Leveraging digital tools to lower the barrier to re-entry into post secondary education

Jonathan Lopez

Background

In 2017, the provincial government expanded the Provincial Tuition Waiver Program to all public institutions in BC, waiving tuition fees for all former youth in foster care. However, only 55.1% of foster youth in BC finish school with high school credentials[1]. As such, many former youths in care are not able to take advantage of the tuition waiver. In addition to the formal qualifications required for entry into post secondary education, many former youths in care have been out of the education system for more than a couple of years and need help acclimatizing.

Intervention

Aunt Leah's Supporting Education for Foster Youth (SEFFY) program aims to help former youth in care access post-secondary education.

Many of the students who access the SEFFY program have been out of the education system for more than 2 years. The SEFFY program provides individual tutoring, academic counselling/coaching, and life skills workshops. The SEFFY program is part of the wrap around support for former youth in care offered by Aunt Leah's (e.g. housing, food, health, etc.).

During the Covid pandemic, the SEFFY program transitioned to virtual learning environments. We were able to adapt the burgeoning productivity apps that became prevalent during the pandemic to support our students.

Academic Organization

Students returning to education after an extended time off are often bewildered by the many new things they need to keep track of (e.g. assignment deadlines, study time, classes etc.)
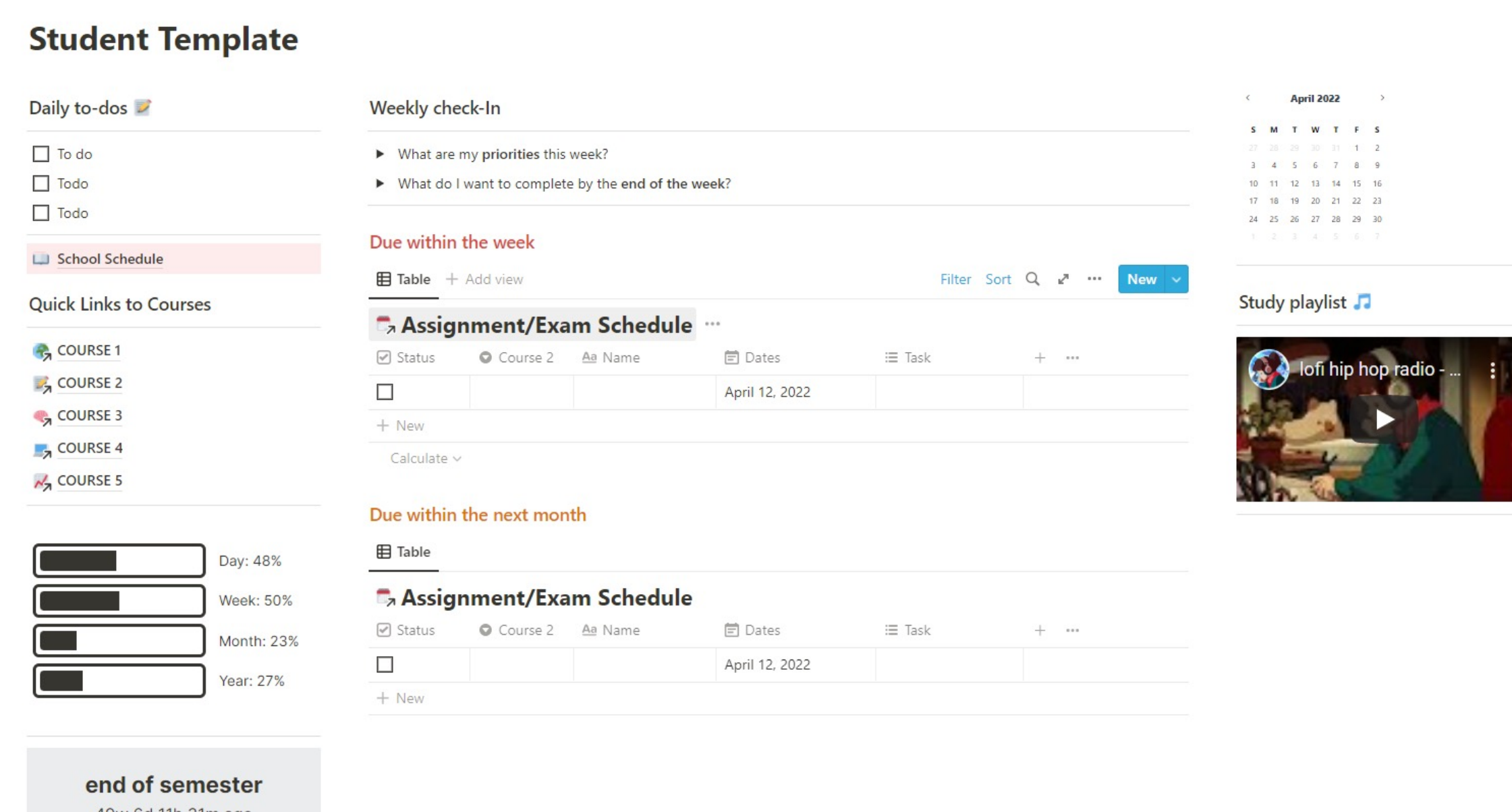
This template on Notion is the most common one to be taken up by students. One can make a free notion account and explore in greater detail template here.
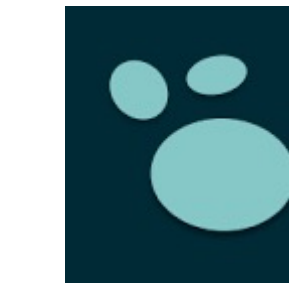
Assignment Instructions/Breakdown

Participants often feel overwhelmed by the formal way instructions are presented. Once they have requirements translated from "academese," they have less trouble getting started on the assignment.

This is the original document and this is the breakdown in Notion. (Notion Account required)

Once students became familiar with this platform, they were able to intentionally explore their learning style by moulding the templates provided to them.

Academic Writing

Many students over whelmed by the sheer amount of writing they have to do. Providing them with a structure helps them see how their ideas cogently build towards forwarding their thesis.

Logseq is a free and open-source outlining tool. It is an excellent way of building a wireframe with students to help them map out what they'll be writing about.

This platform also has the capacity to organize student's notes so that they can easily pull them in when writing an essay.
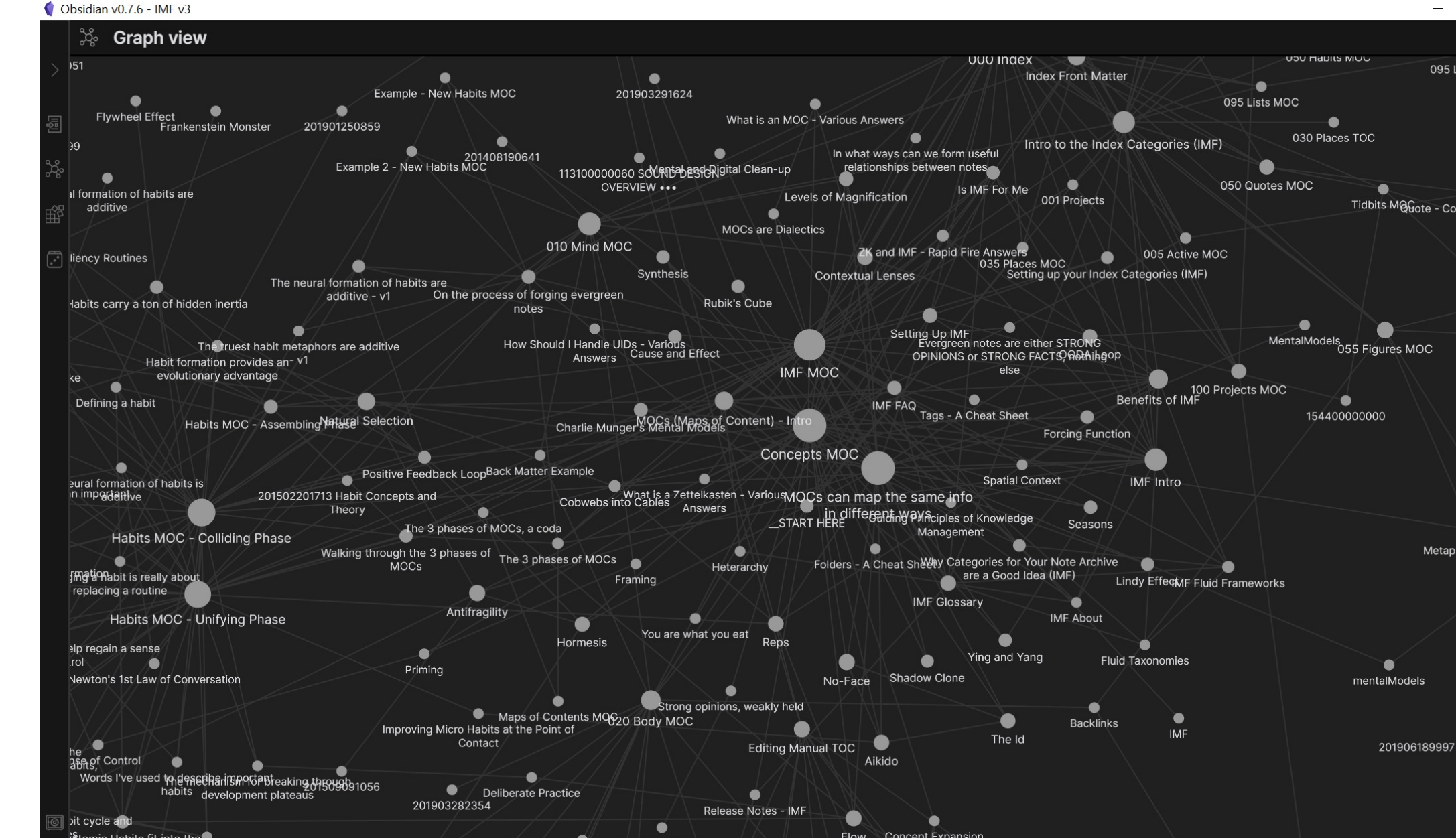
Demo available.

phil 101 term paper

- Introduction
  - Context
    - [[Phil 101 Week 1 Class Notes]]
  - Thesis Statement: Bonjour is right about the problem of induction
- Hume thinks induction is invalid
  - Exegesis on the Problem of Induction
  - [[Hume]]
- Bonjour thinks induction is valid
- I think one of them is making a mistake
- Paragraph 4
- Paragraph 5
- Conclusion
- Bibliography
  - [[Bonjour - A Defense of Pure Reason]]
  - [[Hume - A Treatise on Human Nature]]
- Assignment Requirements

Research and Notes Organization

The Obsidian platform is often combined with the Zettlekasten method of note-taking. Organizing notes in this way helps elucidate links between putatively disconnected areas of knowledge[1].

Demo Available

Call to action

The highly versatile nature of these apps would lend them to be integrated into our Academic Coaching practices.

These platforms (specifically Obsidian) can be added to the workshops that the Library Research Commons provides to improve research. These platforms are most commonly used for personal knowledge management.

References

1) https://mcfd.gov.bc.ca/reporting/services/child-protection/permanency-for-children-and-youth/performance-indicators/education