*Improving Organizational Skills*

**Advisory Goal:** Students will increase their academic success through the monitoring of attendance, grades and discipline issues.

**Purpose:** Students will become aware of the benefits of improving their own note taking and study skills and steps they can take to accomplish this.

**Time:** One Academic Activity Period

**Materials:** Make copies of the handouts (or show on overhead): Note taking quiz, Study Habits Survey, and “What Can You Do?” Pen/pencil

**Activity: S**tudents will complete a survey and choose particular steps that they can take to improve their study and note taking skills. Students will then get together in pairs or groups of three and discuss their answers and formulate some answers for the “What Can You Do?” worksheet

* Distribute the handouts.
* Give the students 20 minutes or so to complete the surveys.
* Ask students to discuss some of their responses.

**Reflection:** Ask the students:

* Did have enough to do for this activity?
* Would you like to see more activities such as this one?

**Reflection:** Ask the teacher:

* Was the time appropriate for the activity?
* Did you have all the materials you needed, should others be listed?
* Did the students take part?
* Did the students seem to enjoy and/or get the purpose of the activity?

TAKING GOOD NOTES IN CLASS QUIZ

Instructions: Read each question carefully. Then print the letter of the correct answer on the line next to the number of the question.

\_\_\_\_\_1. How much of the information you hear will be forgotten within 24 hours?

* 1. 20% to 30%
  2. 40% to 60%
  3. 70% to 90%

\_\_\_\_\_2. How much more do students who take notes retain than students who don't take notes?

* 1. 2 to 7 times more
  2. There's no difference

\_\_\_\_\_3. To keep your notes from each class organized, you should:

* 1. Have only one notebook so that you can keep everything together.
  2. Have separate notebooks for each subject.
  3. Use loose sheets of paper so that you don't have too much to carry to class.

\_\_\_\_\_4. How should you take good notes?

* 1. Write everything your teacher says in class so that you don't forget anything.
  2. It is best to just sit and listen carefully to your teacher and then write everything you can remember at the end of the class.
  3. Don’t try to write everything, just the most important ideas

Answers to the Quiz

*1) How much of the information you hear will be forgotten within 24 hours?*

**Answer:** 70% to 90%.

**Rationale:** People forget much of what they hear for a number of reasons. For example, sometimes we cannot concentrate. Sometimes there is a great deal of material that is difficult and complicated. Information will be especially difficult to remember if it is new, and we have not learned it before. Therefore, taking good notes is important.

*2) How much more do students who take notes learn than students who don't take notes?*

**Answer:** Two to seven times more

**Rationale:** This is true because we can review or reexamine this information many times after we first hear about it. It is important to recognize that just taking notes doesn’t guarantee that we will remember or even learn the information. To improve your learning, you must take notes and review them. The more you review them, the better the chances are that you will remember and learn the information.

*3) How do you keep your notes from each class organized?*

**Answer:** Use separate notebooks for each subject.

**Rationale:** The best way to take good notes is by using separate notebooks for each subject. Use a different color for each class. This will allow you to remain organized, an important and simple strategy for becoming a more successful student.

*4) How do you take good notes?*

**Answer:** Don't try to write everything; write the most important ideas.

**Rationale:** Every time you write information you want to remember, you have to stop listening. Most people can't concentrate on what they write and listen at the same time to what is being said. That's why it is important to learn to write only the main ideas. If you are unsure of the main points, ask your teacher for help.

Study Habit Survey

Read the items below and place a check mark by the ones that you think you need to improve upon or be more consistent with. Remember that you may check as many as you want.

\_\_\_\_\_1. I have a study schedule.

\_\_\_\_\_2. I have a quiet place to study.

\_\_\_\_\_3. I write down my assignments in my planner daily.

\_\_\_\_\_4. I put my class papers in a separate folder or separate section of a binder.

\_\_\_\_\_5. I prioritize and do the urgent ones first.

\_\_\_\_\_6. I keep a list of the assignments due and an estimate of how much time it will take to complete each one.

\_\_\_\_\_7. I finish homework before I watch television on school nights.

\_\_\_\_\_8. I take advantage of the tutoring programs and other opportunities for help in my school.

\_\_\_\_\_9. I have a study buddy or study group.

\_\_\_\_\_10. I am honest with myself about why I didn’t prepare well for a test.

\_\_\_\_\_11. I use a method like SPQ3R or some other method when reading texts.

\_\_\_\_\_12. I try to concentrate and take good notes.

\_\_\_\_\_13. I rewrite my notes or reorganize (highlight key concepts etc.) them each night after class.

\_\_\_\_\_15. I read my notes and I review the text before each test.

\_\_\_\_\_16. I ask for clarification from teachers when I need it.

\_\_\_\_\_17. I can work without distractions in the place that I usually study.

\_\_\_\_\_18. I budget enough time each week to study well.

The list above is not an exhaustive one. Reading it may remind you of something else that you can do to study better. In the space below write down one thing that you will concentrate on during the next few weeks in order to improve your ability to study. Copy it somewhere else in a notebook or day planner to remind yourself to follow through with it.

What Can You Do?

Getting organized and changing habits takes real effort. It is a paradox, but the extra effort actually makes life easier and more enjoyable. The key is to identify one thing at a time and make the effort to improve that one thing. The struggle to stay on top of your responsibilities will be a lifelong one. You will face a number of new situations and jobs in the future. In just about every case, the habits and organizational skills you learn in school will empower you to meet these challenges, but only if you put the effort in now to acquire them.

Get together in groups of two or three and come up with an answer for each of the following:

If getting yourself organized is a struggle, how can you improve?

If you were a parent, at what age would you begin to teach study skills?

How much time should high school teachers spend on teaching study skills? Explain your answer.

How long do you think it takes to acquire good study and note taking skills?