Ben Franklin’s Junto
School Counseling Lesson Plan
Grades 9-12
10-15 students—NHS students or volunteer group

Objective: This lesson is designed for a group counseling session to introduce students to Franklin’s Junto and applying it to current civic responsibility, updating the Junto for your own school community.

Wisconsin Comprehensive School Counseling Model:
Standard D: Students will acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and interpersonal skills to understand themselves and appreciate the diverse backgrounds and experiences of others.
Standard E: Students will demonstrate effective decision-making, problem-solving, and goal-setting skills.
Standard F: Students will understand and use safety and wellness skills.

Session:

1. Ice breaker: Students will sit in chairs in a circle. One person will stand in the center. That person will name a club or group in which s/he has participated. Anyone who has also participated in that club/group will exchange spots with someone, leaving someone else in the center. This activity can continue for 7-9 minutes.
2. Counselor will ask students what the goals of some of those clubs/groups were and discuss the value of participating in groups/clubs. Lead discussion to community service/volunteer experiences. Discuss the value of participating in those activities.
3. Show picture of Franklin. Ask students what they know about him. Allow students to share several responses.
4. Explain to students that Franklin also created a Junto was a group of 12 men that met regularly for discussion and self-improvement. They discussed intellectual, personal, business and community topics. These topics lead to serious discussion and community action. The Junto developed Pennsylvania’s first library, volunteer fire department, the first public hospital, police departments and paved streets.
5. Give students Junto Club and Lending Library of Philadelphia, downloaded from the National Humanities Center Resource Toolbox to read before next meeting, choosing 5 questions to answer from Franklin’s Questions for the Junto.

Session Two:

1. Begin session with another ice breaker activity: Give groups of 4 students ten toothpicks and twenty mini marshmallows. Tell students they have 5 minutes to build the tallest tower. When 5 minutes are over, ask students what traits are needed to be successful in group endeavors. (10 minutes)
2. Ask a student to choose one topic from the handout to begin the discussion. Let the discussion naturally flow and guide students to new topics when appropriate.
3. To wrap up this session, discuss with the group what a logical step would be after discussing this topic. Ask students how the discussion will help them in other ways. Ask students to look over the Junto membership questions and have them update them for our group.

Session Three:

1. Begin session by sharing updated membership pledge questions. Come up with 5 new pledge questions all students will answer, then do the pledge with students.
2. Discuss with students that a successful Junto must have thoughtful conversation followed by action. Ask students to discuss current needs they see in the school community, directing the conversation to activities the students would be able to implement. Have the students come up with some ideas to make the improvements they would like to see. Assign students to work on a proposal to the principal for the rest of the group to review during the next meeting.

Sessions Four—on:

Work on the first activity, making sure that it is something the students will have success in implementing. Start small. After students have experienced implementing those changes continue with both school ideas and community development while continuing the discussion aspect, using current events and student-led topics.