



'Academic Enabler' Observational Checklists: A Method to Measure Students' Ability to Manage Their Own Learning

Student academic success requires more than content knowledge or mastery of a collection of cognitive strategies. Academic accomplishment depends also on a set of ancillary skills and attributes called 'academic enablers' (DiPerna, 2006). Examples of academic enablers include:

- Study skills
- Homework completion
- Cooperative learning skills
- Organization
- Independent seatwork

Because academic enablers are often described as broad skill sets, however, they can be challenging to define in clear, specific, measurable terms. A useful method for defining a global academic enabling skill is to break it down into a checklist of component sub-skills--a process known as 'discrete categorization' (Kazdin, 1989). An observer can then use the checklist to note whether a student successfully displays each of the sub-skills.

Observational checklists that define academic enabling skills have several uses in Response to Intervention:

- Classroom teachers can use these skills checklists as convenient tools to assess whether a student possesses the minimum 'starter set' of academic enabling skills needed for classroom success.
- Teachers or tutors can share examples of academic-enabler skills checklists with students, training them in each of the sub-skills and encouraging them to use the checklists independently to take greater responsibility for their own learning.
- Teachers or other observers can use the academic enabler checklists periodically to monitor student progress during interventions--assessing formatively whether the student is using more of the sub-skills.

A collection of the most common global 'academic enabler' skills in ready-made checklist format appear below.



| Study Skills. The student: | | | | |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> takes complete, organized class notes in legible form and maintains them in one accessible note book | Poor 1 | Fair 2 | Good 3 | NA – |
| <input type="checkbox"/> reviews class notes frequently (e.g., after each class) to ensure understanding | Poor 1 | Fair 2 | Good 3 | NA – |
| <input type="checkbox"/> When reviewing notes, uses highlighters, margin notes, or other strategies to note questions or areas of confusion for later review with teacher or tutor | Poor 1 | Fair 2 | Good 3 | NA – |
| <input type="checkbox"/> follows an efficient strategy to study for tests and quizzes | Poor 1 | Fair 2 | Good 3 | NA – |
| <input type="checkbox"/> allocates enough time to study for tests and quizzes | Poor 1 | Fair 2 | Good 3 | NA – |
| <input type="checkbox"/> is willing to seek help from the teacher to answer questions or clear up areas of confusion | Poor 1 | Fair 2 | Good 3 | NA – |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | | | | |
| Comments: _____ _____ | | | | |

| Organization Skills. The student: | | | | |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> arrives to class on time. | Poor 1 | Fair 2 | Good 3 | NA – |
| <input type="checkbox"/> maintains organization of locker to allow student to efficiently store and retrieve needed books, assignments, work materials, and personal belongings | Poor 1 | Fair 2 | Good 3 | NA – |
| <input type="checkbox"/> maintains organization of backpack or book bag to allow student to efficiently store and retrieve needed books, assignments, work materials, and personal belongings | Poor 1 | Fair 2 | Good 3 | NA – |
| <input type="checkbox"/> brings to class the necessary work materials expected for the course (e.g., pen, paper, calculator, etc.) | Poor 1 | Fair 2 | Good 3 | NA – |
| <input type="checkbox"/> is efficient in switching work materials when transitioning from one in-class learning activity to another | Poor 1 | Fair 2 | Good 3 | NA – |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | Poor 1 | Fair 2 | Good 3 | NA – |
| Comments: _____ _____ | | | | |



| Homework Completion. The student: | | | | |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> writes down homework assignments accurately and completely | Poor 1 | Fair 2 | Good 3 | NA – |
| <input type="checkbox"/> makes use of available time in school (e.g., study halls, homeroom) to work on homework | Poor 1 | Fair 2 | Good 3 | NA – |
| <input type="checkbox"/> has an organized, non-distracting workspace available at home to do homework | Poor 1 | Fair 2 | Good 3 | NA – |
| <input type="checkbox"/> creates a work plan before starting homework (e.g., sequencing the order in which assignments are to be completed; selecting the most challenging assignment to start first when energy and concentration are highest) | Poor 1 | Fair 2 | Good 3 | NA – |
| <input type="checkbox"/> when completing homework, uses highlighters, margin notes, or other strategies to note questions or areas of confusion for later review with teacher or tutor | Poor 1 | Fair 2 | Good 3 | NA – |
| <input type="checkbox"/> turns in homework on time | Poor 1 | Fair 2 | Good 3 | NA – |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | Poor 1 | Fair 2 | Good 3 | NA – |
| Comments: _____ _____ | | | | |

| Cooperative Learning Skills. The student: | | | | |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> participates in class discussion | Poor 1 | Fair 2 | Good 3 | NA – |
| <input type="checkbox"/> gets along with others during group/pair activities | Poor 1 | Fair 2 | Good 3 | NA – |
| <input type="checkbox"/> participates fully in group/pair activities | Poor 1 | Fair 2 | Good 3 | NA – |
| <input type="checkbox"/> does his or her 'fair share' of work during group/pair activities | Poor 1 | Fair 2 | Good 3 | NA – |
| <input type="checkbox"/> is willing to take a leadership position during group/pair activities | Poor 1 | Fair 2 | Good 3 | NA – |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | Poor 1 | Fair 2 | Good 3 | NA – |
| Comments: _____ _____ | | | | |



| Independent Seat Work. The student: | | | | |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> has necessary work materials for the assignment | Poor 1 | Fair 2 | Good 3 | NA – |
| <input type="checkbox"/> is on-task during the assignment at a level typical for students in the class | Poor 1 | Fair 2 | Good 3 | NA – |
| <input type="checkbox"/> refrains from distracting behaviors (e.g., talking with peers without permission, pen tapping, vocalizations such as loud sighs or mumbling, etc.) | Poor 1 | Fair 2 | Good 3 | NA – |
| <input type="checkbox"/> recognizes when he or she needs teacher assistance and is willing to that assistance | Poor 1 | Fair 2 | Good 3 | NA – |
| <input type="checkbox"/> requests teacher assistance in an appropriate manner | Poor 1 | Fair 2 | Good 3 | NA – |
| <input type="checkbox"/> requests assistance from the teacher only when really needed | Poor 1 | Fair 2 | Good 3 | NA – |
| <input type="checkbox"/> if finished with the independent assignment before time expires, uses remaining time to check work or engage in other academic activity allowed by teacher | Poor 1 | Fair 2 | Good 3 | NA – |
| <input type="checkbox"/> takes care in completing work—as evidenced by the quality of the finished assignment | Poor 1 | Fair 2 | Good 3 | NA – |
| <input type="checkbox"/> is reliable in turning in in-class assignments | Poor 1 | Fair 2 | Good 3 | NA – |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | Poor 1 | Fair 2 | Good 3 | NA – |
| Comments: _____ _____ | | | | |

| Motivation. The student: | | | | |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> has a positive sense of 'self-efficacy' about the academic content area (self-efficacy can be defined as the confidence that one can be successful in the academic discipline or subject matter if one puts forth reasonable effort) | Poor 1 | Fair 2 | Good 3 | NA – |
| <input type="checkbox"/> displays some apparent <i>intrinsic</i> motivation to engage in course work (e.g., is motivated by topics and subject matter discussed or covered in the course; finds the act of working on course assignments to be reinforcing in its own right) | Poor 1 | Fair 2 | Good 3 | NA – |
| <input type="checkbox"/> displays apparent <i>extrinsic</i> motivation to engage in course work (e.g., is motivated by grades, praise, public recognition of achievement, access to privileges such as sports eligibility, or other rewarding outcomes) | Poor 1 | Fair 2 | Good 3 | NA – |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | Poor 1 | Fair 2 | Good 3 | NA – |



Comments:

References

DiPerna, J. C. (2006). Academic enablers and student achievement: Implications for assessment and intervention services in the schools. *Psychology in the Schools, 43*, 7-17.

Kazdin, A. E. (1989). *Behavior modification in applied settings* (4th ed.). Pacific Gove, CA: Brooks/Cole..