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ABSTRACT

This practicum was designed to enhance the academic achievement of high school students in English in a suburban community in southeastern New England. Through a 12-week program of study skills introduced in the English 9 collaborative classroom, the practicum aimed to enable students to recognize their best learning strategies. A pre- and post-survey were developed and administered, a teacher interview was conducted, report cards of participants were reviewed, assignment calendars were developed and distributed, curriculum in computer interventions were selected and presented, and study skills were presented. Analysis of the data revealed that: (1) five out of seven English Collaborative students earned a grade of C- or better; (2) six out of seven students passed in homework assignments on time; and (3) five students' report cards reflected two positive comments and zero negative comments. Data also revealed that high school students need more than a 12-week study skills program to increase their academic achievement. (Contains 19 references. Appendixes present a teacher interview form and a study skills survey instrument.) (Author/RS)

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Improving the Academic Achievement of High School Students
through the Implementation of a Study Skills Program

by

Patricia Berthiaume

Cluster 63

A Practicum I Report Presented to the Ed.D Program in Child and
Youth Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY
1995

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

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This practicum report was submitted by Patricia Berthiaume under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

Apr. 21, 1995

Date of Final Approval of
Report

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
 Chapter	
I INTRODUCTION	1
Description of Community	1
Writer's Work Setting and Role	2
II STUDY OF THE PROBLEM	4
Problem Description	4
Problem Documentation	5
Causative Analysis	5
Relationship of the Problem to the Literature	7
III ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS	10
Goals and Expectations	10
Expected Outcomes	10
Measurement of Outcomes	11
IV SOLUTION STRATEGY	12
Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions	12
Description of Selected Solution	14
Report of Action Taken	15
V RESULTS, DISCUSSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	26
Results	26
Discussion	28
Recommendations	30
Dissemination	31
REFERENCES	32
 Appendices	
A TEACHER INTERVIEW FORM	35
B STUDY SKILLS SURVEY	37

ABSTRACT

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This practicum was designed to enhance the academic achievement of high school students in English through a 12-week program of study skills introduced in the English 9 collaborative classroom and to enable students to recognize their best learning strategies.

The writer developed and administered a pre- and post survey to all high school participants; conducted a teacher interview; reviewed the group participants' report cards before and after implementation; developed and distributed assignment calendars; selected and presented curriculum in computer interventions; and presented study skills strategies.

Analysis of the data revealed that: a) five out of seven English Collaborative students earned a grade of C- or better, b) six out of seven students passed in homework assignments on time, c) five students' report cards reflected two positive comments and zero negative comments. The data from the practicum also revealed that high school students need more than a 12-week study skills program in increase their academic achievement.

* * * * *

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Community

The setting of this practicum is a small suburban community high school located in southeastern New England with a population of approximately 15,000 inhabitants. The area of the community is estimated to be 40.7 square miles. In addition, this community is composed of families who are employed in the government, military, and private businesses. Consequently, the district has a sizable transient population due to the number of students from military families. Current demographics indicate that the ethnic and racial makeup of the community has changed in the last three years. The predominantly White, upper-middle class socio-economic community is becoming more diverse.

This community is served by six public schools. There are four elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. The total enrollment of students in the district for the 1994-1995 school year is 3,200. There is increasing enrollment at the elementary school level, which reflects the growth of home building in the community. Presently, the high school is accepting out-of-district students. In the past three years, there has been a large influx of Southeast Asian, Hispanic, and Mashantucket Pequot Indian students whose parents are employed at a

local casino. Multicultural enrollment is expected to increase greatly over the coming year.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The population of the high school consists of approximately 1,100 ethnically diverse ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth graders. Enrollment increases have created the need to address issues involving facilities and services. The Agri-Science program is open to students from other districts. Approximately 30% of the total school enrollment is comprised of out-of-district students. Therefore, these sending communities are responsible for the tuition of students.

The high school has an administrative staff comprising of one principal and two assistant principals and a staff of 77 regular education teachers. The special services staff consists of one guidance director and five counselors, one full-time school psychologist, one speech pathologist, one full-time nurse, and one reading consultant. The writer has been employed as a reading consultant for 17 years.

The writer's primary responsibility is to serve as the high school reading consultant. The responsibilities of this position were enhanced over the past year when the writer's district became a sending high school for neighboring communities. There are 19 Freshman English classes, three of which are collaboratively taught. In addition to teaching reading skills to some students in small groups, the writer is also assigned to team teach two collaborative English 9 classes with two regular education teachers. The writer's responsibility is to support the delivery of instruction content by the regular education classroom

teachers. This writer also serves as the English Second Language district coordinator for K-12. As district coordinator, the writer is responsible for creating an annual budget and for facilitating workshops for both staff and parents. Additionally, this writer serves as an after school tutor in the Teaching Learning Center, Student Council Advisor, and as a member of the Student Study Team.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

The writer found that many Freshman English students use inappropriate and ineffective study strategies. Specifically, the collaborative English class that the writer team teaches is comprised of students with learning disabilities and students not identified as handicapped. Homework responsibilities are not being met and little thought is given to recording daily assignments. Seven out of seven freshmen in the English 9 collaborative class achieved a grade of D on their last report card. Moreover, students have little knowledge of their learning strategies. Having an awareness of strategies does not ensure that students will use them. Students are unable to adapt or extend strategies to match specific learning tasks (Manzo, 1991).

State law mandates that high school freshmen must take a health course and a social studies course. Consequently, this mandate has impacted on students' schedule time for elective classes. As a result, a study skills course offered to freshmen and sophomores and taught by this writer was eliminated.

Little attention is given to organizational and study skills by

English teachers. These teachers feel they lack the time and expertise to address study skills. In the past year, five out of six Freshman English teachers have made appointments with this writer to discuss students' lack of organizational skills. These teachers expressed concern about student organizational skills, class preparedness, following directions, use of time, and making up assignments and tests. Additionally, they feel this lack of organization has negatively impacted upon student report card grades.

Problem Documentation

The existence of this problem was supported by an interview with the English 9 collaborative teacher (see Appendix A) who indicated that seven out of seven students from the collaborative English class lacked organizational skills. These students consistently come to class without a textbook, notebook, or writing implement. In response to 18 statements on a study skills survey, seven students answered negatively to 14 questions regarding the implementation of study techniques. Furthermore, homework is either incomplete or not turned in. These seven students showed a grade of "D" in English on their last report card. Report cards from the last term indicated 2 negative comments and 0 positive comments by the English teacher.

Research suggests that homework is recognized by both parents and teachers as an important discipline requiring diligence (Epstein, Polloway, Foley, & Patton, 1993). Homework is a complex process

involving subject matter, assignment characteristics, resources to complete the assignment, and the home and study environment. Each of these components seriously affect the quality of homework (Cooper, 1989).

Marshak (1992) emphasizes the need to encourage students to become empowered, active learners who recognize and develop learning skills suited to their learning styles. Furthermore, students have little opportunity to observe their teachers modeling a strategy. Students need an opportunity to discuss and interact with other students and receive immediate feedback about each attempt. Having students recognize their learning styles affords them confidence to make use of their strengths and weaknesses; it makes learning easier.

Causative Analysis

There are several contributing factors that cause students to experience failure in the English classroom. First, students have had little exposure to study skills training; therefore, they are unable to apply learning strategies. An elective study skills course which had been taught by the Reading Consultant was discontinued five years ago. This was due to time and schedule constraints affecting freshman schedules. Second, of the seven English classroom students experiencing poor academic achievement, three were from out-of-district communities. These out-of-district students and those who came from diverse academic backgrounds due to migration from other parts of the country lack some skills taught within the writer's district in the earlier grades. Third, teacher collaboration is limited to three English 9 classes. Finally,

homework assignments are not written in assignment notebooks.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

A review of the literature indicates the concern of others for the problem. Teachers perceive students to be weak in skills involving listening, following directions, time management, test preparation and test taking, note taking and essay writing (Simmers-Wolpow, Farrell, & Tonjes, 1991). Additionally, colleges recognize a growing number of unprepared students. These at-risk students lack understanding of when and how to use specific strategies (Hennessey, 1990). Students must become aware of their learning style and be able to select their best study strategies suited to a specific learning task (Archambeault, 1992).

Recognizing preferential strategies and environmental study conditions enables students to become reflective thinkers and better self monitors of their learning. Academically successful students recognize their learning style and their most effective study strategies thus enabling them to become more self-confident about their learning. A checklist provided by the teacher is one method of assisting students to become acquainted with their personal learning styles. This will enable students to become more discerning in both their selections of learning strategies and in controlling their study environment.

Study skills should be taught in the context of the mainstream classroom and not as a separate entity (Decker, Spector, & Shaw, 1992). Additionally, the authors feel that the teaching of study strategies is beneficial to teachers as well as students. Students acquire effective

study strategies while teachers develop better organizational skills and are more creative in the classroom. To be most effective, study skills should be introduced and maintained throughout a student's schooling (Hoover, 1989). Memorization is not the goal of study skills; how to learn is.

Research conducted by Carbo and Hodges (1988) indicates that at-risk students are academically successful when taught to use learning strategies. This study investigated the impact of physical environment on an individual's acquisition of knowledge. A reading style inventory was given to students to identify their reading strengths and to match their learning styles. Results indicated that students' learning styles and instruction are often mismatched, causing frustration, anxiety, and even physical illness. Teaching to a student's learning style enhanced an individual's self-esteem and eliminates any barriers to learning.

Christen and Murphy (1985) report that most students only study before tests. They spend minimal time preparing for tests and daily lessons. Furthermore, teachers assume that students have mastered these skills and strategies in earlier grades (Deshler & Schumaker, 1992). However, Weinstein, Ridley, Dahl, and Weis (1988) contend that unless students are taught, they are unable to implement effective learning strategies.

Research supports the needs to teach study skills in the regular classroom. Students who recognize their learning style are better able to select effective learning strategies. Presenting instruction matched to a student's specific learning style enables the student to become a confident, reflective learner. Students must be assertive in their own

learning; they must recognize their learning strengths and utilize study strategies to compensate for any weaknesses.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The goal of this practicum was to improve students' academic performance in English 9 through implementation of study skills and to enable them to recognize their best learning strategies. It was hoped that this instructional program would motivate other colleagues to undertake a similar program in their English classes.

Expected Outcomes

The following outcomes for this practicum were as follows:

Outcome 1: Six out of seven English 9 Collaborative students will earn a grade of "C-" or better in English as measured by the student's quarterly report card grades.

Outcome 2: An interview with the Freshman collaborative English teacher will indicate that six out of seven students will be passing in assignments on time.

Outcome 3: Report cards for each of the students at the end of the quarter will reflect two positive and zero negative comments from the English teacher.

Outcome 4: On a study skills survey (see Appendix B), six students

will respond positively to 14 out of 18 questions regarding the implementation of study techniques.

Measurement of Outcomes

The following goals and outcomes were projected for this practicum:

Measurement of Outcome 1: Six of the seven English 9 collaborative students who participate in the study skills program will earn a grade of "C-" or better in English on their quarterly report cards. The report card was selected as a means of providing data on each student's academic progress before and after program implementation.

Measurement of Outcome 2: A post-interview (Appendix A) will be held with the English 9 collaborative teacher of those students who participated in the program. The post-interview is composed of five questions focusing on (a) academic performance of the seven English collaborative students, (b) how successful students were in completing and passing in homework assignments, and (c) students' organizational skills.

Measurement of Outcome 3: Quarterly report cards for the six English 9 students completing the study skills program will reflect two positive and zero negative comments from the English teacher. The report card was selected to provide data on teacher comments before and after the implementation.

Measurement of Outcome 4: Six students in a post-study skills survey (Appendix B) will respond to 14 out of 18 questions regarding their implementation of study techniques. If all students answer "yes" to 14 out of 18 questions, then this outcome will have been met.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

Students in the Freshman collaborative English class implement inappropriate study strategies and experience academic difficulty. Incomplete homework assignments and ineffective study skills demonstrated by these students interfere with their academic success.

The literature suggested several strategies for improving student academic achievement in high school. According to Ellis, Deshler, Lenz, Schumaker, and Clark (1991), assignment completion strategy teaches students to monitor their homework by recording the assignment, analyzing and completing the assignment, and submitting the completed assignment. Students must be taught to allocate time and read instructions and questions carefully when taking tests.

As observed by Ellett (1993), secondary teachers are more inclined to incorporate instructional modifications when they collaborate with a special educator. Therefore, the writer collaborated with a regular education teacher in the English 9 classroom. The writer and the classroom teacher team teach on a regular basis throughout the school year. Recognizing that students require study skills strategies to improve grades this writer, the reading consultant, taught the study

skills program.

Marshak developed a study skills program incorporating 12 study skills components. Hymel and Guedry-Hymel (1987) suggest that Marshak's hm Study Skills Program, Level 11 accommodates the organizational and test-taking styles of students. These writers also suggest that 3 of the 12 components presented by Marshak would be beneficial to high school students. Three aspects of Marshak's model were implemented in the collaborative classroom. The content focused on the organizational skills of successful students, including time management, recognizing learning styles, preparing for and taking objective tests, and answering essay questions.

Effective teachers use an eclectic approach to teaching study skills (Ellis, 1993). Recognizing that no one program may meet the needs of all students, the writer provided supplementary study skills information to students. Included in this supplementary information compiled by the writer were illustrated cartoons, teacher-made sample tests, and a model of a well-organized notebook. As suggested by Rosenberg (1989), the epitome of an effective teacher is recognized by the manner in which material is presented in the classroom. Therefore, this writer clearly modeled each skill, guided practice in each skill, responded to students' questions and comments, and reviewed previously presented material. Assignment sheet calendars were provided for students and supplementary problem situations were presented in class for discussion.

Moreover, a conscientious effort on the part of the teacher to have students develop a fluid writing style is especially beneficial to the

silent, nonparticipative student (Benson, 1991). Therefore, students used computers in the classroom for responding to essays as a means of meeting the needs of the students with handwriting and spelling problems.

Description of Selected Solution

The solution selected by the writer was based on the review in the previous section and also from the writer's analysis of high school students' study skills. The writer recognized the need for study skills intervention with high school students. Moreover, the solutions of teaching time management, organizational skills, and test-taking strategies seemed to be most practical for this writer. These solutions seemed to be feasible and can be implemented during the 12 weeks of the practicum.

It was hoped that by implementing the provisions of this section that high school students who participated in a study skills program would improve their academic performance. An advantage of students practicing their test-taking skills is that it helps them manage the anxiety that often accompanies tests. Good test-taking skills also ensure that students' test scores reflect what they actually know (Wilkenson, 1986). Low achieving adolescents can learn to function independently in all classrooms. Study skills intervention can help students to actively participate, to establish realistic goals, and enable them to become independent learners.

The approach that was employed in this program to improve students' academic performance was that of an eclectic approach although the

hm Study Skills Program was the primary text used by the students. Different strategies cited in the literature review was shared with students. Implementation of the program took place in the collaborative classroom where the writer's team-teaching colleague provided input and shared observations about the class and the program. Computers were utilized by the students when responding to the essay component of test taking strategies.

Report of Action Taken

The writer followed the 12-week plan presented under the Description section of the practicum. Changes in the practicum were as follows. Since Decker, Spector, and Shaw's (1992) work suggested that study skills be taught in the mainstream classroom, the writer presented a study skills program to seven English 9 collaborative students who had been experiencing academic problems. The writer believed that this solution would be most effective for helping these high school students to improve their academic achievement. During the eighth week, a student from out of district was enrolled in the English 9 collaborative. As a result, the writer worked with this student during study hall for five sessions in an effort to acquaint the student with what had already been presented to the other seven students. However, at the end of the eleventh week, the writer was notified that this student had been withdrawn from the high school.

Week 1

The writer interviewed the English 9 collaborative teacher to discuss students' academic progress and the implementation of a study

skills program. The classroom teacher agreed to having this writer introduce a 12-week study skills program one hour a week to the seven students in the English collaborative. When interviewed regarding these seven students, the English teacher indicated that a) each student did not use class time wisely, b) each student neither completed nor turned in homework on time, c) each student was experiencing academic failure in English 9, and d) none of the seven students took class notes.

The writer met with the English class and presented an overview of the 12-week study skills program. Students were told that they would obtain the basic study skills they would need to succeed academically in high school. Specifically, students were told that not only would they become familiar with their personal learning styles but also they would learn informational and time management skills along with test-taking techniques. Students were introduced to the program, and were told that each session would be for one hour a week. They were informed that each session would meet every Friday for one class period. Students were told that although they did not have to implement all the techniques they were going to become acquainted with, the writer hoped they would try some of the suggestions and select those techniques that suited them. Students were asked to complete a learning styles inventory. Throughout the presentation, students were attentive and appeared receptive to the program.

Week 2

The writer returned the learning styles inventory. Students read them over, and a discussion ensued regarding the similarities and differences in each of their learning styles. At this time, the writer

shared with students what each learning style had to offer and stressed that no one learning style was best. Students were encouraged to keep their inventory for future reference.

Each student received a copy of the hm Study Skills Program, Level II. Students were encouraged to take additional notes and to underline important information emphasized during each session right in their text. Prior to introducing text pages 1-3, students were asked to give their definition of study skills and what they felt was the value of study skills. The writer then shared with students an all-encompassing definition of study skills. All seven students actively participated and shared their experiences and the consequences of not having passed in homework.

At this point, an unexpected spin-off occurred when the class was discussing homework assignments. Students attempted to mention specific teachers by name whom they felt had an unfair homework policy. The writer explained that while sharing such information with the group was helpful, specific names of teachers could not be mentioned; this request was quietly accepted by the students. When students were distributed a teacher-made, 18 statement survey regarding study skills, the writer found the students to be mistrustful because they were certain it was a test. After some discussion, the writer was able to dispel their fears, and they willingly completed the questionnaire.

Week 3

The writer began this session with a review of the previous week. When student questionnaires were returned, the writer shared observations with the group and a lively discussion ensued.

Interestingly, the writer observed that no one student dominated the discussion. Unfortunately, due to the limited amount of time left in the session, the writer had to conclude further class discussion.

The writer introduced and modeled strategies for notebook organization. The writer shared with students that organizational techniques are one key to becoming a more effective and efficient learner. A overhead was used to illustrate in cartoon form the consequences of disorganization. Students were told they would have an opportunity to assemble a similar notebook for their personal use the following week.

Week 4

This session began with a review of the previous week. All seven students were distributed a three-ring notebook with separators, a hole-punched folder, and a small, spiral notebook calendar. Then, students duplicated the writer's notebook model of the previous week. Moreover, students were encouraged to use their notebooks for other academic classes besides English.

Each student was asked what a goal was; although definitions varied, students provided interesting feedback to each other. Each student established personal goals they wished to achieve for the remainder of the school year. Next, the concept of prioritizing time and activities was introduced to the group. Two students shared how their family situations and responsibilities somewhat limited their own time. Here it was mentioned by the writer that one kind of schedule might be more useful to one student than another and that flexibility was also to be considered. The important of scheduling study time along with chores

and other activities was emphasized.

Week 5

This session began with a review of the previous week. Students were asked individually if they had utilized their newly organized notebooks. Five students eagerly produced their notebooks and displayed them for the writer's perusal. The efforts of these students was apparent and the writer enthusiastically complimented them on their individual organizational styles. The other two students also produced notebooks; however, these notebooks remained untouched since our last session. The writer asked these students why they had not been used in their other classes; both students responded that they thought the notebooks were to be used only for English class. The writer clarified this misconception and encouraged use of the notebooks in all classes.

With the calendar notebook provided to students in last week's session, the writer demonstrated how to schedule class assignments. The calendar notebook is imprinted with each subject; therefore, the student needs only to jot down the specifics of each subject. The writer emphasized that the calendars could only work if they are actually used.

Next, students were asked to turn to Unit 12, pages 93-104 of their text on time management. These pages were read and discussed. On an overhead, the writer projected a simulated daily schedule. Students responded by providing activities for each time frame in the schedule. Then the group discussed how realistic the schedule was and could they live with it. Two students said they could not live with any written schedule; four students said that a schedule might be helpful in planning and remembering special things; one student suggested that a

flexible schedule would be good so that no one would get uptight about not following everything exactly as scheduled.

Week 6

The session began with a review of the previous week. Some students shared how the use of an assignment calendar had kept them on task during the week. Students felt that using the calendar was difficult to get used to but concluded that it was probably worthwhile.

The writer introduced the topic of objective tests. Students were asked to define and give some examples of objective tests. Only a few students volunteered answers. However, all seven students shared their likes and dislikes regarding each type of objective test. The writer informed the group that the more they knew about the skills involved in taking tests the better able they would be to demonstrate their knowledge on a test.

Students were asked to turn to Unit X, page 73 in their text on preparing for and taking tests. The writer explained that knowing what kind of a test a teacher is planning to give is important because students would be better prepared to study for it. Students brought up some valid questions regarding tests and exams. They wanted to know how to ask a teacher about a test and what was going to be on the test. Therefore, students were encouraged to politely ask their teachers for specifics prior to taking a test.

Week 7

The writer began this session with a review of the previous week. The writer asked the group if they were using their notebooks and assignment calendars. One student mentioned how assignments never got

lost anymore because of the neat way the calendar fit into the three-ring notebook. Students were asked to open to their test to page 75 and to read silently while the writer read aloud the section regarding multiple choice test questions. The writer then completed an example on an overhead by modeling the process described in the reading; a brief discussion followed.

Students were then asked to count off by twos for the purpose of small group interaction. There were two groups of two students and one group of three students. Students were asked to complete five sample multiple choice questions within five minutes. Upon completion of this exercise, one student from each group shared their responses and the process they used to determine their answers. Students were given supplemental test questions, and the same grouping procedure was followed.

Week 8

This session began with a review of the previous week. One student volunteered how impressed his parents were when they saw his notebook and assignment calendar and the fact that he was actually using them. This elicited a few chuckles and additional remarks from other students.

During this session, a transfer student from another district joined the English class. This student had not had any previous study skills training. Therefore, the writer arranged to meet with the student twice a week for two weeks during study hall to acquaint the student with the material already presented to the rest of the class. This student was provided with the same instructional materials as the other students in the class.

Students were asked to open to page 79 in their text and to read silently while the writer read aloud the section on matching questions. A process was suggested and an example was modeled by the writer. Students were asked to individually complete the exercise in the text; when they finished, all but one student shared the process they used to "narrow down" an answer. Students then moved on to short answer questions. One student volunteered that the length of the answer line made it easier to figure out how many words were in the answer. Each group member then added some interesting opinions on the topic.

Again, students were asked to get into groups; this time, however, they were divided into four equal groups of two. Students were asked to complete the exercise in the text involving short answers. Each group shared their answers and procedures. Next, the writer asked the students to silently read page 80 regarding true and false test taking. After modeling on an overhead several samples and sharing personal techniques with the students, the writer asked the class to answer a 12-statement exercise in the text. When they finished, they resumed their groups and shared their responses with each other. This lesson was summarized by the students themselves within their groups.

Week 9

This session began with a review of the previous week. The writer began class with a discussion of what essay tests entailed. The writer explained that the focus of essay tests was on ideas and not so much on fact, although some facts are needed for explanation. Students were told that the approach to writing an essay on a test was the same method they employed each time they wrote a paragraph in English class. However,

they were cautioned that they would have to work more quickly on a test.

Again, students were encouraged to find out from a teacher whether a test would include essay questions. Students were told that in preparing for the test, they should try to anticipate possible essay questions that might be asked. Then, think about how they would answer those questions. The writer stressed a) the importance of reading the test directions carefully before attempting the essays, b) that all questions should be read first, and c) that time be allotted to each essay based upon how much the question is worth and how well it can be answered. Students asked about how to answer specifically stated questions; the writer answered briefly but explained that more concise information would be given over the next two weeks.

Week 10

This session began with a review of the previous week. The writer also asked to see each student's notebook. Five students were using their notebooks; three were not, nor had they made any attempt to do so. One of these students was the transfer student. Since students would be answering sample essay questions during this class session, the writer arranged for eight laptop computers for each student's use.

Seven students were familiar with the four-step method on how to organize an essay; the new student was not. Therefore, the writer asked the group to open their text to page 87 where organization of the essay was discussed. Terms such as thesis statement and main idea were reviewed for the benefit of the new student. Students were told that sometimes they could rephrase an essay question and use it as part of their thesis statement. A sample essay question was projected on the

overhead to demonstrate this technique. The writer then reviewed the writing procedure using an example on the overhead. Then, students were asked to use their computers to answer the essay question on page 88 of their test using the four-step method. Immediately, several students raised their hands to ask how long the essay had to be. The writer took this opportunity to suggest that writing more does not mean better; but a well-organized and well-written essay will express understanding to the teacher more effectively.

Before students began the assignment, the writer had them read the information at the bottom of the page suggesting how students should apportion their time when answering an essay question. Students were given 20 minutes to complete this assignment, including a spell check.

Week 11

This session focused on a review of a) learning styles, b) organizational skills, c) goal setting, d) time management, and e) test-taking strategies. Once again, students were provided laptop computers for this session. Students were encouraged to make suggestions and comments about the study skills program, or about the information presented during our sessions. Someone asked if they might write it up on the computer; the other students enthusiastically took up the cause. The writer agreed; students were given ten minutes to complete their writing.

After students passed in their suggestions, the previous week's essay was returned to them. At their suggestion, the essays were shared aloud among the group. Everyone was asked to take out their notebooks. Again, five students were employing their organizational strategies

regularly, one student had begun to use it somewhat, and two students had not used their notebooks at all. Students were reminded that the following week would be the last session of the program. Very little was said, but what was amusing was that one of the students who had not utilized a notebook asked if we were going to learn anything else about strategies.

Week 12

At the conclusion of last week's session, the writer was notified that the new student had been withdrawn from the high school. During this session, seven students completed an 18 statement post survey regarding study skills. When the group finished, the writer and students shared and compared the results of the pre and post survey. The writer was encouraged by the interest demonstrated by the students regarding the changes they had made; the writer praised the group for their attentiveness and cooperation throughout the 12 sessions.

The writer met with the English teacher prior to this final session and elicited comments regarding students' test taking skills, organizational skills, and homework. Third term report cards for the seven English 9 collaborative students were reviewed for comments and for grades. Conclusions and a final evaluation of this report were recorded for the practicum and the building administrator.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, DISCUSSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

Many Freshman English students use inappropriate and ineffective study strategies. With carefully selected, sequenced lessons, students are able to acquire appropriate strategies to handle assignments (Carbo & Hodges, 1988). The goal of this practicum was to improve students' academic performance in English 9 through implementation of study skills and to enable them to recognize their best learning strategies.

The writer's collaborative English class is comprised of three students with learning disabilities and four students not identified as handicapped. These students have little knowledge of their learning strategies; homework responsibilities are not being met; and seven out of seven Freshmen in the English collaborative class achieved a grade of "D" on their last report card.

The solution strategy selected included a 12-week study skills program for seven English 9 collaborative students who lacked organizational skills and evidenced poor academic achievement. The following outcomes were projected:

Outcome 1: It was projected that six out of seven English 9 collaborative students would earn a grade of "C-" or better in English

as measured by the student's quarterly report card grades. This outcome was not achieved. An analysis of the report cards of the seven participants who completed the study skills program indicated that one student earned a grade of "B"; three students earned a grade of "C"; one student earned a grade of "C-"; and two students received a grade of "F".

Outcome 2: An interview with the Freshman collaborative English teacher will indicate that six out of seven students will be passing in assignments on time. This outcome was achieved. An analysis of the post-interview with the English teacher indicated that seven out of seven students passed in 12 assignments on time during the marking term.

Outcome 3: Report cards for each of the students at the end of the quarter will reflect two positive and zero negative comments from the English teacher. This outcome was not achieved. Analysis of the seven students' report cards indicated that five students received two positive and zero negative comments from the English teacher; and two students received zero positive and two negative comments.

Outcome 4: On a study skills survey, six students will respond positively to 14 out of 18 questions regarding the implementation of study techniques. This outcome was achieved. An analysis of the post-study skills survey indicated that four students responded positively to 14 out of 18 questions; two students responded positively to 15 out of 18 questions; and one student responded positively to 6 out of 18 questions.

Discussion

Based upon the most recent report cards of the seven English 9 collaborative students who completed the study skills program, the writer found that Outcome 1 (six out of seven students would earn a grade of "C-" or better in English) was not met. A possible explanation of the result is that introduction of a study skills program did not occur earlier in the school year. Supporting this explanation, two students recommended to the writer that the program would be more helpful if it was presented at the beginning of the school year.

Another explanation for this outcome not having been met is that a 12-week program may not have addressed all the study skills components students need. As supported by Marshak (1992), an effective study skills program should contain twelve study skills components. When presenting the program, the writer felt that other study skills components should have been addressed such as listening, problem solving, and note taking.

Report cards of five of the students who received study skills instruction revealed that they earned a "C-" or better in English. The writer's collaborative colleague shared the information that one student who had received an "F" in English had done so for three marking terms; consequently, that student was referred to the Student Study Team.

The writer found that Outcome 2 (an interview with the Freshman collaborative English teacher will indicate that six out of seven students will be passing in assignments on time) was achieved. An explanation for this outcome may be that as a result of participating in the study skills program, students had become more aware of their need to be prepared for English class. The writer also noted that students

were cooperative and receptive throughout implementation of the program.

After just a few weeks of implementation, the writer's colleague observed some changes taking place in students' attitudes regarding preparation for the midterm examinations. During the marking term, the English teacher noted that all seven students had passed in 12 assignments on time. Despite having passed in all 12 assignments, two students still failed for the marking term. Six students regularly asked questions such as what type of test they could expect and how long they would have to complete the test. Additionally, these students were faithfully recording daily homework assignments in their calendars. Ellis, Deshler, Lenz, Schumaker, and Clark (1991) support the teaching of assignment completion strategy so that students can learn to effectively monitor their homework.

Another explanation for this outcome having been met is that students had access to computers for English assignments. Although the computer lab was not available during our class period, provision was made by the writer for laptops in the English classroom. Clearly, students preferred writing on the computers, especially those who experienced problems with handwriting.

During a discussion of homework assignments, the writer became aware of the many homework demands expected of students by colleagues. For instance, one teacher will not accept any late assignments; consequently, the student receives an "F". Another teacher will accept late assignments but will lower the grade for each day the assignment is late. Still another teacher accepts late assignments with no penalties. These inconsistent demands among colleagues create further confusion for

many students.

The writer found that Outcome 3 (report cards for each of the students at the end of the quarter will reflect two positive and zero negative comments from the English teacher) was not met. One explanation why this outcome was not met is that two students had to be repeatedly spoken to regarding their behavior in the classroom. For example, twice during the marking term one student had to be removed from class. However, none of these incidents occurred during the writer's teaching sessions.

Outcome 4 (on a study skills survey, six students will respond positively to 14 out of 18 questions regarding the implementation of study techniques) was achieved. One explanation for this outcome is that students felt more positive about their test-taking skills; therefore, they experienced less test anxiety. Another implication for the success of this outcome is students' study habits and organizational skills had been refined. Clearly, these six students recognized their learning style and successfully selected effective learning strategies.

Recommendations

The following recommendations can be used in the writer's workplace.

1. The study skills program should be expanded to include other English 9 collaborative classes.
2. A study skills program should be implemented for special education students during resource class.

3. Study skills training workshops should be offered to all high school teachers to provide them with the necessary skills to teach study skills.

4. A study skills workshop should be offered to parents of high school students to familiarize them with strategies to help their youngsters and to provide them an opportunity to become more actively involved in their children's education.

The following recommendations could benefit other school settings.

1. Study skills should be implemented in the early grades with ongoing instruction through high school.

2. Parent education in study skills should be made available in all schools to enable parents to become more actively involved in their youngsters' education, especially with their homework.

Dissemination

The results of this practicum have been disseminated to the building principal, English Department staff, and the assistant superintendent. The writer will share results of this practicum with other professionals through a presentation at a local workshop or a state conference.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Teacher Interview Form

TEACHER INTERVIEW FORM

Date:

Student's Name:

Teacher's Name:

QUESTIONS

1. Does the student use class time wisely?
2. Does the student complete and turn in homework on time?
3. Does the student come to class prepared to work?
4. Does the student complete tests with a passing grade?
5. Does the student take notes?

Results of interview:

APPENDIX B

Study Skills Survey

NINTH GRADE STUDY SKILLS PROGRAM CHECKLIST

Respond to each of the following questions. Bubble in the appropriate answer on the answer sheet. Use "A" for "Yes"; "B" for "No".

- | I. STUDY HABITS | YES | NO |
|---|-----|----|
| 1. Do you have all the supplies you need to do your work at school ? | A | B |
| 2. Do you have all the supplies you need to do your work at home ? | A | B |
| 3. Do you write down your assignments? | A | B |
| 4. Do you remember instructions? | A | B |
| 5. Do you study in a quiet place? | A | B |
| 6. Do you study the same time each day? | A | B |
| 7. Do you study without a lot of interruptions? | A | B |
| 8. Do you have a written weekly schedule or calendar of events? | A | B |
| II. READING HABITS | | |
| 9. Do you think about what the material is covering before you begin to read? | A | B |
| 10. Do you think about what the material is covering while you are reading? | A | B |
| 11. Do you review in your mind what you learned after you have read an assignment? | A | B |
| 12. Can you decide what is important to remember? | A | B |
| 13. Do you know how to take notes on what you have read? | A | B |

14. Are you able to remember information
about what you have read?

A B

III. TEST TAKING HABITS

YES NO

15. Do you feel you study properly for tests?

A B

16. Do you forget information that you have
studied?

A B

17. Have you developed a method for taking
tests?

A B

18. Are you nervous before taking a test?

A B