



Academic Self-Regulation Program to Improve the Way Students Study and Learn

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Self-regulated learning is a dynamic and self-directed process that integrates a learner's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to establish and achieve their learning goals (Schunk, 2008; Zimmerman, 1998). Learners with a higher level of self-regulation are more likely to perform well academically compared to those with lower levels of self-regulation (McCormick, 2003; Zimmerman, 1998). Self-regulated learners possess a strong sense of academic self-efficacy, or belief in their academic abilities, particularly concerning the specific goals they set for their learning (Zimmerman & Cleary, 2006). In self-regulated learning, students actively engage in various essential processes that help them become more confident, self-aware, and strategic, enabling them to take control of their learning (Santos & Alliprandini, 2023; Schunk, 2008; Suhandoko & Hsu, 2020; van Houten-Schat et al., 2018; Zimmerman, 1998). Goal setting, self-monitoring, self-assessment, strategy selection and use, self-reflection, and adaptation and adjustment all contribute to learners becoming more autonomous and effective in their studies, enhancing their ability to achieve academic success (Cazan, 2020; Suhandoko & Hsu, 2020). Improving self-regulated learning enables students to become better learners, enhance their academic performance, and strengthen their clinical competencies (McCormick, 2003; Suhandoko & Hsu, 2020; van Houten-Schat et al., 2018).

An Academic Self-Regulation (ASR) Program was developed and implemented as an intervention for first-generation students at an occupational therapy program to improve their self-regulated learning; this dissertation research was completed in partial fulfillment of a Doctor of Education (EdD) at Johns Hopkins University. Research during that time reviewed the program's process and outcomes evaluation. Overall, the participants reported that the program improved their self-regulated learning, knowledge and use of learning strategies, and confidence in their academic abilities (Ham, 2023).

Later the ASR Program was implemented again for students at Touro University School of Health Sciences (SHS) in the Manhattan campus. The goal was to enhance their self-regulated learning and improve the way they study and learn. The ASR Program has been approved for all students within SHS and was first launched in Spring 2024. At the time, the program was not part of any research, and all health science students at the school were invited to participate. Participation was voluntary for the students.



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Self-Regulated Learning Model

Zimmerman's (1998) self-regulated learning model guided the ASR Program. This model emphasizes the processes through which learners can direct and manage their own learning, consisting of three key phases: forethought, performance, and self-reflection. The forethought phase involves goal setting and analyzing the task. The performance phase focuses on implementing these strategies while self-monitoring progress. In the self-reflection phase, learners evaluate their performance by assessing which strategies were effective, which were not, and what actions they can take moving forward. Zimmerman's model underscores that self-regulation is a critical component of effective learning. Furthermore, the principles of self-regulated learning align closely with the core concepts of occupational therapy, highlighting the importance of goal setting, self-reflection, and strategy use to enhance engagement in both learning and daily occupations (Ham, 2025).

Academic Self-Regulation (ASR) Program

The ASR Program consisted of six one-hour, remote sessions held weekly. The series of sessions entailed components of Zimmerman's self-regulated learning model: forethought, performance, and self-reflection. Each session opened with a self-reflection on previously learned learning strategies, allowing participants to evaluate their effectiveness. Essential components included discussions on self-assessing behaviors, effective learning and retention strategies, goal setting using the SMART framework, and self-reflection. Throughout the sessions, participants were encouraged to share their insights and receive feedback from both peers and the facilitator, creating a supportive and collaborative learning atmosphere.

A key theme across the sessions was the focus on ongoing self-reflection and adaptation of learning strategies. Each session concluded with goal setting, where participants outlined specific academic goals to accomplish before the next session, alongside a commitment to applying at least two strategies and monitoring their progress. The sessions also progressively introduced various strategies, such as time management, test-taking strategies, self-monitoring, and metacognitive awareness, while emphasizing the importance of active participation in the learning process. By the final session, participants engaged in a review of all the strategies covered, allowing them to integrate their learning and make well-informed adjustments as they continue. Table 1 outlines the details of each session.

Table 1

Academic Self-Regulation (ASR) Program

Session 1

- Introduce concepts related to self-regulated learning.
- Self-assess your learning strategies/study skills and engage in group discussion.
- Analyze the task.
- Purposeful break.
- Cognitive strategies such as comprehension strategies and strategies to retain & recall information.
- Academic goal setting: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound (SMART) goal framework.
- Create 1-2 academic goals to accomplish by the next session, sharing them with peers and the facilitator for feedback and support.
- Implement at least 2 of the learning strategies by the next session and self-monitor your progress.

Session 2

- Reflect upon your use of the learning strategies, whether you had achieved your goals from the previous session, what strategies worked for you, what you could have done differently, and what adjustments you will make accordingly for the next session.
- Engage in discussion with each other and the facilitator by sharing your personal experiences.
- Strategies to retain & recall information and become more proactive in your learning as a student.
- Purposeful break.
- Create 1-2 academic goals to accomplish by the next session, sharing them with peers and the facilitator for feedback and support.
- Implement at least 2 of the learning strategies by the next session and self-monitor your progress.

Session 3

- Reflect upon your use of the learning strategies, whether you had achieved your goals from the previous session, what strategies worked for you, what you could have done differently, and what adjustments you will make accordingly for the next session.
- Engage in discussion with each other and the facilitator by sharing your personal experiences.
- Strategies to retain & recall information and increase metacognitive awareness.
- Purposeful break.
- Create 1-2 academic goals to accomplish by the next session, sharing them with peers and the facilitator for feedback and support.

- Implement at least 2 of the learning strategies by the next session and self-monitor your progress.

Session 4

- Reflect upon your use of the learning strategies, whether you had achieved your goals from the previous session, what strategies worked for you, what you could have done differently, and what adjustments you will make accordingly for the next session.
- Engage in discussion with each other and the facilitator by sharing your personal experiences.
- Time and study environment management strategies.
- Purposeful break.
- Create 1-2 academic goals to accomplish by the next session, sharing them with peers and the facilitator for feedback and support.
- Implement at least 2 of the learning strategies by the next session and self-monitor your progress.

Session 5

- Reflect upon your use of the learning strategies, whether you had achieved your goals from the previous session, what strategies worked for you, what you could have done differently, and what adjustments you will make accordingly for the next session.
- Engage in discussion with each other and the facilitator by sharing your personal experiences.
- Test taking strategies and strategies to improve motivation.
- Purposeful break.
- Create 1-2 academic goals to accomplish by the next session, sharing them with peers and the facilitator for feedback and support.
- Implement at least 2 of the learning strategies by the next session and self-monitor your progress.

Session 6

- Reflect upon your use of the learning strategies, whether you had achieved your goals from the previous session, what strategies worked for you, what you could have done differently, and what adjustments you will make going forward. Engage in discussion with each other and the facilitator by sharing your personal experiences.
- Brief review of all the learning strategies that have been discussed in the previous sessions.
- Purposeful break.
- Create at least 1-2 academic goals to be accomplished going forward. Share with each other and the facilitator to receive feedback and support. Continue implementing the strategies in your learning.
- Tie it all together and discussion.

Throughout the sessions, participants shared their appreciation for the various academic self-regulation strategies introduced, expressing that they found them useful for their learning. One student remarked, “I found the program improved my study habits and made me more confident and reflective on how to approach assignments and exams.” Another student noted that learning about the “study strategies, time management techniques, and purposeful breaks” was especially helpful and increased her organization and motivation as a student. Additionally, one student revealed that she found “positive self-talk, motivating oneself and others, and changing the physical and social environment” to be applicable and advantageous strategies for her studies. Students also indicated that learning about test-taking strategies was very informative. As one student summarized about the ASR program:

The ASR program has been beneficial for me because I knew I needed better study habits and approaches to completing assignments. Before I was procrastinating constantly and studying last minute, and it caused me a lot of stress and anxiety. Through the ASR program, I have become more self-aware of my self-destructive habits. I have begun to analyze tasks in front of me, assignments or tests, and set goals for myself. I have tried to get more organized, and I have implemented some of the strategies we discussed in the program.

Conclusion and Implications

The ASR program helps students become more self-regulated in their learning, enhance their study habits, and improve their process of learning. Self-regulated learning enhances clinical competence through goal setting, self-reflection, critical thinking, and adaptability; improves information retention and academic self-efficacy; boosts academic engagement and time management; and promotes academic success while supporting diverse learning needs. The program’s emphasis on self-monitoring, self-awareness, and self-directed learning mirrors the therapeutic process in occupational therapy, where clients are supported in setting and achieving goals, monitoring progress, engaging in reflection, and modifying strategies as necessary. Integrating an academic self-regulation program or self-regulated learning principles into occupational therapy education empowers students to take charge of their learning, ultimately fostering independence, adaptability, and lifelong learning skills essential for academic and professional growth.

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