Success Center

Directed Learning Activity (DLA)

Developing a College Mindset

F003.1

Directed Learning Activity – Developing a College Mindset

Description: ***Whether you've just finished high school, are returning to college after a long break from formal education, or furthering your studies for you own personal or professional growth, your success in college classes begins with developing an educational maturity and a college mindset.***

Many students are hyper-focused on their grades and the points they need to earn in order to pass a class. While it's true that points and grades get you to the next level of classes, students with college mindsets understand that "just trying to get by" will not help them at the next academic level or in their future career. College-minded students focus on mastering the material presented in courses. This leads to not only passing grades, but also increased confidence and readiness for whatever comes next – academically or professionally.

Step One: Understanding the Six iFALCON Habits of Mind

Successful students possess a set of practices, behaviors, and attitudes that Cerritos College refers to as the iFALCON Habits of Mind. Each of the capital letters in the acronym *iFALCON – F*, *A*, *L*, *C*, *O*, and *N* – stands for one of the six Habits of Mind that have been identified as the behaviors most commonly practiced by successful students. This Directed Learning Activity (DLA) will first introduce you to the six Habits of Mind and then help you to understand how you can cultivate them in order to develop a college mindset.

***F*ocus:** Successful students **focus** on the work to be done. They are academically self-disciplined, spending appropriate amounts of time studying. They come to class on time, prepared. They complete all assignments and turn them in on time. They complete their programs.

Why should students develop focus? Focus helps students concentrate on accomplishing one task at a time.

What skills are needed to develop focus? Most often, the habits associated with focus are sitting in a quiet place free of distractions with all the necessary tools available to complete a task.

How do you plan to practice focus this semester? Write down one action you could take to practice this habit.

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***A*dvance:** Successful students **advance** by constantly striving to improve. They embrace life-long learning. They understand that developing expertise in a subject – as well as thinking skills and learning skills – requires a long-term commitment.

Why should students strive to advance? Students should understand that advancing is the true measure of their academic achievement.

What skills are needed to advance? Setting goals along the way, learning from mistakes, and committing to change are the habits associated with advancing.

How do you plan to advance this semester? Write down one action you could take to practice this habit.

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***L*ink-up:** Successful students **link-up** with the academic community. They get involved. They get to know their professors, study in groups, and surround themselves with focused classmates and mentors. They use college resources and programs to help with their learning.

Why should students link-up? Students link-up to improve their learning. Other students' strengths, as well as the expertise of faculty and the resources of campus support services, enhance their educational experiences.

What skills are needed to link-up? Habits associated with linking-up are creating study groups, going to faculty office hours, asking questions outside of class, and seeking out help from tutors in the Success Center.

How do you plan to link-up this semester? Write down one action you could take to practice this habit.

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***C*omprehend:** Successful students study for **comprehension**. They seek to truly understand course content rather than simply complete requirements. They ask questions to gain understanding, and reflect on what they are learning – as well as on *if* they are learning.

Why should students strive to comprehend? Learning is about developing deep knowledge. Comprehending material presented in a course is the benchmark of learning. Transferring this learning to real-life situations is the key to success outside of college.

What skills are needed to comprehend? Repeating concepts and applying them to situations within, and outside of, class; studying without an attached assignment; and teaching concepts to others are all habits one needs to practice in order to comprehend.

How do you plan to increase your comprehension this semester? Write down one action you could take to practice this habit.

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***O*rganize:** Successful students are **organized**. They plan to succeed. They have an educational goal. They focus on their educational purposes, maintain a specific education plan, and choose classes with an intentional learning purpose in mind.

Why should students organize? Students in college have more paperwork than any other previous academic environment. Keeping track of all the materials and the time needed to complete activities associated with classes is essential for success in college.

What skills are needed to organize? Managing time, making lists/goals, and keeping notebooks and other materials needed for learning easily accessible are habits one needs to develop in order to become organized.

How do you plan to improve your organization this semester? Write down one action you could take to practice this habit.

***N*ew Ideas:** Successful students embrace **new ideas**. They are curious, seeking out new perspectives. They transfer concepts to new contexts in order to solve problems. They integrate concepts and knowledge to form greater personal understandings.

Why should students embrace new ideas? Students often need new ideas to solve problems. In college, this means that learning from mistakes and trying different approaches will lead to success. Being open to other opinions on material is another growth outcome.

What skills are needed to develop new ideas? Habits associated with embracing new ideas are listening open-mindedly to other opinions and trying something different when a previous behavior or action does not work.

How do you plan to embrace new ideas this semester? Write down one action you could take to practice this habit.

Step Two: Self-Assessing Your Use of the iFALCON Habits of Mind

Now that you have been introduced to the six habits practiced by successful college students, you will take an assessment designed to measure how thoroughly you use them in your studies.

Please complete the "Do You FALCON?" checklist (Attachment 1), which will help you to identify the good habits you have developed that will likely lead to academic success as well as the bad habits that could conceivably limit your success in college.

When you have completed Attachment 1, write a brief reflection concerning your present study habits. Were you surprised by your results on the self-assessment? What changes do you want to make? What areas are you going to work on first? If you are not certain of what each behavior entails, go back to the Step One and re-read the definition. This time, highlight, make notes next to, or star (*) behaviors you want to improve.

Step Three: Monitoring Habits Using the College Mindset Tally

This next exercise encourages you to monitor your own behaviors to help you develop good habits.

Read the directions on the first page of "The College Mindset Tally" (Attachment 2) as well as the examples of the six iFALCON Habits of Mind.

On the second page, you will find a Tally sheet for two weeks of school. To "tally" simply means to make a mark like this (|) each time you demonstrate a particular habit. Of course, you won't do this immediately, but try to find a minute or two at the end of each day for the next two weeks to reflect on your behavior. For example, in the box "Arrived at class 5 minutes early," you might remember you attended three classes that day, and you were early to each one. You would the make three marks in the box, like this: |||. Try to leave enough room to fill in for five days of school.

For the purposes of this DLA, fill in the first week's tally based on habits you have shown so far this week. After reflecting on your responses, write down goals for the following week. Hopefully, after consciously keeping track of your positive behaviors for a couple of weeks, you will begin to practice them without recording them, and they will become habits.

PRINT STUDENT NAME **STUDENT #**

Tutor Feedback:

_____ The student wrote and discussed six actions to be taken – one for each of the iFALCON Habits of Mind.

_____ The student completed the "Do You FALCON?" self-assessment and discussed his/her personal reflection with the instructor/tutor.

_____ The student filled-in one week's worth of data on "The College Mindset Tally" and discussed their personal goals for the next week with the instructor/tutor.

Additional Comments: _____

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PRINT INSTRUCTOR/TUTOR NAME **DATE**

INSTRUCTOR/TUTOR SIGNATURE