

Bronze Level Lesson Plan

Recognizing and Responding to Non-Academic Barriers

Part of the Basic Needs Support Badging Framework

Level Focus: **Learn**

Duration: 60–90 minutes (adaptable)

Audience: Faculty, advisors, coaches, student support professionals, K–12 educators, administrators

I. Purpose

This Bronze-level session builds foundational awareness and first-response capacity for recognizing and responding to non-academic barriers that affect student success.

Participants will:

- Understand the scope of basic needs insecurity
 - Recognize early warning signs
 - Practice supportive first-response language
 - Identify referral pathways
 - Commit to one immediate action step
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II. Learning Outcomes (Bronze Competencies)

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Describe common non-academic barriers affecting students in their context.
2. Identify at least three early indicators that a student may be struggling.
3. Use supportive, non-judgmental first-response language.
4. Distinguish between support and over-functioning.
5. Identify appropriate institutional or community referral pathways.
6. Complete a structured reflection to solidify practice.

Prepared by Dr. Karen McGregor. For more information and support using this, please send me a message on linked in: www.linkedin.com/in/dr-karen-mcgregor-

III. Foundational Framework

The McGregor Context Lens

Adapted from ecological development theory.

Students operate within overlapping systems:

- Individual student
- Family & caregiving roles
- Employment
- Institutional systems
- Broader social and economic conditions

Bronze Principle:

We cannot change all systems — but we can scan them and act where we have influence.

Additional Anchors:

- Challenge + Support must coexist
- Shine light on behaviors you want to see
- Begin with the end in mind (retention, dignity, belonging)

Link to McGregor Lens video: <https://youtu.be/UOzPol6dtlw>

Link to Challenge + Support video https://youtu.be/A7w_FDqig-0

References:

IV. Lesson Structure

Segment 1 — Awareness: The Reality of Basic Needs (15–20 minutes)

Objective: Ground participants in cross-sector data and lived realities.

Suggested Activity:

- Present 3–5 high-impact statistics relevant to your sector.

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- Invite participants to reflect on what surprises them.

Data to Find Locally:

- Food insecurity rates (institutional or state-level)
- Housing instability data
- FAFSA Pell eligibility percentage
- % students working 20+ hours
- % students who are caregivers
- McKinney-Vento data (K–12)
- Retention disparities for students with financial hardship

Discussion Prompt:

What does this look like here?

Segment 2 — Recognizing Early Signals (15–20 minutes)

Objective: Build recognition skills.

Common Early Indicators:

- Sudden drop in engagement
- Missed assignments without explanation
- Changes in communication tone
- References to work, caregiving, instability
- Financial stress language
- Inconsistent attendance
- Technology instability

Activity Option:

“Family Feud” style reveal or small group brainstorm:

What are the earliest signs you’ve noticed?

Bronze Takeaway:

Recognition is the first act of care.

Segment 3 — Supportive Conversations (15–20 minutes)

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Objective: Practice first-response language.

Principles:

- Ask, don't assume
- Validate effort
- Normalize help-seeking
- Avoid promises you cannot keep
- You are the bridge, not the solution

Sample Opening Lines:

- "I'm really glad you told me."
- "That sounds like a lot to carry."
- "Let's see what support might be available."
- "You're not alone in this."

Practice:

Use short disclosure scenarios.

Ask participants to craft a first sentence only.

Reflection Prompt:

What felt easy? What felt uncomfortable?

Segment 4 — Boundaries & Referral (15–20 minutes)

Objective: Clarify roles and referral pathways.

Bronze Distinction:

Support ≠ solving

Listening ≠ counseling

Referring ≠ abandoning

National Anchors (transferable across sectors):

- FindHelp.org
- 211
- Feeding America
- Local nonprofit coalitions
- School/district McKinney-Vento liaison

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- Campus resource hubs

Adaptation Exercise:

Ask participants to identify:

1. Who handles emergency aid?
2. Who manages food access?
3. Who supports housing concerns?
4. Who provides mental health support?
5. Who coordinates follow-up?
6. What is the formal referral process?
7. What is the informal “community of care”?

Prompt:

List 3 resources you can name today without Googling.

V. Institutional Customization Section

For Facilitators Preparing This Lesson:

Complete this before delivery:

- Identify top 3 local student barriers.
- Clarify referral pathways (step-by-step).
- Confirm privacy considerations (FERPA, mandatory reporting).
- Identify your campus/district “community of care.”
- Determine escalation protocol.
- Locate a centralized resource directory (or create one).

Optional Add:

Include your institution’s emergency grant, pantry, counseling, and advising contact info.

VI. Bronze Reflection Requirement

Participants complete a short written reflection:

1. One signal I will watch for differently.
2. One sentence I will use differently.

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3. One resource I will learn or share this month.
4. One colleague I will discuss this with.

Badge Criteria:

Completion of reflection + attendance or module participation.

VII. Assessment & Evidence of Learning

Bronze-level evidence may include:

- Reflection submission
- Participation in discussion
- Completion of local resource mapping exercise
- Completion of referral pathway identification

No mastery test required at Bronze level.

VIII. Materials Needed

- Slide deck
- Scenario cards (optional)
- Reflection form (paper or QR)
- List of institutional resources
- National resource list
- Optional short McGregor Lens video

IX. Instructor Notes

Keep tone:

- Human-centered
- Non-shaming
- Action-oriented
- Realistic about limits

Avoid:

- Overloading with statistics
- Turning into counseling training
- Overpromising institutional solutions

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Remember:

Bronze is awareness + recognition of early warning signs + referral readiness.

Silver and beyond deepen skill and systems engagement.