(s) facilitating this group could be an administrator, teacher, school counselor, counseling intern, or somebody who has worked in a school environment teaching students.

**Recommendations for Implementation**

The person(s) facilitating this group could be an administrator, teacher, school counselor, counseling intern, or somebody who has worked in a school environment teaching students. The environment for this group would be a school setting in a small classroom or conference room. Ideally in a room with a desk or table for all ten students to sit at comfortably together and to be able to write. A black board with chalk or a whiteboard with dry erase markers would be
needed, as well as paper, pencils, highlighters, a planner, a three ring binder, a back pack (preferably student’s personal back pack), textbooks, and a computer for each student participating in the group.

In order to implement this group it is important to develop a positive relationship with a school and faculty. If they have a list of students who have bad grades, you can see if they have a need to teach study skills to students. After developing a list, the facilitator would then meet with these students individually and discuss their grades, possible reasons for them and introduce them to the idea of joining a Study Skills group. Then the facilitator will select students from the individual meetings who demonstrated a need for help with organization, how to study for tests, developing school goals, motivation and willing to participate in a group. Consent forms with information about the group, including meeting dates and times, would be given to parents. Without consent, the students typically cannot participate, this depends on the school.

**Group Weekly Schedule**

**Everyday Study Skills:**

Designed for students who need a “boost up” in organization, test taking, and/or studying.

**Week one: Introductions**
Students will participate in an icebreaker and making of group rules. A pre-test survey will be given to measure students’ previous knowledge of study skills.

**Week two: Organization**
Students will learn how to use their student planners, break down assignments, make use of 3 ring binders and folders, and how to keep their backpack neat.

**Week three: Time Management and Goal Setting**
Students will learn how to use time effectively, make a list of priorities and goals, create a study plan, and keeping track of time.

**Week four: Be Successful in Class**
Students will learn the importance of being in school and on time to class, how to adapt to different teachers, being prepared for each class, being aware of body language, and participating in class and in groups.

**Week five: Taking Good Notes**
Students will learn about active listening, recognizing important information, and how to take notes that are easy to read.

**Week six: How to Read a Textbook**
Students will learn how to stay focused while reading, and reviewing.

**Week seven: Study Smart**
Students will learn how to find a good place to study, how to get started, their personal learning style, organizing their study plan, how to study for tests, and how to write a paper.

**Week eight: Being a Good Test Taker, Reducing Test Anxiety and Asking for Help**
Students will learn how to mark questions to return to later, how to answer multiple choice questions, look for key words, know how to approach essay questions, how to take math tests, prepare for open book tests, checking answers, and looking over graded tests. Students will learn the importance of studying early, reviewing the night before, relaxation techniques, and how asking for help will get most problems resolved.

**Week nine: Career Exploration**
A brief introduction to possible careers, schooling necessary and ways to attain those career goals.

**Week ten: Last meeting**
Answering any questions and facilitating a post-test survey to measure for information learned throughout the weeks.
A Group Counseling Tool to Improve Academic Achievement In Middle School

By Cassie Barajas

Week 1: Introduction

Goals:

1. To describe the group and the expectations to the students.

2. To provide information about the group including the purpose, process, and activities.

3. To get to know other members of the group.

4. To help students establish a sense of trust and belonging as they share about themselves and listen to others share.

5. To establish basic rules for group participation.

Objectives:

1. Participants will know the purpose and how the group operates.

2. Participants will be able to describe one characteristic of each group member.
3. Participants will be able to explain the importance of confidentiality.

4. Participants will be able to identify at least two group rules.

Materials needed:

1. For Skittles game: Skittles (enough for each group member to have one of each color and at least one duplicate color), cups (for each group member), paper with game rules.

2. Confidentiality hand out

3. Group rules hand out

4. Pre-Test hand out

Procedures:

1. Before students arrive all the materials and make sure the ice breaker is ready.

2. Explain the purpose of the group including how the group will be conducted, types of activities and expected group interaction.

3. Ice breaker. Hand out cups and instructions for the game. The group leader(s) should also participate so students can learn about the leader(s) too.

4. After ice breaker, give each student the confidentiality hand out face down. Ask group if anyone knows what confidentiality is. Listen to all definitions and give positive feedback. After all answers have been heard (not everyone has to answer), ask them to turn the paper over. Discuss what it means thoroughly. Ask students for examples. Let each student keep a copy.

5. Give each member a hand out of the group rules. Go over them and discuss if they think anything else should be added to the rules. Let each student keep a copy.

6. Give each member a Pre-test. Explain to them there is no right or wrong answer, and they will be given a 5 minutes to complete it.
7. Close the session with positive feedback about how well they participated and let them know about the next meeting time.
Skittles Game

Going in a circle,

1. Pick one skittle from the cup.
2. Then answer the question for that color.

Each color is a different question:

   **Red**- Your favorite TV show?

   **Green**- What is you favorite color?

   **Yellow**- I've never, but I'd like to....?

   **Orange**- If I had to go out to eat, I'd eat at?

   **Purple**- When I grow up, I want to be...?

   **Any Color Picked A Second Time**- repeat something a group member has said about themselves you liked.
Confidentiality

- The meaning of confidential information is a private message that is shared with only a few people for a certain purpose. Confidentiality means to keep something between the individuals involved.

- What is confidential: Talking about classes we dislike. Stories about our families and hobbies outside school.

- What is not confidential: If someone is hurting you, you want to hurt someone, or you want to hurt yourself.
Group Rules

1. Be active listeners.
   Let your body language show that you are listening.

2. Be on time.
   So everyone has a chance to participate, we will always start on time.

3. Respect
   No put downs. If you don't have something nice to say, you probably shouldn't say it!

4. Things we say are confidential.
   What is said in group, stays in group.
### Pre-Test

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<th>Study every day.</th>
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<td>Study the hardest things first and then move on to easier ones.</td>
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<td>Spend the most time on things that you find most difficult.</td>
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<td>Ask for help if you are struggling with something.</td>
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<td>Take notes as you study, using your own words.</td>
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<td>Organize your work in a binder or folder.</td>
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<td>Look at your notes every night.</td>
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<td>Quiz yourself about what you just studied.</td>
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<td>Write homework down in your planner.</td>
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Week 2: Organization

Goals:

1. To help students learn how to use their binder, dividers, folders, and student planner.
2. To explain how to break down assignments into easier tasks.
3. To teach students how to organize and keep backpack neat.

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to write down assignments in planner so they complete them on time.
2. Students will learn how to organize and use their binder, dividers and folder so they do not lose work and can find it easily.
3. Students will be able to break down assignments into more manageable work so they begin to turn in more assignments for grading.
4. Students will learn how to organize their backpack so they can find assignments and materials easily.

Materials:

1. Number Bingo handout and markers.
2. Student planners, highlighters, binders, dividers, folders, and pencil cases.
3. Check Ups handout

Procedures:

1. Students should bring materials or school should provide them for the group.
2. Start with organization game: Number Bingo. Give each student a sheet with a marker. Since there are 10 students, two students will have the same paper. Explain that the
winner will be those who find six numbers in any order on their sheet. Pick numbers from 10-29, 40-49, 60-69, and 80-89. Some sheets have numbers other than these.

3. After students have won, ask all students how easy it was to find the numbers and show others their Bingo sheets. Explain how this is like being organized. It is easier to find things we need when they are in order. The papers that contained other numbers not called are examples from when students have unnecessary papers in their backpack. They have to go through unnecessary things to find things they need.

4. Explain how life can sometimes be busy, and having a messy binder or backpack doesn't mean you're a slob. Ask for examples of what makes them busy, such as soccer practice and take care of siblings. Ask for examples of why they get behind on homework. Then provide ideas of how to stay organized, such as using a binder with dividers, and a planner.

5. Explain how to use a binder with dividers. Show them how each divider represents each class. Show them how to use a folder. One side for homework to do and papers for their parents. The other side is for completed homework and papers that will be turned in.

6. Explain the importance of using a planner and how it helps to keep track of assignments. Explain how previously discussed, life gets busy and we tend to forget things, and how a planner never forgets.

7. Hand out highlighters and show them how to highlight important assignments like tests, projects and activities with different colors. Explain how this makes things stand out, so the student does not have to search for things every day.
8. Show them how to break down assignments. Ask if they have anyone help them with homework at home and who. Ask if anyone checks their homework and who. If students have someone helping them, explain to leave difficult assignments for those times, and to work on assignments they understand or find easy on their own. If students don't have help, see if the school has after school tutoring direct them there and stress the importance of getting help.

9. Have students bring their backpacks. Show them how to organize it and put small things in a pencil case. Ask if they have ever lost a pencil during a test or important assignment. Explain how a pencil case can help avoid that mishap.

10. Give each student a Check Ups handout. Ask how they can continue to stay organized when they are busy. Ask if they feel being organized will help improve their grade.

11. Close the session with positive feedback about their feedback and participation.
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Check-Ups!!!

1. Each day before you start homework take everything out of your backpack. Throw out your trash, get rid of papers you no longer need (except: old tests, quizzes, and hand outs in case you need them in the future!), and put other papers where they belong.

2. Every week or two check your pencil case to make sure you have all the materials you need for school.

3. Every couple of weeks go through your binder and throw away anything you don't need any more. Keep old tests, quizzes, and hand outs at home in case you need them in the future.

**REMEMBER:** If you are not sure what to do with a paper ask a parent or family member what to do with it.
Week 3: Time Management and Goal Setting

Goals:

1. To explain how to manage time with multiple assignments and after school activities.
2. To teach students how to set goals and meet them in a timely manner.

Objectives:

1. Students will be more aware of their time.
2. Students will learn how to divide their time between homework and leisure.
3. Students will learn about different types of goals.
4. Students will be able to make their own goals and set deadlines to reach them.
5. Students will learn that they are achieving goals daily.

Materials needed:

1. Procrastination handout.
2. Time log handout and pens.
3. Time log questions.
4. Goal cards (already cut and ready to use).
5. Goal handout.

Procedures:

1. Begin with asking students what is the first thing they think about doing when school is out for the day? Ask them to define procrastination. Let students try to define it. After students have answered, ask if they procrastinate on doing what they should be doing after school?
2. Hand out Procrastination paper and go over it with students.

3. Hand out the Time Log. Have students estimate their typical day by the hour using the codes.

4. Hand out the Time Log Questions. Give the students a few minutes to answer, then go over them with the group.

5. Next, create a study plan. Ask students when they study best, at night or right after school? Ask them to estimate how much time they will need to complete homework and using a colored marker, put it on their log. Every day when they get home they should figure out how much time they have available to do homework and develop a study plan to stay organized and on track.

6. Explain how we can all sabotage ourselves. Use some examples from their logs, such as using the computer, and mention how that sabotages their study time. Next, mention how they can prepare for sabotage. One example would be, asking parents to monitor their internet use until they finish their homework. So they don't have to be alone trying to eliminate the sabotage. Another example would be, telling friends not to call the house until 6pm, when all their homework is complete. If siblings are the problem, find a quiet place and make do not disturb sign

7. Goal setting game. Mix up the Goal Cards and have students pick one randomly. Ask the student what the steps are to complete that goal. The main idea is that there are steps to achieve a goal.

8. Hand out Goals paper and work on goals that students would like to achieve.

9. Close group with asking the students what they learned about their own time management. Ask them if they realized how many goals they achieved daily.
Procrastination

CUT DOWN A TASK INTO SMALLER PARTS - if you have a large task, it doesn't have to be done at once. Start with a smaller part of the task, one step at a time.

BE SPECIFIC ABOUT EACH SMALL STEP OF THE TASK - tell yourself "I will read three pages of chapter 6 on Tuesday before dinner", rather than "I need to read chapter 6."

MAKE LISTS - check items off your list (or planner) as you complete them.

USE SPARE TIME - If you have a few minutes to wait for dinner, you can use that to go over notes from class.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE PERFECT - trying your best is better than not doing it at all.

AVOID SABOTAGE/DISTRACTIONS - TV, video games, internet, phone calls, and music can distract you and give you excuses to delay your homework.

Adapted from: Academic Advisement Program by Lisa King, p. 68
# Time Log

Fill in the log using the codes: HW= homework, C= in class, P= talking on the phone, texting, shopping, using the computer and playing, TV= watching television, S=sleeping. If you need to, make up some of your own.

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Adapted from: AVID.org
How is your current studying/homework time?

When do you plan to study and work on homework?

   During the week?

   On weekends?

Do you need to be more productive with your time? How will you do this?

What can your family do to help you be more successful in school?

Adapted from: AVID.org
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Goal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make a sandwich</td>
<td>Make a cake</td>
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<tr>
<td>Walk the dog</td>
<td>Get an A on a test</td>
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<tr>
<td>Get on the internet</td>
<td>Get ready for school</td>
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</table>

Adapted from: Academic Advisement Program by Lisa King, p. 89
My goal is:

My target date is:

To reach my goal I will do:
1.

2.

3.

I will know I've reached my goal because:

To help me stick to reaching my goal I will:
1.

2.

Adapted from: specialed.about.com
WEEK 4: BE SUCCESSFUL IN CLASS

Goals:

1. To explain the importance of being on time and in class.
2. To teach students how to adapt to different teachers.
3. To explain motivation.
4. To help students learn how to be prepared for each class.
5. To teach students how to be aware of their body language.
6. To help students participate in class and in groups.

Objectives:

1. Students will learn the importance of being on time and attending class.
2. Students will learn how to adapt to different teachers.
3. Students will learn what motivates them.
4. Students will be able to prepare themselves for each class.
5. Students will learn about body language.
6. Students will be able to participate in class and small groups.

Materials:

1. Motivation game: blocks to build towers with, assorted candy and cookies for students.
2. Motivation handout.
3. Turning in assignments game: Turing in assignments signs worksheet pre-cut, worksheet questions for leader.
4. Body Languages handout.

Procedures:
1. Start the group with asking if anyone was late to any classes today and why. Ask them why it is important to come to school in time. What might happen? After the students have answered make sure to mention how being on time and in class means they will not miss anything important such as presentations, notes, discussions, assignments and tests. Ask them if they have ever missed anything important? Were they able to make up the work? Did they fall behind in class?

2. Go through reasons that would be an acceptable and unavoidable absence, and those that are not acceptable and are avoidable. Brainstorm some ways to avoid the unacceptable tardiness. Give some examples such as waking up late: set an alarm, put clothes out the night before, have backpack and lunch already packed to save time.

3. Ask them how they feel about their teachers. Do they have a favorite, why? Do they have a difficult one, what makes the class hard? Explain how in the classroom the teachers are the ones who are in charge. It is important to know the rules of each teacher. One might count you tardy if you are not in your seat when the bell rings, one might say that as long as you are in class you are not tardy. Explain how they do not need to agree with the teachers, but do need to follow the rules. Ask for examples of different teachers. Do they all count homework? How do they get participation points? Are all the teachers strict about the rules?

4. Pull out the blocks and divide the students into groups of 2 or 3 depending on how many are in the group. Explain that they are supposed to build a tower, and whoever builds the tallest one without falling will win a treat. In order for them to add a block to the tower they need to take turns answering one of two questions (write them somewhere they can see them); 1.) Say something they do or don't like about school.
2.) Say something they need help with in school. After answering the question of their choice, they may add a block. Each member must have a turn.

5. As the game progresses make sure every couple minutes and reward those whose towers are tallest. Start with the smallest candy and work your way to the better ones and reward with more than one candy at a time.

6. At the end of the game ask the students if the candy motivated them to work faster? Did the type of candy change their motivation or how much candy was being handed out?


8. Have the signs for the "Turning in Assignments" game precut and taped in different corners of the room. Explain to the students that they will be asked questions, and they will answer by standing in the corner of the room where the sign matches their answer.

9. After the game ask what they thought. Ask them what they can do to prepare themselves for each class? Explain how getting homework done the night before helps, packing their bags the night before and making sure they have everything, and making a check list can help.

10. Handout the Body Languages worksheet. Give students time to answer. After they have answered explain how teachers can recognize students body language. Ask them about some bad body language they have seen in class. Students having their back turned to the teacher, head down, staring out the window. Ask them what would be good body language. Facing the teacher, sitting with good posture, looking interested.
11. Next, ask students how they feel about participating in this group. Do they feel they participate enough, do they feel they are quiet? Ask them what makes a good group? Ask them about working in groups in class. Have they been in a group they didn't like, why? Give examples of good group members, participating, working together, being nice to group members, waiting for their turn to speak. Explain this is the same as participating in class.

12. End the group with feedback about their participation and answer any questions they may have.
What Motivates You?

Directions: Color in the circle next to the items that help to motivate you. In other words, would you work harder if these things were rewards?

- Candy
- Video games
- Food
- Money
- Internet
- Feeling successful
- Learning
- Being Independent
- Understanding information
- Teacher complimenting you
- Family complimenting you

Adapted from: Academic Advisement Program by Lisa King, pg. 87.
Turing in assignments signs

ALWAYS

SOMETIMES

NEVER

Adapted from: Academic Advisement Program by Lisa King, pg. 82.
Turning in Assignments: Questions
(For Leader)

❖ I know what I should be doing for homework.
❖ I do my homework at home.
❖ I remember to bring my homework from home to school.
❖ I turn in my homework on time.
❖ I finish my class work.
❖ I participate in class.
❖ If I miss school, I call a friend to find out the homework.
❖ I ask for help if I don't understand my homework.
❖ I ask my teacher for help.

Adapted from: Academic Advisement Program by Lisa King, pg. 82.
Body Language

**Directions:** Put the letter of the word that matches the picture.

A. Scared  
B. Sad  
C. Angry  
D. Happy  
E. Confused  
F. Thinking  
G. Tired

1. ______  
2. ______  
3. ______  
4. ______  
5. ______  
6. ______  
7. ______
Week 5: Taking Good Notes

Goals:

1. To teach students how to be active listeners.
2. To help students learn how to recognize important information.
3. To teach students how to take notes that are easy to read.

Objectives:

1. Students will learn how to be active listeners so they can take good notes.
2. Students will learn how to take notes and recognize important information to include in them.
3. Students will be able to write notes that are clear and easy to read so they can use them to study.

Materials:

1. Draw Me handout and pencils.
2. Passage for leader and Outline worksheets
3. Abbreviations worksheet

Procedures:

1. Start with asking the group if they know what active listening is. After their answers you can explain further that active listening means that you are not just hearing what the teacher is saying, but also thinking about and trying to understand the information that the teacher is talking about.
2. Give each student the "Draw Me" handout. Let students know that you will be giving them directions on what to draw. Tell them you will only be saying the directions once, and they will need to listen carefully.
• Draw a straight line from F to A
• Draw a straight line from F to B
• Draw a line from E to F
• Connect C to B
• Connect D to A
• Start at point F and draw a line down 1/2 of an inch in length
• Start at point C and draw a line down 1/2 of an inch in length like F
• Start at point D and draw a line down 1/2 of an inch in length like C
• Connect those new lines to make a rectangle.

3. Ask the students if it was hard to follow long, why? Explain how this is active listening. They had to listen and then think about what they had to do next. Explain how this is similar to taking notes. Tell them how taking notes is another way to help them pay attention. It helps keep their mind from wandering to other topics. It also shows their teacher how they are interested in what they are learning. They don't want to write everything the teacher says, just the important parts.

4. Now that they know how to be active listeners, it is important that they know how to recognize important facts. Give examples such as, the teacher's voice will change, they may say it louder or slower to show that it is something important to write down. Another thing the teacher might do is saying things like, "the main point", or "the biggest reason". If the teacher writes something on the board is something they would want to include in their notes. They might even want to mark the information with a star or highlight so when they go over their notes later they will know it was important.
5. Hand out the outline for the next activity. Let the group know that you will be reading a passage and they will need to listen and fill out the outline as you read.

6. Go over the outline and see what notes they took. Let them know that this outline was to help them recognize important facts from unnecessary information.

7. Next hand out the abbreviations paper. Ask them if they have seen or used these before. Explain how these allow them to take notes faster and make it easier to read so they are not writing messy. Tell them they can make up some of their own, but they need to remember what it means. Let them write some on the sheet if they can think of any.

8. End the group with positive feedback about the group participation and answer any questions they may have.
Draw Me

Adapted from: Study Smart by Gary Abbamont
Poodles

Overview

The Poodle is a breed of dog. The poodle breed is found officially in toy, miniature, and standard sizes, with many coat colors. Originally bred as a type of water dog, the poodle is skillful in many dog sports, including agility, obedience, tracking, and even herding. Poodles have taken top honors in many conformation shows, including "Best in Show" at the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show in 1991 and 2002, and at the World Dog Show in 2007 and 2010.

Characteristics

The poodle is a very active, intelligent and elegant dog, squarely built, and well proportioned. The eyes should be very dark, oval in shape, and having an alert and intelligent expression. The ears should hang close to the head, set at, or slightly below eye level. The coat should be of naturally harsh texture, dense throughout.

Temperament

Otherwise notable is this breed's keen sense for instinctual behavior. In particular, marking and hunting drives are more readily observable than in most other breeds. Even Toys will point birds. Classified as highly energetic, poodles can also get bored fairly easily and have been known to get creative about finding mischief. Poodles like to be in the center of things and are easily trained to do astonishing tricks involving both brains and agility. They have performed in circuses for centuries, beginning in Europe, and have been part of the Ringling Circus in its various forms from its inception.

From: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poodle
Outline

I. Sizes of the Poodle Breed
   A. 
   B. 
   C. 

II. Poodle Sports
   A. 
   B. 
   C. 
   D. 

III. Characteristics
   A. 
   B. Eyes
      1. 
      2. 
      3. 
   C. 
   D. Coat
      1. 
      2. 

IV. Temperament
   A. 
   B. 
   C. 

82
### Abbreviations

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<td>@</td>
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<td>/</td>
<td>or (this/that = this or that)</td>
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<td>↗</td>
<td>increasing, increased, increases, rises</td>
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<tr>
<td>↘</td>
<td>decreasing, decreased, decreases, falls</td>
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<tr>
<td>=</td>
<td>equal to, is</td>
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<td>≠</td>
<td>not equal to, is not</td>
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<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
<td>ditto (means the same as the words immediately above the ditto marks)</td>
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<td>w/o</td>
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<td>w/i</td>
<td>within</td>
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<td>etc.</td>
<td>et cetera, so forth</td>
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<td>b/c</td>
<td>because</td>
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<td>esp.</td>
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<td>ex.</td>
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<td>to, two, too</td>
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**Week 6: How to Read a Textbook**

Goals:

1. To help students stay focused while reading.
2. To teach students how to highlight.
3. To teach students how to review.

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to stay focused while reading.
2. Students will learn how to highlight so they can focus on major points.
3. Students will learn how to review material they have read so they can study for tests.

Materials:

1. Using a Textbook handout, textbooks for each student and pencils.
2. Passage worksheet and highlighters.

Procedures:

1. Start group with asking students what is a way to stay focused while reading? One way would be taking notes, another would be highlighting. Ask if there are any important points already highlighted for them in their books. If they haven't already mentioned it, remind them about bold and italic words. Explain how these are important terms or ideas to know.
2. Give the group the Using a Textbook handout and a textbook. After they have answered the questions make sure to go over their answers to make sure they understand the different parts of a textbook.
3. Next, handout the passage worksheet from last week. This time the students will be highlighting the main points. Go over their papers and make sure they highlighted the main points. If they highlighted too much, let them know. Explain how highlighting too much will give them extra reading and can waste time.

4. Now ask the students what they usually do after they finish reading. Remind them this is a good time to review. Let them know that when they review they are locking the information into their head. Ask how they review. Mention that when they review they should go over the chapter is to look at the subheadings, and to themselves, restate what the main point is for that section in their own words. Look at the bold and italic words and remember what they mean. Let them know that they should do this 3 days before a test, each day.

5. End the group with positive feedback about the group participation and answer any questions they may have.
Using a Textbook

1. Where is the table of contents?

2. How many chapters are in this book?

3. On what page does the glossary begin?

4. What page is the index on?

5. What is the title to chapter 6?

6. What is the difference between a hyphen (–) and a comma (,) when looking at page numbers in an index?

7. How are the words arranged in a glossary?

8. In chapter 6, what is the title of the chapter and the title of the first sub-heading?
Poodles

Overview

The Poodle is a breed of dog. The poodle breed is found officially in toy, miniature, and standard sizes, with many coat colors. Originally bred as a type of water dog, the poodle is skillful in many dog sports, including agility, obedience, tracking, and even herding. Poodles have taken top honors in many conformation shows, including "Best in Show" at the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show in 1991 and 2002, and at the World Dog Show in 2007 and 2010.

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From: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poodle
Week 7: Study Smart

Goals:

1. To help students find a place to study.
2. To teach students about their personal learning style.
3. To explain to students how to organize their study time.
4. To teach students how to study for tests.
5. To teach students the parts of a paper.

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to find a good place to study.
2. Students will be able to use their personal learning style to learn in class.
3. Students will learn how to organize their time so they can study.
4. Students will learn different methods they can use to study for tests.
5. Students will learn the parts of a paper.

Materials:

1. Personal learning style worksheet and pencils.
2. Time log worksheet.

Procedure:

1. Begin with asking students where they study. Ask them what a good studying spot would be like. Ask them what makes their study spots a good place to study. Explain how they should have good light, quiet, and a place to sit and write.
2. Give the students the Personal learning style hand out. Go over it with them and explain what it means. Explain how knowing this can help in the classroom.
3. Give each student a time log again. Tell them a scenario. Today is Monday, but you have a test on Friday for science. Write down the hours you would use to study for the test. Go over the time with them. Let them know they should be studying at least three days before for one hour each day. While studying they should always give themselves more time then they think they will need, break big things into smaller parts, and take short breaks when they need them.

4. Ask students how they study for tests. Explain that there are many ways to study. Tell them about making flash cards, review a chapter by summarizing all the sections, review notes, have someone test you, use acronyms (PEMDAS), uses images to trigger your mind.

5. Ask students how they would write a paper. Go through how it would be done,
   - Choose a topic
   - Gather information
   - Make an outline, with an introduction, body and conclusion.
   - Write a rough draft
   - Read your paper out loud
   - Have someone else read it
   - Write a final draft
   - Check for spelling and grammatical errors
   - Make sure your paper looks neat, and turn it in on time

6. End the group with positive feedback about the group participation and answer any questions they may have.
# Personal Learning Style

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<td>I remember something better if I write it down.</td>
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<td>I need to take a lot of study breaks.</td>
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<td>Writing is difficult for me.</td>
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<td>If there is music or noise around, I can't concentrate.</td>
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<td>I learn well by using math cubes, counters and acting things out.</td>
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<td>I like to hear directions told to me rather than reading them.</td>
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<td>I hum or talk to myself when I am bored.</td>
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<td>To remember something better, I get a picture of it in my head.</td>
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<td>I used my hands when I am talking.</td>
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<td>I learn well by reading things out loud.</td>
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<td>I like to see what I am learning better than hearing it explained.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I like to do things myself to really understand things.</td>
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From: Academic Advisement Program by Lisa King, pg. 58.
Personal Learning Styles

The three basic learning styles are:

**Visual Learning**: Learning through seeing

**Auditory Learning**: Learning through hearing

**Kinesthetic Learning**: Learning through movement or touch

Tips for learning styles:

**Visual Learning**: Use a different colors divider for each class, use post it notes, check lists, and reminder cards. Use pictures, charts, graphs to reinforce information.

**Auditory Learning**: Leave reminders on voice memos, say daily schedule and tasks out loud, study in groups or with a partner, use audio books, read out loud.

**Kinesthetic Learning**: use computers to do written work; play with stress ball when doing homework, highlight main ideas.

Adapted from: Academic Advisement by Lisa King
Fill in the log using the codes: HW= homework, C= in class, P= talking on the phone, texting, shopping, using the computer and playing, TV= watching television, S=sleeping. If you need to, make up some of your own.

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Adapted from: AVID.org
**Week 8: Be a Good Test Taker, Reduce Test Anxiety, and Asking for Help**

Goals:

1. To teach students how to answer test questions.
2. To explain the importance of studying early.
3. To teach students relaxation techniques.
4. To explain the importance of asking for help.

Objectives:

1. Students will learn how to answer test questions.
2. Students will learn the importance of studying early for tests.
3. Students will learn relaxation techniques to help with test anxiety.
4. Students will learn the importance of asking for help.

Materials:

1. Test tips worksheet.

Procedures:

1. Start by asking students how they answer multiple choice questions. Do they just work through all of them, or do they save the hard ones for last.
2. Handout the Test Tips worksheet. Go over all the tips and ask students if they have any of their own to add.
3. Ask students if they have a test on Friday, when do they start to study. If students mention the night before, ask them if they would be less stressed out if they studied before that. Mention how studying early allows for more study time so they will be more prepared, and it will also give them the opportunity to ask questions about topics they don't fully understand.
4. Ask students what stresses them out before a test. Explain how studying early helps relieve stress, getting a good night's sleep, and eating breakfast.

5. Next have them practice some relaxation techniques.

   - Tell them to try the turtle. They will pull their shoulders to their head and tighten up every muscle for a minute, then let go. This is to help tension.
   - Next try a breathing technique. Ask students to close their eyes, take a deep breath, hold it for a few seconds, then release. Tell students to concentrate on their breath as they do this for a few more breaths.
   - Next, show them a visualization technique. Tell them to close their eyes again. This time they will imagine themselves in a place where they are happy and calm. After a few minutes ask them to open their eyes.

6. Ask students who they ask for help with homework. Do they ever come to school and ask teachers to explain questions they didn't understand. Again, explain that if they study early they can ask teachers for help with concepts they don't understand before taking the test. If the teacher thinks they need more help, they can refer students to after school help or some other way a student can get help if they can't attend.

7. End the group with positive feedback about the group participation and answer any questions they may have.
Test Tips

- On multiple choice tests, mark the hard questions with a dot or star and come back to them later. Answer the ones you know first so you don’t waste your time.
- When you are taking a multiple choice test, try to come up with the answer in your head before you look at the answers.
- If you’re not sure of an answer, cross out the ones you know are wrong and then make an educated guess.
- Always read all the answer choices before answering, don’t pick the first one that sounds right.

- When taking a test with essay questions, answer the easy one first so you will have more time to think about the difficult ones.
- Before you answer, brainstorm, draw a diagram, or outline.

- When taking a math test, try drawing a picture to help you answer.
- Always show your work, you may get partial credit even if you have the wrong answer.

- On open book tests, try to highlight notes and important information before the test so you don’t waste time.
- Try to use sticky notes to mark pages with important information.
- If the teacher allows, write important facts on a separate piece of paper to use during the test.

- After you finish, if you have time, check your answers.

- Once you get a test back, go over the answers. See what your mistakes are so you can improve them for the next test.

Adapted from: How to Get Good Grades by Linda O’Brien
Week 9: Career Exploration

Goals:

1. To teach students how to explore careers.
2. To help students find careers of interest.
3. To help students learn about money.

Objectives:

1. Students will learn how to explore possible careers and what they need to get a job in that field.
2. Students will be able to identify a career they interested in.
3. Student will learn about expenses and what it takes to survive on their own.

Materials:

1. A computer, paper and pencils.
2. "What does it take" worksheet, computer and pencils.
3. A computer.

Procedures:

1. Ask students if they have thought about college. Ask if they know what college they would like to go to. Ask them if they have thought about what career they would like to have.
2. Next using a computer log on to https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-started. Go through the website with the group. Start with "start with you". Have students take out a piece of paper and answer the questions. After they have answered them, ask them what career they think they would like to explore. Next, click on "start with careers"
and have the group decide what to start with. Here they will see interests and what careers fall into the same category as those interests.

3. Next, handout the "What Does It Take" worksheet. Help students research the information. Use https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/majors-careers or http://www.bls.gov/ooh/ to research or any other site you know that contains all the necessary information. Go over these sheets with the students and explain what each section means so they fully understand it. Let students know that they can access these with their parents at home too.

4. Next you would want to go to http://www.californiarealitycheck.com/ here you will be able to show students how they would live on the career they choose. It will show the annual salary and expenses they can expect to have.

5. End the group with positive feedback about the group participation and answer any questions they may have. Remind students the next meeting is the last one.
What Does It Take

Use https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/majors-careers or http://www.bls.gov/ooh/ to research or any other site you know to research the requirements and skills for the career you are interested in.

EXAMPLE

I want to be a(n): Middle school Teacher.

Education Requirements: At least a Bachelor's degree.

Related majors: Education, Psychology, Special Education.

Skills I need: A curious, creative communicator who is patient, flexible, and tireless. I should also be compassionate as well as sensitive to the needs of others.

Job Outlook: Jobs for teachers at most levels to grow as fast as the average for all careers through 2020.

Compensation: Average earning for Middle school (excluding career/technical education): $55,780.

How to make high school count:  
- Get a well-rounded education, especially if you want to teach in an elementary school, where academic teachers cover all subjects, from English to math.
- Notice the way your teachers teach. Which methods work? Do different teachers have different styles?
- Join a peer-tutoring program.
I want to be a(n) ________________________________

Education Requirements:____________________________________________

Related majors:____________________________________________________

Skills I need:_______________________________________________________

Job Outlook: _______________________________________________________

Compensation: __________________________________________________________________

How to make high school count:______________________________________

Adapted from: http://www.learningforlife.org
Week 10: Last Meeting

Goals:

1. To close the group and answer any questions from students.

Objectives:

1. Students will have learned study skills and Post-test will show some improvement.

2. Students will be able to ask any questions they may have.

Materials:

1. Post test and pencils.

2. Motivational quotes.

Procedures:

1. Greet students and let them know that this is the last meeting. Ask if they have any questions or feedback they would like to share.

2. Give each member a Post-test. Explain to them there is no right or wrong answer, and they will be given a 5 minutes to complete it.

3. Handout the Useful Words worksheet and read them with the students.

4. Thank the students for participating in group. Again ask if they have any questions. Ask them what they have learned from group.

5. End with positive feedback about all their hard work in group.
### Post-Test

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<tr>
<th>Always</th>
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<td>Study every day.</td>
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<td>Create a quiet place at home to study or do homework.</td>
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<td>Turn off the phone, TV, and other devices that may disturb you when studying.</td>
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<td>Listen to music or other things while doing homework or studying.</td>
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<td>Take regular breaks while studying or doing homework.</td>
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<td>Study early (don’t wait until the last minute).</td>
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<td>Study the hardest things first and then move on to easier ones.</td>
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<td>Spend the most time on things that you find most difficult.</td>
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<td>Ask for help if you are struggling with something.</td>
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<td>Take notes as you study, using your own words.</td>
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<td>Organize your work in a binder or folder.</td>
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<td>Look at your notes every night.</td>
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<td>Quiz yourself about what you just studied.</td>
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<td>Write homework down in your planner.</td>
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Useful Words

- The will to win, the desire to succeed, the urge to reach your full potential... these are the keys that will unlock the door to personal excellence.
  - Confucius.

- Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time.
  - Thomas A. Edison

- If you can dream it, you can do it.
  - Walt Disney

- Yesterday is not ours to recover, but tomorrow is ours to win or lose.
  - Lyndon Johnson

- Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts.
  - Winston Churchill

- By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.
  - Benjamin Franklin
References


