

## ACADEMIC INTERVENTIONS

### My student doesn't do homework!

**STRATEGIES:** The following strategies have been used successfully by teachers in our school. Don't hesitate to ask any I-Team member if you have questions about implementing them.

- 1. Assignment Book/Calendars:** Make sure that student is clearly recording all assignments to ensure the student understands what homework is to be accomplished. Calendars can help break up long term assignments and enable students to budget their time more effectively.
- 2. After School Homework Help:** Many students do not have a proper learning environment at home to complete work. Providing a student with time after school -- either one-on-one with a teacher or in Homework Club -- could provide an effective place for a student to complete homework.
- 3. Parental Contact/Communication:** Like an assignment book, parent contact can make sure that students arrive home with a clear understanding of work to be accomplished. Parent contact can take the form of a phone call, e-mail, or progress reports.
- 4. Vary Homework for Appropriateness:** Many students struggle with homework that is not targeted to their ability level, their interest level, or their learning style. If a student is struggling completing assignments, consider offering them varied homework. This may include differentiating the following: length of the assignment; difficulty of the assignment; format of the assignment. Making success on homework more obtainable can help students develop the attitude and skills necessary to succeed on more difficult assignments.
- 5. Alternative Homework Assignments/Student Choice:** To meet the needs of various types of learners, consider differentiating your homework across learning modalities and providing students a choice. This can help empower the student and allow him/her the opportunity to accomplish the task in a manner compatible with their strengths.
- 6. Homework/Incentive Chart:** An incentive chart provides a tangible measure of your student's progress completing homework. When creating a chart, meet with the student to determine an acceptable level of performance to target. This target should vary depending on student need. For example, a student not finishing homework might have a target of 15 minutes of homework a night in a particular subject. Once a target is established, the chart is a daily "check-in" monitoring the student's progress meeting that goal. Not only does the chart offer frequent opportunities for teacher/student interaction (and opportunities to praise!), but it can also include an extrinsic incentive to motivate the student. Usually, charts should run for a predetermined time period, after which its' effectiveness should be evaluated. Targets can then be modified to offer a greater challenge to the student.
- 7. Homework Contract:** Like an incentive chart, a contract concerning homework completion formalizes an agreement between teacher and student regarding the student's work. It offers a goal for improvement and an incentive to accomplish it. It is an effective intervention for a student who needs extrinsic motivation but does NOT require day to day monitoring.
- 8. Allow additional time to complete homework:** Sometimes, homework inconsistency can be traced to a simple problem - lack of time. Granting more time to a student obviously alleviates this problem and can allow the student to get back on track.
- 9. Peer Tutor/Mentor:** Sometimes, modeling successful approaches to completing homework can help turn a struggling student around. Pairing your student with another student -- a classmate, Peer Leader, or even High School Student -- not only shows the student the proper way to approach homework but also utilizes positive peer pressure to encourage your student to complete work. Tutors -- if available -- can be arranged through the Student Assistance Coordinator.

### My student does poorly on tests!

**STRATEGIES:** We all struggle with students who perform poorly on our assessments. The following is a list of some common steps you can take to try and help any student maximize their performance on written assessments.

1. **Read Test Questions to Student:** Sometimes, poor performance on test is only an outward sign of a reading or processing problem that prevents the student from understanding the test's expectations. Reading the test question can provide clarity and clear expectations, enabling the student to fully demonstrate the greatest extent of their knowledge.
2. **Allow Oral Responses from Student/Diversify Assessments:** Sometimes, students perform poorly on assessments not because they don't know the material, but because they cannot express their knowledge due to poor processing or writing skills. Allowing the student to explain their answers orally offers the student the opportunity to truly express all they know on the given topic. Offering assessments other than written will also afford that opportunity.
3. **Extended Time:** Students who process information slowly might only be in need of more time to improve their test performance.
4. **Provide Study Guides/Review Sessions:** Both methods can provide a framework for student studying, helping students who have poor study skills to focus on important ideas in a timely fashion.
5. **Teach Test Taking Strategies:** Prior to the test, help prepare your struggling student by either previewing the test or reviewing test taking strategies. If previewing, remind the student of the test format and the expectations on the test. This will allow them to enter the test more confidently and can also help them prepare more effectively. Don't forget to emphasize study strategies at this point. Suggesting a specific study strategy that will help with your specific test will give the student direction as he/she prepares.
6. **Break-up Test:** Students who struggle taking tests often start a test with good intentions. However, they lack the mental fortitude to maintain focus throughout the test. Breaking the test into parts -- either by allowing a break (drink or bathroom) or by breaking the test up over several days -- can allow the student to apply their best effort to all parts. Hopefully, this will result in improved performance.
7. **Isolate Test Taker:** Students who are easily distracted can find anything to focus on other than the test. Isolating this type of student -- allowing them to take the test in a corner of the room or a small group room -- can improve the student's focus and increase their chance to find success on the assessment.
8. **Peer Tutor:** Assigning students with poor study skills a "study buddy" models good study habits and provides social pressure to prepare for a test.
9. **Reduce Emphasis on Competition/Focus on Individual Improvement:** Students accustomed to receiving poor grades will often respond more positively to an assessment that measures their individual improvement as opposed their grade relative to their peers. This allows them to achieve personal success even if they are not succeeding relative to the class. Such success could turn to greater overall success in the long run. Targets for personal improvement should be quantified in a student/teacher conference and incorporated into the plan. Remember to update the expectations to allow for continued growth.

## My Student is disorganized!

**STRATEGIES:** Disorganized students can be a teacher's worst nightmare. We have all spent countless hours cleaning notebooks and lockers for our messy friends. Sometimes, unfortunately, literally cleaning up the mess left behind by a disorganized student only solves the problem in the short-term. The locker or notebook is now clean, but doesn't remedy the cause of the disorganization. Next time you "clean-up" a disorganized student, try some of the strategies listed below to help them develop their own organizational skills.

1. **Periodic Clean-Outs:** The best part of the job! Get a big trash bag and get rid of everything the student doesn't need. Give them a chance to start with a "clean-slate". Make sure these clean-outs happen more than once. If the student knows that the locker or notebook will be checked again, it gives greater motivation to keep it clean.
2. **Provide Materials:** Before setting high organizational expectations, make sure the student has everything they need to stay organized. If you need supplies, stop by the SAC office or guidance. We can get notebooks, folders, etc., for students who really need them.
3. **Peer Buddy/Mentor:** Like any other skill, sometimes a good model helps kids realize what it takes to be successfully organized. Seat your disorganized student near an organized student and empower the organized student to help their untidy friend get on top of their pile. Don't forget that you, too, could serve as the model. Show the student your system for staying on top of your work and they will see the long

term relevancy of staying organized.

4. **Organization Check-list/Assignment Book:** Disorganized lockers or notebooks are often indicative a student's disorganized days. Helping them to order their days can help them organized everything else. Try posting a list of required materials for each class on their schedule in their locker or assignment book. You could also put organizational "hints" in the same place. The options are vast and varied but they are guaranteed to make organization a bigger priority.
5. **Organization "Time":** If at all possible, allow time during class for organizational purposes. A couple of minutes at the beginning or end of the period can help all of your students stay organized.
6. **Organizational Check-Points:** In the hustle and bustle of a busy day, sometimes disorganized students are simply "rushed" students. Allowing extra time at critical times of the day can allow the disorganized student to find a place for everything.
7. **Behavioral Chart:** Disorganization can be changed like any other behavior using a focused modification plan. Pick a reasonable "organizational" goal with your student. Chart/Monitor their progress and reward them if the expectations are met. Adjust expectations after a defined period of time and your student should slowly move towards an more organized life.

### **My Student doesn't seem to care"**

**STRATEGIES:** The teenage years can often be hallmarked by apathy and indifference. Motivating these students can be a middle school teacher's biggest challenge. If you have a student that doesn't care, see if the below interventions help.

1. **Physical Investigation:** Sometimes mental apathy is rooted in physiological issues. Talk to the school nurse to try to find out if the student has a medical history. Try to discover the student's eating and sleeping habits to see if they might be contributing to the lack of energy.
2. **Identify Student Interests:** Talk to the student to find out his/her interests in and out of school. If you can connect to the student on another level, the student might enhance the students attitude in class. There are several interest surveys available through the I-Team to help you discover your students interests.
3. **Mentor:** Procuring a mentor from SAC not only provides a positive adult role model, but, hopefully, a confidant who can discover the source of the student's malaise.
4. **Promote School Involvement:** Involving a student in an after-school activity that relates to his/her interests can often lead to a change of attitude during school.
5. **Behavior Modification:** Counter apathy by constructing a behavioral modification plan that rewards appropriate involvement in class. As with all behavior mod plans, pick a precise goal and be sure to evaluate progress in a timely fashion.
6. **Evaluate the Appropriateness of the Task:** If the task is either too easy or too hard, students may not put effort into it. Make sure that the student is correctly challenged to ensure his/her best attitude.
7. **Give the Student Responsibilities:** Having the student perform a job can boost self-confidence, encouraging them to focus on daily class activities.
8. **Investigate Substance Abuse:** Unfortunately, apathy and disinterest can be a sign of drug or alcohol abuse. If you suspect any kind of substance abuse contact the SAC office or the nurse as soon as possible.