

# Middle School Teacher's Initiative Leads to School-Wide Implementation of Study Technology



## Introduction

A teacher of eighth grade science in a large public middle school received Study Technology training on his own initiative. He then persuaded the school administration to allow him to deliver a course in Study Technology to his students. The action was subsidized by the teacher and his wife and a few friends, who purchased the textbooks and supplies needed for the course. And so began a series of events that will soon result in the implementation of Study Technology throughout the curriculum of this Middle School (hereinafter referred to as LMS).

## The Students

The large Title I middle school (LMS) (1500 students) is in a sprawling school district in Texas. The district includes both urban and suburban neighborhoods—several in very affluent areas typically associated with higher test scores. The school is outside the city limits but is not in a typical suburban environment. Students are 80% Hispanic, 15% African-American and 5% Caucasian. Annual scores on reading and math sections of the Texas statewide achievement test (TAAS) have been unacceptably low.

## The Intervention

For two years in a row, during the first six weeks of the school year, the teacher taught *Learning How to Learn*, a basic course in Study Technology, to his five sections of eighth-grade science. Study Technology was created by humanitarian and educator, L. Ron Hubbard, who researched and wrote on a wide range of educational issues. Taken together this body of knowledge and the methods developed by Mr. Hubbard compose a pedagogy that includes both structural and strategic components. Students learned vocabulary and comprehension tools as well as strategies for monitoring and correcting their learning process. Throughout the training the students were encouraged to apply and practice all the learning tools and strategies.

In the second school year (2004-2005), due to a family situation, the teacher was absent for two of the six weeks available to teach the course. Consequently, most of the students did not complete the course that year.

## The Benchmark Test

In November 2004, all eighth-grade science students took the first of the three “benchmark” tests sponsored by the school district and administered throughout the school year. The benchmark test is

designed as a “formative” test, to assist teachers in adjusting instruction to the needs of students during the school year. Each teacher is provided with an item analysis of the results for his students and a comparison with district-wide results. Otherwise, scores are aggregated and reported at the school level. A high level of achievement on the test is designated by the school district as “mastery.”

For 2004, the benchmark scores were reported in such a way that two of this teacher’s five science sections were disaggregated from the school’s 20 sections of eighth-grade science. The disaggregated sections were the two pre-advanced placement (Pre-AP) classes. Results for the other three science sections were aggregated with the school-wide results for eighth-grade science.

## Results

**The Two Science Pre-AP Classes.** Because all Science Pre-AP classes were disaggregated in the reporting of district-wide results, it is possible to compare the Science Pre-AP results for any one school with those of the other nine schools that conduct Science Pre-AP classes or with all 687 Science Pre-AP students in the district.

Fifty-seven of the sixty students in the two LMS Science Pre-AP classes took the test. The results were as follows:

The average percentage score for the LMS group was 88.5%, compared to 74.8% for all Science Pre-AP students in the district.

Every student in the LMS group achieved 100% mastery, according to district criteria, compared to only 85% on the average for all Science Pre-AP students in the district.

No other school reported a mastery level as high as 100%. The next closest schools were reported as 98.1% and 95.0%. The lowest school had only 63.6% achieving mastery.

**The Three Regular Science Classes.** The scores for students in these classes were aggregated with all non-Pre-AP eighth-grade science students in the LMS (313) and with all such students district wide (4,175 students in 17 schools). The three classes represented only about 15% of the LMS eighth-grade science students, yet their influence on the results is unmistakable, as this LMS scored the highest of all 17 district schools for the first time ever.

The average percentage score for LMS students was 74.0%, compared to 62.9% for all 4,175 district students. Only one other school came close to that score—with 73%. Most other schools achieved aver-

ages in the 50% to 60% range, with one school going as low as 28.0%.

86.3% of LMS students achieved science mastery compared to 62.2% for all 4,175 district students. Only one other school came close to 86.3% with a mastery level of 81.8%. All others were far below.

**The Second Benchmark Test.** In March 2005, science students throughout the school district took the second benchmark test. As announced by the teacher, “we came out on top again.” Results reflected the impact of Study Technology:

1. The average score for the school’s pre-AP classes was 78.4% compared to 68.8% for all Science Pre-AP students in the district.
2. 55 of the school’s 59 Pre-AP students, or 93.2%, achieved mastery, compared to only 74.7% for all Science Pre-AP students in the district.
3. No other group of Pre-AP classes in the district reported a mastery level as high as 93.2%. The next closest schools were reported as 92.7% and 80.4%. The lowest school had only 62.2%.
4. For the school’s regular (non-Pre-AP) eighth grade science students the average percentage score was 71.9%, compared to 62.7% for all district students.
5. Only one other school came close to that score, with 69.8%. The bottom schools scored 14.0% and 38.0%.
6. 81.3% of the school’s regular eighth-grade science students achieved science mastery, compared to 60.7% for all district students.

## Discussion of Results

The outstanding results on the benchmark tests were achieved in spite of the following circumstances:

- The students who received the Study Technology training had six weeks less instruction in science and little time to make up the deficit before the first benchmark test in November.
- Several of the comparison schools reside in very affluent communities typically associated with higher test scores. LMS, on the other hand, a Title I school, has received unacceptably low reading and math scores on the Texas annual statewide achievement test.
- Only 15% of the LMS non-Pre-AP eighth-grade science students received Study Technology training, yet the school outperformed the other

16 schools. The influence of the 15% of scores was therefore substantial.

**Anecdotal Data.** According to the teacher himself, students who finished *Learning How to Learn* reported a dramatic change in their understanding of what they were taught in school and felt they now had the confidence to learn anything they desired. Students got so “fired up” with the tools of Study technology that many of them came in before and after school to work on their courses,

The teacher also told of one student who did not want to apply what was being taught in the *Learning How To Learn* course and felt it was silly and that it would not work. This student barely passed eighth grade and went on to high school. Midway through the next school year she came back to the middle school, walked into the teacher’s classroom and gave him a big hug. She had come back to thank him for teaching her *Learning How To Learn*. She reported that it had changed her life. She was now achieving all A’s and B’s because she was applying what she learned in his class. She then turned to other students in the classroom and told them they should finish the course because it really works.

### Student success with Study Technology:

*Dear Mr. L.*

*Before [learning Study Technology] I just wanted to come to school to hang out with the ladies. Now I want to come to school to actually learn something. Now I want to learn and there is nothing that can stop me from doing it. I will use these skills in my everyday life and hopefully be more successful. The Learning How To Learn course is one of those things you wish only you knew. Whenever I used to struggle with my work I would panic and I felt like quitting. I sometimes thought to myself if I can’t even make it through middle school, how am I going to make it through high school? But now that I learned this course I am confident I can go through middle school, high school, and even Harvard Law School. Whenever someone feels like learning is boring, I am going to tell them “obviously you haven’t learned the magic course which is the Learning How To Learn course”. I used to think I was a knucklehead because I never learned anything but all I had to do was get the mass of what I was studying. I have learned many words I did not understand in eight simple steps that even a baby can do. This course has taught me many things I will never forget and I will use forever and once I get old I’m*

showing my children and grandchildren. I will tell the 7th graders to work hard so they can get Honors Science and go through Mr. L's magical course.

— B.S..

Mr. L,

I am so glad that we did the Learning How To Learn program. I have gotten so much out of it. Classes are easier and not as time consuming as before. For example, in U.S. History when I read a word that I do not recognize (which is a lot of words!) I know that this is the third barrier to study and now I know the eight steps to fix it. Homework has become much easier now. I have much more time because I don't have to spend forever on my homework. My parents are much happier also because I am bringing my grades up. I feel much more powerful and proud of myself because I now can learn anything I put my mind to. That is so invigorating. I can actually do anything I want to, and learn anything I want to. Thanks Mr. L. I hope a lot more people learn how to learn and feel just like I do.

— B.P.

P.S. AHH! I'm so happy!

I finished the Learning How To Learn course yesterday and I am very proud of everything I have accomplished and everything I have learned. Now that I know what the barriers are, I will be able to recognize them and their "symptoms" and I will know what I should do to overcome those barriers or obstacles. No longer will I find myself feeling blank or dizzy, and not know what to do about it. I will no longer be studying, or trying to study while I'm not absorbing any information. Now I know the correct way to study, and I can absorb all the information I need to learn in half the time because now I know the proper way to learn.

— K.B.

Dear Mr. L,

Thank you so much for helping Learn How To Learn. My parents thank you also. But thanks for teaching me the three barriers and how to conquer them. Last week I had a test and I kept on running into misunderstood words so all I did was look them up and make sentences. That really helped me learn the definition. I received an 85 on the test. My parents were very proud of me. Well, I just wanted to say thank you, you are a great teacher and any kid would be lucky to have you. It is very rare that kids get teachers like you. Thank you. **Your student**

— N.P

### Conclusions

- Study Technology greatly increases the efficiency and speed of learning.
- The impact of Study Technology on the learning process is great enough to propel students to higher levels of achievement.
- The tools of Study Technology give confidence to students and the willingness to reach for more learning.

### Results Lead To Expansion

The outstanding performance of the science students on the benchmark test convinced the school administration to consider additional ways of bringing Study Technology to LMS students. It was decided, as a first step, to offer Study Technology courses as electives. A second teacher will be trained by Applied Scholastics to help with the delivery of these courses. A two-day workshop on Study Technology will be delivered to the teaching staff by the science teacher, who received specialized training at the Applied Scholastics campus. Additional pilot programs are being considered, such as:

- Providing Study Technology training to incoming sixth graders.
- Reducing the achievement gap in reading and math with Study Technology-trained peer tutors.



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