ACADEMIC SEMINAR
CODES: 4919-4989

Course Description: The Academic Seminar course is a GPA-weight-bearing elective credit course for graduation. It is designed to facilitate the delivery of specially designed instruction to high school students who have individualized education programs (IEPs) that are developed pursuant to the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

The Academic Seminar course is flexible to allow for individualization based on the academic and functional needs of each student in the course. Students will receive instruction to improve specific skills in core academic subjects (e.g., English Language Arts/ELA and mathematics) and/or functional areas (transition, behavior, executive functioning) and will be assessed on their understanding and ability to apply the taught skills. The academic instruction will be aligned with high school English language arts (ELA) and mathematics standards adopted by the State Board of Education, and the functional instruction will be aligned with the competencies for transition, behavior, and executive functioning described below. It is not expected that during the course, students will receive instruction and be assessed on all high school ELA and math standards and all functional criteria. Rather, students will receive instruction and be assessed on academic and functional skills as identified in the students' IEPs, and the instruction provided will align with the academic standards and/or functional competencies applicable to the individual needs of each student.

Objective: To facilitate the implementation of IEPs and to ensure that students receive appropriate individualized instruction that assists them in accessing the general education curriculum and progressing towards annual IEP and post-secondary transition goals.

Grade Levels: 9-12

Course Credit: 0.5 unit or 1 unit

Prerequisite: None

Resources: Instructional materials from core academic subjects and supplemental materials selected based on individual student academic and functional needs

1. Academic Skills Instruction – Alignment with ELA and Mathematics Standards

The instruction in core academic subjects (e.g., English Language Arts/ELA and mathematics) provided in the Academic Seminar course will be aligned with the ELA and mathematics standards adopted by the State Board of Education and published on the South Carolina Department of Education website. The instruction will be designed to assist students in accessing the general education curriculum and to achieve progress on the annual IEP goals relating to core academic subjects developed by the students' IEP teams.

When instruction is provided on core academic subjects, the course will include assessments selected from general education course materials or appropriate supplemental materials, or assessments specially designed for students based on individual need, to measure the students' understanding of, and ability to apply, the lessons taught during the course. Student grades for the course will be based, in whole or in part, on the results of these assessments. The weight of the assessments in the grade will depend on the specific academic needs of each student and the number and extent of the identified academic and functional needs.

2. Executive Functioning Competencies Instruction

The Executive Functioning Competencies support the knowledge, skills, and characteristics a student should demonstrate in order to meet the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate. These competencies include the cognitive and behavioral processes that allow students to plan, organize, initiate, sustain attention, regulate emotions, and problem-solve effectively in both academic and functional settings.

Based on individual student needs, the student will receive specially designed instruction and demonstrate content knowledge in one or more of the executive functioning competencies.

Instruction will be guided by:

- Explicit connections to at least one executive functioning competency and an identified annual IEP goal and/or transition objective.
- Authentic academic, vocational, or community contexts (e.g., problem solving, planning and organizing for a project).
- Multiple opportunities for practice in real-world or simulated high school/community contexts environments (e.g., managing time to include utilizing checklists and planners/agenda/calendars).
- Differentiated strategies, materials, and pacing to match individual learning profiles, cognitive levels, and executive functioning needs.

Executive Functioning Competencies include:

Planning: The ability to develop a thoughtful strategy before beginning a task in order to work efficiently and stay organized. This includes:

- Creating to-do lists or step-by-step outlines before starting assignments or activities

- Using calendars or schedules to plan ahead and manage deadlines
- Identifying materials, resources, or supports needed to complete tasks
- Breaking larger tasks into smaller, manageable parts
- Reviewing and adjusting the plan as the task progresses to ensure successful completion

Organization: The ability to develop and maintain a system of order that supports efficiency and readiness for learning. This includes:

- Creating and using systems such as folders, binders, or labeled materials to keep work organized
- Using checklists to ensure tasks, assignments, and materials are accounted for
- Keeping a clean, orderly workspace that supports focus and productivity
- Annotating texts or notes to highlight key information and improve understanding
- Routinely reviewing and updating organizational systems to ensure they continue to meet the learner's needs

Task Initiation: The ability to independently begin tasks in a timely and purposeful manner. This includes:

- Starting assignments or activities promptly without unnecessary delay
- Asking questions or seeking clarification when needed to get started
- Gathering necessary materials before beginning a task
- Using routines or cues to support smooth transitions into work
- Demonstrating persistence by remaining engaged once the task has begun

Time Management: The ability to use time effectively in order to complete tasks, meet deadlines, and maintain productivity. This includes:

- Breaking assignments or activities into smaller parts with clear timelines and due dates
- Using timers or visual countdowns to stay on track during work periods
- Applying strategies such as first/then to prioritize tasks and manage expectations
- Estimating how long tasks will take and planning accordingly
- Reflecting on how time was used and making adjustments to improve efficiency

Attention: The ability to sustain focus on a person or task while managing distractions and returning attention when it shifts. This includes:

- Using tools such as highlighters or note-marking to stay engaged with the material
- Creating or accessing a quiet, structured workspace that supports concentration
- Using timers or visual cues to maintain focus during work periods
- Incorporating scheduled breaks to prevent fatigue and support sustained attention
- Practicing strategies to ignore or minimize distractors and refocus when attention drifts

Metacognition: The ability to reflect on one's own thinking, learning, and problem-solving processes to improve understanding and performance. This includes:

- Using graphic organizers to outline thoughts, connect ideas, and monitor comprehension
- Thinking aloud to model reasoning, decision making, or problem-solving steps
- Identifying personal strengths and challenges related to learning tasks
- Engaging in reflection to evaluate what worked well and what could be improved
- Applying insights from reflection to adjust strategies for future learning

Working Memory: The ability to hold information in mind long enough to use it for learning, problem solving, or completing tasks. This includes:

- Using mnemonic devices to remember important steps, sequences, or concepts
- Engaging in rote practice to strengthen retention of key information
- Receiving information through multiple modalities such as visual, auditory, or hands-on methods
- Repeating or rephrasing information to reinforce understanding
- Referring to cues, visuals, or notes to support recall while working

Self-control: The ability to pause, think, and choose responses that support positive behavior and successful engagement. This includes:

- Using breathing techniques or calming strategies to regulate emotions in the moment
- Taking purposeful breaks to reset and return to tasks with improved focus
- Identifying personal triggers and practicing responses that lead to better outcomes

- Using visual or verbal cues to remind oneself to slow down and think before acting
- Reflecting on choices to strengthen self-regulation skills over time

Flexibility: The ability to adapt to changes, shifts in routines, or unexpected situations while maintaining engagement and problem-solving skills. This includes:

- Participating in simulated opportunities to practice handling change without prior notice
- Engaging in role-playing activities to rehearse responses to new or challenging situations
- Practicing perspective taking to understand different viewpoints and adjust reactions
- Using strategies to stay calm and open-minded when routines shift
- Reflecting on how changes were managed and identifying ways to respond even more effectively next time

Perseverance: The ability to persist through challenges, setbacks, or frustrations in order to reach completion and achieve goals. This includes:

- Using positive self-talk to stay motivated during difficult tasks
- Practicing self-advocacy by asking for help or clarification when needed
- Breaking challenging tasks into smaller, manageable steps to maintain momentum
- Reflecting on strategies that helped overcome obstacles and applying them in future situations
- Celebrating successful completion to reinforce resilience and confidence

3. Behavior and Social Competencies Instruction

The Behavioral and Social Competencies support the knowledge, skills and characteristics a student should demonstrate in order to meet the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate. By strengthening self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making, students increase their ability to adapt, persist, collaborate, and act responsibly across academic, career, and community environments.

Based on individual student needs, the student will receive specially designed instruction and demonstrate content knowledge in one or more of the Behavioral and Social Competencies. Instruction will be guided by:

- Explicit connections to at least one behavioral and social competency and an identified annual IEP goal and/or short-term objective.

- Authentic academic or functional contexts (e.g., self-management within a science lab group project).

- Multiple opportunities for practice in real or simulated high school contexts (e.g., managing frustration during group work, making responsible choices in community-based instruction).

- Differentiated strategies, materials, and pacing to match individual learning profiles, cognitive levels, and behavioral needs.

Behavioral and Social Competencies include:

Self-Awareness: The ability to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts. Includes capacities to recognize one's strengths and limitations with a well-grounded sense of confidence and purpose. This includes:

- Identifying personal and linguistic assets

- Identifying one's emotions

- Demonstrating honesty and integrity

- Linking feelings, values, and thoughts

- Experiencing self-efficacy

- Having a growth mindset

- Developing interests and a sense of purpose

Self-Management: The ability to manage one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations and to achieve goals and aspirations. This includes the capacities to delay gratification, manage stress, and feel motivation & agency to accomplish personal/collective goals. This includes:

- Managing one's emotions and self-regulation

- Identifying and using stress-management strategies

- Exhibiting self-discipline and self-motivation

- Setting personal and collective goals

- Using planning and organizational skills

- Showing the courage to take initiative

Social Awareness: The ability to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others. This includes the capacities to feel compassion for others, understand behavior in different settings, and recognize family, school, and community resources and supports. This includes:

- Taking others' perspectives
- Recognizing strengths in others
- Demonstrating empathy and compassion
- Showing concern for the feelings of others
- Understanding and expressing gratitude
- Identifying and understanding social norms
- Recognizing situational demands and opportunities
- Understanding the influences of organizations/systems on behavior
- Demonstrating personal and collective agency

Relationship Skills: The ability to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and to effectively navigate settings with a wide variety of individuals and groups. This includes the ability to communicate clearly, listen actively, cooperate, work collaboratively to problem solve and negotiate conflict constructively, navigate settings with differing demands and opportunities, provide leadership, and seek or offer help when needed. This includes:

- Communicating effectively
- Developing positive relationships
- Demonstrating a global perspective
- Practicing teamwork and collaborative problem-solving
- Resolving conflicts constructively
- Resisting negative social pressure
- Showing leadership in groups
- Seeking or offering support and help when needed
- Standing up for the rights of others

Responsible Decision-Making: The ability to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across a wide variety of situations. This includes the

capacity to consider ethical standards and safety concerns, and to evaluate the benefits and consequences of various actions for personal, social, and collective well-being. This includes:

- Demonstrating curiosity and open-mindedness
- Identifying solutions for personal and social problems
- Learning to make reasoned judgments after analyzing information, data, facts
- Anticipating and evaluating the consequences of one's actions
- Recognizing how critical thinking skills are useful both inside & outside of school
- Reflecting on one's role to promote personal, family, and community well-being
- Evaluating personal, interpersonal, community, and institutional impacts

4. Transition Instruction Incorporating Career Preparation and Self-Determination Competencies

Transition competencies, to include career preparation and self-determination skills, support the knowledge, behaviors, and habits a student should demonstrate to meet the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate and to prepare for successful post-secondary education, employment, and independent living.

Based on individual student needs, the student will receive specially designed instruction and demonstrate content knowledge in one or more of the career preparation and self-determination competencies.

Instruction will be guided by:

- Explicit connections to at least one career preparation or self-determination competency and an identified annual IEP goal and/or transition objective.
- Authentic academic, vocational, or community contexts (e.g., goal setting during work-based learning, self-advocacy during a transition planning meeting, and post-secondary planning).
- Multiple opportunities for practice in real-world, high school, and community environments (e.g., completing job applications, participating in mock interviews, setting and tracking career goals).
- Differentiated strategies, materials, and pacing to match individual learning profiles, interests, and post-secondary goals.

Career Preparation And Self-Determination Competencies Include:

Self-Awareness and Self-Efficacy: The ability to recognize one's strengths, preferences, interests, and limitations and to understand how they relate to personal and career goals. Includes developing confidence and persistence in pursuing desired outcomes. This includes:

- Identifying personal strengths, interests, and areas for growth
- Recognizing the relationship between abilities and potential career paths
- Demonstrating self-confidence when faced with challenges
- Acknowledging personal achievements and using feedback to improve
- Understanding how behavior and effort impact future opportunities

Choice-Making and Decision-Making: The ability to evaluate options, consider consequences, and make informed decisions that lead toward identified post-secondary goals. This includes:

- Comparing alternatives and predicting outcomes
- Making informed choices based on preferences and interests
- Applying problem-solving steps to everyday and career-related situations
- Accepting responsibility for decisions and outcomes
- Demonstrating persistence in carrying out selected choices

Goal setting and Attainment: The ability to set realistic personal, educational, and career goals and to create actionable steps to achieve them. This includes:

- Setting short- and long-term goals related to academics, employment, and independence
- Developing and following a plan of action
- Monitoring progress toward goals and adjusting, as needed
- Using tools such as planners, checklists, or digital portfolios to track achievements
- Celebrating milestones to reinforce motivation and self-direction

Career Awareness and Exploration: The ability to identify career interests, understand job characteristics, and explore work environments that align with strengths and preferences. This includes:

- Identifying a range of careers and occupational clusters
- Exploring workplace expectations, schedules, routines, and salaries
- Participating in career interest inventories and reflection activities

- Engaging in worksite visits, job shadowing, or classroom simulations
- Describing how academic subjects relate to career readiness

Career Development and Self-Advocacy: The ability to apply learned skills in authentic work or community settings while effectively communicating needs, preferences, and rights. This includes:

- Developing a résumé, cover letter, or job application
- Demonstrating employability skills such as punctuality and teamwork
- Communicating strengths and needed supports to supervisors or teachers
- Practicing interview skills and professional communication
- Taking initiative to seek assistance or opportunities for advancement