



Applied Scholastics' Study Technology

**A Research-Based Solution
for Keeping Students
Motivated and Engaged**

Introduction

“America’s high school graduation rate is among the lowest in the industrial world...the United States ranks 16th out of 20 countries (Guide for 2005 National Education Summit on High Schools, 2005). Educators today recognize that student dropout from school is a persistent national problem that threatens the foundations of our social, political and economic health. Additionally it creates negative consequences for the individuals who drop out. According to the latest National Center for Educational Statistics report, 11% of 16- to 24-year-olds were out of school without a high school credential in 2001 (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2003).

The single strongest school-related predictor of dropping out is poor academic performance (OERI Urban Superintendents Network, 1987; Hess et al. 1987; Wood, 1994). While there are surely other factors behind poor academic performance, it is clear that students who are not engaged in the learning process do not learn and they tend to drop out of school as they get older (Lumsden, 1994; Blank, 1997; Dev, 1997; Kushman, 2000; Woods, 1995). Insights from cognitive science tell us that active student engagement is prerequisite for learning in any teaching situation (Ewell, 1997, p.8). Therefore, it appears that a key remedy for the drop out problem is the employment of educational practices that improve student motivation and engagement.

A Model for Creating Student Motivation and Engagement

A pronounced characteristic of a classroom utilizing Study Technology as provided by Applied Scholastics is that students are absorbed in what they are learning. Interest and morale are high. Students confidently take on bigger and bigger academic challenges and even re-engage themselves in a failed task when necessary. How this degree of motivation and engagement is accomplished and why is vitally important to today’s educators.

The educational methods employed by Applied Scholastics were created by humanitarian and educator, L. Ron Hubbard, who researched and wrote on a wide range of educational issues. Taken together as a body of knowledge the methods developed by Mr. Hubbard are known as Study Technology. The pedagogy includes both structural and strategic components.

In his research Mr. Hubbard became aware of the direction in which education would be required to go in response to social and economic trends that were developing as early as the 1960’s. In Study Technology there are solutions for today’s educational problems.

Study Technology

One simple but key element is at the core of Study Technology—teaching the student how to learn so that he becomes a self-aware,

strategic and independent learner, a true partner in the learning process.

Mr. Hubbard discovered that there are three main barriers that prevent a learner from being able to comprehend and use the subject matter. Moreover, each of the three learning barriers is accompanied by certain identifiable physical and mental reactions in the learner. Once the learner becomes aware of a barrier to his comprehension of the subject matter, there are precise tools he can use to overcome it. Learning about the three barriers and their manifestations and how to use the “fix-up” strategies is called “learning-how-to-learn”.

Current research recognizes that the ability to comprehend text, beginning even as early as when learning to read, is critical to the success of the learning process. “Comprehension strategies are conscious plans—students must be aware of what they do understand, be able to identify what they do not understand and use appropriate measures to resolve comprehension problems” (Armbruster et al., 2001).



In this classroom, where students are skilled in Study Technology, active engagement in learning tasks is a typical scene.

How Does Learning How to Learn Align with Current Research?

The literature concerning student motivation and engagement clarifies that feedback to the student must be plentiful, prompt, clear and constructive (Strong et al., 1995; Hattie, 2001). An Applied Scholastics student, who knows how to learn, is aware of his learning process and can monitor and correct it. Because he is monitoring his own comprehension, and thus providing his own feedback, he becomes quite independent as a learner and can not be stalled by lack of feedback from external sources. Furthermore when he knows that comprehension has failed, he knows exactly what to do and is able to correct the problem himself: he must first backtrack to find the learning barrier; he then re-engages himself to remedy the learning problem. In this way the student achieves mastery of the subject being studied.

Lumsden (1994) has written that students' perceptions about their own abilities play a role in their willingness to engage in learning. Applied Scholastics students are confident of their abilities because they know how to learn and they understand that the learning tools and strategies they have been taught are the key to their academic success—that all who use them can succeed. This certainty provides confidence, and students who have learned how to learn are willing to take on bigger and bigger academic challenges and even to re-engage themselves in a failed task when necessary.

Anderman & Midgley (1998) make the point that students' interpretation of success and failure affect their willingness to engage themselves in learning. Applied Scholastics students understand that any inadequate academic performance is due

primarily to lack of attainable skills—not knowing how to learn—rather than some innate personal deficiency. These students are not discouraged by prior academic failure because they now have the tools they need to succeed.

Conclusions

While the greatest impact of Study Technology is realized when the pedagogy is implemented fully, there is much to be accomplished in any standard classroom just by teaching students how to learn. In a standard classroom where students have received such training, not only is there a high degree of engagement in learning tasks, but students participate in and enhance the instructional process as well. For example, during a classroom lecture a savvy student doesn't just originate that he does not understand, but can communicate specifically as to the nature of the non-comprehension thus prompting the teacher to identify and remedy the learning barrier. Students may assist the process further with questions—What does it look like? What does that word mean? They have become active partners in the process.

Learning-how-to-learn as employed in Study Technology produces self-aware, self-confident, independent learners who actively participate in the teaching-learning process by constantly monitoring and correcting their comprehension.

John Hattie's landmark meta-analysis of 180,000 educational research studies revealed that 50% of the variance in learning stems from the student himself (the teacher accounts for 30% and school, family and peers the remaining 20%) (Hattie, 2003). Therefore, as the first step in improving educational outcomes, it is imperative to focus on the stu-

dent himself. This should be done with the intention of empowering the student to become a motivated and engaged learner by teaching him how to learn by the Study Technology method.

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