

Learning Activity: Four planner activities – Effective learners, study areas, time management, prioritising tasks.

Learning Behaviours: Recognising independent learning, getting started, breaking down time and planning a strategy

Teacher: KDJ **DATE:** 4 /4/06

Class: 7A English

Discussion Tool: *Worksheets, planner recording*

Planner Activity No 1

Get the students to complete the "Are you an effective learner" quiz
Be sure to stress that this doesn't indicate how smart or dumb you are but how efficiently and effectively we use the resources around us to help us study.

Also stress that the aim of the test is to help us improve our study habits.

When they have finished get them to add up their score and record it in the Study Habit activities section of their planner.

Tell them that we will be doing this again at the start of the second semester to see if we have improved and become a more effective learner.

Don't worry about cheats, this is not about winning or losing it's about improvement.

ARE YOU AN EFFECTIVE LEARNER?

This "question and answer" test may help you spot where you might start to improve your study skills. Just answer **YES** or **NO**.

1. Do you plan, make a rough copy of, and check your homework or assignment before copying it out neatly?
2. Do you voluntarily revise a subject even if exams or tests are not due for some time?
3. If you are having problems with a subject, do you talk it over with your teacher as soon as you can?
4. Do you do complete your homework or assignment in advance of its deadline?
5. Do you have a place at home where you can study without being distracted?
6. Do you take notice and act upon the comments and suggestions your teacher might make about your work?
7. Do you keep a record of the "language" (terminology) used in each subject, especially if that subject is science?
8. Do you use the library, internet or other learning aids regularly to help with your studies?
9. Have you always kept your exercise books or folders in good order and up to date?
10. Can you easily spot the main points of a topic when reading a text book and make extra notes from them?
11. Do you plan your use of time by writing down what you have to do and by when?
12. Do you know ways of improving your memory when revising?
13. Do you plan ahead for tests or examinations?
14. Are you able to forget about schoolwork once you have finished studying?

Read on to find out what your score means...

"YES" TO AT LEAST TEN QUESTIONS:

You are well on your way to becoming an effective learner. Use the rest of this guide to help you spot the weaknesses you may still have.

LESS THAN TEN "YES" ANSWERS?:

No problem - read this guide very carefully, follow the advice, and you, too, can be an effective learner!

Planner Activity No 2

Discuss with your class the importance of a study area go through all the information below

Place special emphasis on the highlighted section.

Get the students to think about a space in their home that will best suit their needs.

Assure the students that they not every one will be able to find the ideal place for them to study but they can find the best available space in the house possible

Get the students to write the study area in Study Habit activities section of their planner.

Setting up a study area

will help you get into the "study habit".

If you always work in this one place your brain will begin to switch into "study mode" as soon as you sit down. In other words, you "activate" your ability to concentrate. In an ideal world the study area would be:

**QUIET
FREE OF DISTRACTIONS
COMFORTABLE
WELL LIT AND VENTILATED**

In the real world the first two are difficult to achieve! There is no ideal place to study, only one in which **you** are able to study. This is a very individual place.

Firstly, decide what your study needs are.

Do you need silence or some background noise?

Do you study best when sitting or lying down?

Do you prefer the room light or direct light from a table-lamp?

The choices are entirely up to you.

Secondly, once you have decided upon your needs, **claim your territory!**

When setting up your workplace you will need to organise your materials so that they are **ALWAYS** at hand. There is nothing worse than interrupting study to find something that should have been there already. You will definitely need a bookshelf for books and notes and a container or drawer for things such as stationery.

IF YOU MIGHT NEED IT, IT SHOULD BE THERE!!

It is also helpful to have a large noticeboard in front of your study area to pin timetables, short notes, "find-outs" and "must-do's". It will also be an ideal place to put memory aids so that they are always in sight.

Finally, **keep it tidy and organised!** If you always have to search for materials you will waste valuable time and your concentration will fade.

In fact, make it very clear to **everyone** who may use that room that your study area is sacred - if something then goes missing or runs out then you only have yourself to blame.

KEEP IT EQUIPPED - KEEP IT TIDY - KEEP USING IT!

A few words about music...

It is perfectly OK to listen to music while you are studying. But choose carefully!

Educational psychologists have discovered that music with a rhythm of **60 beats per minute** actually **helps** you learn!!

However, most contemporary music has a rhythm of 100 - 140 beats per minute which **lowers** your brain's ability to retain information.

Don't believe it? Try it...

For your information **Classical Baroque** music has the correct rhythm of 60 beats per minute or so.



Planner Activity No 3

Go through as much of the information that you feel is relevant for your group.

You may want to complete the table suggest, you may not.

It is important that the students understand that they should organize their time.

Explain to them that if they are organized they will be able to complete much more in week than if they aren't.

Once they have done this get them to fill out "my Home Study" plan in Study habits activities section of their planner.

Student may just want to nominate a time that they can and will set aside for study.

If they are finding this difficult to do try the method below which I feel is a better way to complete this activity.

Take in some photocopies of the time table and get the students to "black out" the times they can not possibly do any study. Times that they have commitments, e.g. sport training, part time jobs, family commitments etc. You may want to colour code these

Then get the students to look at the space they have blank and pick times that they will dedicate as study times.

If students have no blanks get them to look at the commitments they already have and try and pick some that they could cut back on.

Prioritise!!!!!!

It's Important at the end of this that we get the parents to sign this. Follow this up because it is important and beneficial to get the parents involved.

Getting Organised

"If I spent as much time doing the things I worry about getting done as I spend worrying about doing them, I wouldn't have time to have anything to worry about."
Beryl Phizer

Those people who find schoolwork easy are those who can **organise** their work:

They are able to work on their own; they can fit their work to a flexible timetable; they are willing to stick to it. Wise use of time is the key to success - and not just in terms of schoolwork. Your time must be divided up in many other directions. For example, how much time do you devote to the following?

Draw up a table like this, complete it, and see.

Activity	Hours per week
School	
Homework	
Part-time jobs	
Household chores	
Sport	
Relaxation	
Sleep	
Meals (including snacks!)	
Other activities?	
TOTAL	

"So what was your total?....."

There are, of course, **168** hours in a week! How is **YOUR** time divided between

important and **unimportant**

useful and **useless**

productive and **unproductive**

In fact, **ALL** of the activities listed above should be given time in a well-planned timetable.

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Time	Saturday
4:30							
5:00							
5:30							
6:00							
6:30							
7:00							Sunday
7:30							
8:00							
8:30							
9:00							
9:30							

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Time	Saturday
4:30							
5:00							
5:30							
6:00							
6:30							
7:00							Sunday
7:30							
8:00							
8:30							
9:00							
9:30							

Activity 4

Go through the information on Working Out Priorities.

Get the students to copy out the highlighted sections into the appropriate section of the Study Habit activities section of their planner.

WORKING OUT PRIORITIES

Priorities can be divided up into:

URGENT - must be done **now**.

IMPORTANT - must be done **soon**.

UNIMPORTANT - must be done **eventually**.

There is, of course, a lot of overlap so you might also list the things you have to do only in order of importance - the top one or two becoming urgent.

Keep a diary and a pencil handy to record things as they crop up.

You could also use a card index, or even a computerised database, whatever you feel you can work with.

If you find that more than two items are urgent, then you are the victim of bad planning - do it better next time!!

MOST OF ALL

BE FLEXIBLE - LEARN TO FIT THINGS IN

and

**BE EQUIPPED - DIARY, TIMETABLES,
CARD INDEX, ETC.**

Another way of setting priorities is to use the **4D system**:

DUMP anything that does not need to be done at all...

DELAY what you can't dump...

DESIGNATE a time for what you can't delay...

and then.....

DO IT!

Student Comments

Student reflections are in their Portland Secondary College planner.

Some responses are listed below.

Activity One – Most scores ranged between 8 and 14 with the most common No responses being for voluntarily revising work, taking notice and acting upon comments by the teacher about work, keeping a record of the language used in a subject and planning time effectively.

Activity Two – The two most common responses were ‘my own room’ (12) and the kitchen table (7). Three students wrote in front of the T.V. and one wrote they just didn’t do homework at all. Most people rated their own room highly although some students commented that they sometimes got distracted by things in their room and the kitchen table workers said it was okay as long as the rest of the kitchen was quiet. Other students commented that the noise of the T.V. was very distracting and they hated doing homework if younger brothers and sisters were mucking around or being noisy.

Activity Three – This was the most popular activity completed. Students enjoyed blocking out their time and many realised that while they felt they did homework all the time it was clear from their timetables that they did not. Many students commented that they hadn’t realised just how much time they spent a week just watching t.v or playing on the computer. Students have agreed to try and keep a record of how much homework they are completing each week.

Activity Four – After reading through the sheet and discussing it students are going to try and prioritise their after school time to fit in their homework.

Teacher Journal

What is my intention? What do I want to achieve?

I was concerned that students weren’t handing in homework because they weren’t recognising the importance of doing it. I wanted to run the students through a number of activities over a series of lessons to help them realise that they needed to complete their work and submit it on time, and that the starting point for this was to take responsibility for planning their time and getting started on the set task. I particularly wanted to look at some of the blockers against homework as well as reminding them again about the learning behaviours we were going to be working on.

What happened?

We worked through four activities. The first sheet asked them to reflect on their independent learner study habits and to answer yes or no to a number of questions. This sheet helped focus our discussion on a good learner and gave them some language to use when talking about learning. We spent quite some time talking about the reasons why they couldn’t answer yes to every question and directed them towards some of the blockers. They identified two main areas – not enough time and no good place to study. We then moved into looking at good places to study, the use of music and the number of distractions and students identified a place in their home where they could study quietly. After completing sheet two many students confirmed they don’t have a good place of

their own to study. We then addressed the other main blocker – not enough time. I gave the students a grid sheet which asked them to allocate their time from 4:30 to 9:30pm each day and their weekends. Students had to record how they spent each half hour. At the end of this exercise students had to tally up how many hours a week they spent sleeping, eating, at school, homework, relaxing, part time job, etc. Once this was done I asked students to decide what part of their week was unproductive or unimportant time. We then discussed their responses with most students arguing that none or very little of their time was unproductive. This discussion then led to sheet four about prioritising tasks and time so that homework gets done. At then end of these four activities I hoped students would have a better understanding of the importance of organising their time to fit homework in.

What was my role?

Giving instructions and reading through sheets as well as directing discussion.

What feelings and senses surround the event?

Students enjoyed this activity. They are now trying to keep a record of the amount of homework they do each week. I was pretty happy with the activities as they were fairly straight forward but still got across the point I wanted to make.

What do I think the students got out of the event?

I think students got a better understanding that to do well they have to make time for their homework and that it is important to be organised.

What might I change next time around?

Next time I think I would do this activity earlier in the year and not leave it until week eight. That way I might have avoided some of the problems that arose over lack of homework.