

Early Intervention:

Teaching Students How to Swim Instead of Throwing Them in and Hoping They Don't Sink

What is an Early Intervention Program?

Numerous studies indicate that students who perform below average in law school are at a greater risk for failing the bar exam. Although it is important to provide bar exam support, students must first have a strong foundation. An early intervention program addresses critical thinking deficiencies in the first year of law school and helps students address those gaps and develop into independent learners. An integral part of an early intervention program is a first-year, for-credit course. This course should promote critical thinking in the context of a doctrinal course (ex: Criminal Law).

Criminal Law Lab (CLL): Akron's Early Intervention Course

CLL is a 2 credit, mastery graded course offered first-year, second semester. Required for students who earn a 2.3 or lower GPA the first semester.

CLL teaches students how to be active learners: not only do they need to monitor their learning of legal concepts and legal reasoning techniques, but also how to do this monitoring. CLL covers material such as formulating a rule of law from one or more legal authorities, placing the rule in a rule-structure, analyzing application of that rule to a set of facts, and organizing a legal discussion of that analysis.

Sample CLL Schedule

Week	Class	Assignment Due
1	Course Intro & Performance Evaluations Legal Analysis & Synthesis, Assessment Essay	Ch 2- all, Ch 3 33-34, Ch 8 159-185
2	Individual Conferences- self-evaluation, learning style, goal setting & time management	Bring completed self-evaluation to individual conference.
3	How to Approach Essays- organization & framework, developing analysis	Assessment Essay (2 copies)
4	How to Approach Essays- multiple issue organization	Finish: Organization & Framework, Developing Analysis Ch 7- pgs 105-149
5	Statutory Interpretation Reverse statutory analysis, how to read a statute	Multi-issue hypo: outline & response
6	Introduction to Essay Forensics	Statutory Interpretation Essay
7	Essay Forensics- assessing your own essay	3 different color highlighters Ch 8- 185-199, Ch 9- 201-233, 245-252
8	Essay Forensics- re-writing your essays	-----
9	Outlining Review Intro to Multiple Choice Ques (M.C. packet 1-10)	Hard copy of a course outline Ch 4 43-79, Ch 7 150-157, Ch 9 234-245
	Spring Break- No Class	-----
10	Issue-spotting essay	M.C. packet: 11-20
11	Multiple Choice Forensics (11-30) Write your own hypo (sm groups)	M.C. packet: 21-30
12	Respond and grade hypos, Exam prep refresher	Ch 5 & 6- all
13	Final Exam	-----
14	Individual Conferences	Essay re-writes due no later than 1pm.

Exam Reviews & Self Evaluations

The key to improving academic performance is to identify the causes. Exam Reviews and Self-Evaluations will assist you in doing this and allow you to make the changes necessary to improve your academic performance.

Exam Reviews

The goal of these meetings is to identify your strengths and weakness so you can build on the strengths and improve weak areas.

Guidelines for a Productive Exam Review:

- To the extent possible, review your exam before the meeting.
- Attend the meetings with one thing in mind: learning from past experience and gaining from professional reaction to your work.
- This is not a time for you to apologize or defend your performance- the professor is not judging you as a person based on your exam.
- Take notes and take an active role in the meetings.
- Ask the professor to go through the exam with you and highlight hits and misses:
 - What issues did you spot/miss?
 - Did you set forth the applicable rule? Was it accurate?
 - Did you develop the analysis, how could you better develop it:
 - What arguments could you have made- policy, logical inferences, counter-args, etc.
 - Did you explore the facts of the question thoroughly in light of the legal principles and issues identified?
 - Are there any areas where you wasted your time?
 - Look for places where you wrote a lot but earned little to no points because you were restating facts, copying quotes, reciting history, background, or general policy- apart from using this to analyze an issue.
 - Was your writing organized- did you display rule/test framework properly and clearly?
 - Did you manage your time well?
 - What aspects of your exam were strong?
 - What preparation and study strategies will help me address weaknesses I displayed?

Self- Evaluation

Use the following questions to help you identify the source(s) of your academic performance issues.

GENERAL STUDY HABITS	YES	NO
Devoted 45+ hours/week outside of class reading, briefing, reviewing, outlining, and answering hypos.		
Studied during most alert times.		
Studied in an effective physical location with few distractions.		
Refrained from emailing, texting, checking FB, surfing the internet, watching TV, or other distractions when studying.		
Familiar with my learning style and study in a way that best suits this style.		
Used my time efficiently and effectively.		

CLASS PREPARATION AND REVIEW	Contracts	Torts	Civ Pro	Property
Regularly completed the assigned reading for class.				
Briefed cases throughout the semester.				
Avoided using canned briefs.				
Usually understood what I read.				
When briefing or taking notes, usually put things in my own words.				
Actively engaged in class, treating each question as though it were asked of me.				
Took effective class notes.				
Refrained from texting, checking email, surfing the internet in class.				
Spent 10 minutes each day reviewing what was covered, correcting notes, etc.				
Went to the professor when I had questions about the material.				
Created my own outlines, flowcharts or flashcards (individually or with a study group).				
Wrote and answered my own hypos.				
Attended ASP study sessions.				
Throughout the semester regularly reviewed the course material- on my own or with someone else.				
Prior to reading week- wrote out responses to practice questions.				
Took advantage of opportunities for self-assessment (practice and feedback from professor, ASP office, peers).				
Limited use of commercial study aids for substantive material.				
Avoided last-minute cram sessions.				

EXAM PREP AND EXAMS	Contracts	Torts	Civ Pro	Property
During reading and exam period- studied at least 30 hours/exam.				
Did not create outlines during reading week.				
Streamlined and condensed outlines as I became more comfortable with the material.				
Study time was fairly evenly divided between reviewing the outline, answering practice questions, and assessing responses.				
Took one or more practice exam under exam conditions.				
Practiced writing responses to questions where the facts or the law were ambiguous.				
Did not cram or stay up all night the night before the exam.				
At the start of the exam I looked over the questions, their point values, and made note of the recommended time limits.				
Followed time limits for each question.				
Understood the exam questions.				
For each essay question- took notes and outlined before writing.				
Resisted the urge to start writing/typing immediately.				
Read the call of the question before the fact pattern.				
Marked important facts on the exam paper and jotted down relevant issues.				
Had enough time to respond to all the questions.				
If you finished early, reviewed work to make sure you covered all issues, used all facts, answered all questions, etc.				

NON-ACADEMIC ISSUES THAT AFFECT LAW SCHOOL PERFORMANCE	YES	NO
I took care of myself- balanced academics with activities and personal interests.		
Kept in touch with family and friends outside of law school.		
I value myself as a person, whatever my grades might be.		
I have a group of law school friends who can help me when things go wrong.		
Exercised or was active on a regular basis.		
Regularly got 6-7 hours of sleep per night.		
For the most part, had a somewhat healthy diet.		
Consumed hyper-caffeinated beverages (i.e., Red Bull) on a regular basis.		
Dealt with stress effectively.		
Struggled with staying motivated through the semester.		
If I experienced any problems, academic or non-academic, I talked it over with a professor, the ASP Director, Dean Thorpe, or other school personnel.		
Kept sight of and reminded self of professional goals.		
Took stock of my skills that will be of value to the legal profession.		
Stable living arrangements (roommate, security, etc.)		
Have my finances under control (didn't run out of money).		
If I have a significant medical condition or disability, I received treatment or appropriate accommodations.		

Tying it All Together

Complete this after you meet with professors, write exam reviews, and take the self-evaluation.

What did I do well?

- Contracts
- Torts
- Civil Procedure
- Property

What did I do poorly?

- Contracts
- Torts
- Civil Procedure
- Property

Look at all exams together and ask:

- Did I do better in certain subjects or certain types of exams? Why?
- What was the most common comment from my professors?
- What was my most common error?

Overall, what did you find most challenging about your first semester of law school?

Based on the above evaluations, list at least one specific thing in each category you can do to improve your academic performance this semester:

General Study Habits:

Class Preparation and Review:

Exam Preparation and Exams:

Non-Academic Issues:

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**Self-Evaluation**

Complete this and bring it to your first meeting with Professor Kelly.

Use the following questions to help you identify the source(s) of your academic performance issues.

| GENERAL STUDY HABITS                                                                                                   | YES | NO |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|----|
| Devoted 45+ hours/week outside of class reading, briefing, reviewing, outlining, and answering hypos.                  |     | X  |
| Studied during most alert times.                                                                                       | X   |    |
| Studied in an effective physical location with few distractions.                                                       |     | X  |
| Refrained from emailing, texting, checking FB, surfing the internet, watching TV, or other distractions when studying. |     | X  |
| Familiar with my learning style and study in a way that best suits this style.                                         | X   |    |
| Used my time efficiently and effectively.                                                                              |     | X  |

| CLASS PREPARATION AND REVIEW                                                                                  | Contracts | Torts | Civ Pro | Property |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-------|---------|----------|
| Regularly completed the assigned reading for class.                                                           | X         | X     |         |          |
| Briefed cases throughout the semester.                                                                        |           |       |         |          |
| Avoided using canned briefs.                                                                                  |           | X     |         |          |
| Usually understood what I read.                                                                               | +         |       |         |          |
| When briefing or taking notes, I usually put things in my own words.                                          | +         | +     |         |          |
| Actively engaged in class, treating each question as though it were asked of me.                              |           |       |         |          |
| Took effective class notes.                                                                                   | +         | X     |         |          |
| Refrained from texting, checking email, surfing the internet in class.                                        | +         | X     |         |          |
| Spent 10 minutes each day reviewing what was covered, correcting notes, etc.                                  |           |       |         |          |
| Went to the professor when I had questions about the material.                                                | +         | +     |         |          |
| Created my own outlines (individually or with a study group).                                                 | +         | +     |         |          |
| Created my own flowcharts or flashcards.                                                                      | X         | +     |         |          |
| Wrote and answered my own hypos.                                                                              |           |       |         |          |
| Attended ASP study sessions.                                                                                  | +         | +     |         |          |
| Throughout the semester regularly reviewed the course material on my own or with someone else.                | +         | +     |         |          |
| Prior to reading week- wrote out responses to practice questions.                                             | +         | +     |         |          |
| Took advantage of opportunities for self-assessment (practice and feedback from professor, ASP office, peer). | +         | +     |         |          |
| Took one or more practice exams under exam conditions.                                                        |           | +     |         |          |
| Limited use of commercial study aids for substantive material.                                                | X         | +     |         |          |
| Avoided last-minute cram sessions.                                                                            |           |       |         |          |

Please rank your first year courses in order of difficulty:

- Most difficult 1 Torts because: trouble "meshing" cases together. "Big Picture"  
↓  
2 ~~Contracts~~ LARW because: Developing analysis  
3 Contracts because:  
4 \_\_\_\_\_ because:  
Least difficult 5 \_\_\_\_\_ because:

Overall, what did you find most challenging about your first semester of law school?

- Writing and articulating full, in-depth answers
- Finding effective study habits
- Time management
- [Need to stop checking FB and texting!]

Based on the above evaluation, list at least one thing in each category you can do to improve your academic performance this semester:

- General Study Habits:
- visit library more frequently
  - review material after each class
  - write down questions
  - read more effectively
- Class Preparation and Review:
- Brief every case
  - make notes about questions I have
  - meet w/ Cravens at least once weekly
  - read ahead time & skim before class
- Exam Preparation and Exams:
- outline before reading week (start about 3 weeks into sem.)
  - use more flash cards
  - MORE HYPOS!!!
- Non-Academic Issues:
- stop bad habits
  - workout 3x/week, 20 min.
  - focus more on school  $\frac{1}{2}$ ; not non academic issues (relationships)

| EXAM PREP AND EXAMS                                                                                                        | Contracts | Torts | Civ Pro | Property |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-------|---------|----------|
| During reading and exam period- studied at least 30 hours/exam.                                                            |           | X     |         |          |
| Did not create outlines during reading week.                                                                               | X         |       |         |          |
| Streamlined and condensed outlines as I became more comfortable with the material.                                         | X         |       |         |          |
| Study time was fairly evenly divided between reviewing the outline, answering practice questions, and assessing responses. | X         |       |         |          |
| Practiced writing responses to questions where the facts or the law were ambiguous.                                        |           | X     |         |          |
| Did not cram or stay up all night the night before the exam.                                                               | X         | X     |         |          |
| At the start of the exam I looked over the questions, their point values, and made note of the recommended time limits.    |           | X     |         |          |
| Followed time limits for each question.                                                                                    | X         |       |         |          |
| Understood the exam questions.                                                                                             | X         |       |         |          |
| For each essay question- took notes and outlined before writing.                                                           | X         |       |         |          |
| Resisted the urge to start writing/typing immediately.                                                                     | X         | X     |         |          |
| Read the call of the question before the fact pattern.                                                                     |           |       |         |          |
| Marked important facts on the exam paper and jotted down relevant issues.                                                  | X         | X     |         |          |
| Had enough time to respond to all the questions.                                                                           | X         |       |         |          |
| If you finished early, reviewed work to make sure you covered all issues, used all facts, answered all questions, etc.     | X         |       |         |          |

| NON-ACADEMIC ISSUES THAT AFFECT LAW SCHOOL PERFORMANCE                                                                                                    | YES | NO |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|----|
| I took care of myself- balanced academics with activities and personal interests.                                                                         | X   |    |
| Kept in touch with family and friends outside of law school.                                                                                              | X   |    |
| I value myself as a person, whatever my grades might be.                                                                                                  |     | X  |
| I have a group of law school friends who can help me when things go wrong.                                                                                | X   |    |
| Exercised or was active on a regular basis.                                                                                                               |     | X  |
| Regularly got 6-7 hours of sleep per night.                                                                                                               | X   |    |
| For the most part, had a somewhat healthy diet.                                                                                                           | X   |    |
| Did not consume hyper-caffeinated beverages (i.e., Red Bull) on a regular basis.                                                                          |     | X  |
| Dealt with stress effectively.                                                                                                                            |     | X  |
| Struggled with staying motivated through the semester.                                                                                                    | X   | X  |
| If you experienced any problems, academic or non-academic, you talked it over with a professor, the ASP Director, Dean Thorpe, or other school personnel. |     | X  |
| Kept sight of and reminded self of professional goals.                                                                                                    | X   |    |
| Took stock of my skills that will be of value to the legal profession.                                                                                    | X   |    |
| Living arrangements are stable (roommate, security, etc.)                                                                                                 | X   |    |
| Have my finances under control (didn't run out of money).                                                                                                 |     | X  |
| If you have a significant medical condition or disability, you received treatment or appropriate accommodations.                                          |     |    |

N/A