

Help High School Students Improve Their Study Skills

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Abstract (summary)

Although secondary level teachers often assume that all students have acquired sufficient study skills by the time they reach high school, many have not. Difficulties are especially common in the areas of listening, note-taking, test-taking, time management, and organizational skills. Because these skills are an essential part of independent learning, Lambert and Nowacek offer suggestions for high school teachers on how they can incorporate study skills in their instruction so that all students with learning disabilities acquire these necessary skills.

Full text

With the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), academic standards for students have significantly increased. Never before has it been more important for learners to maximize the time they spend studying. Although secondary level teachers often assume that all students have acquired sufficient study skills by the time they reach high school, many have not. Difficulties are especially common in the areas of listening, note-taking, test-taking, time management, and organizational skills (Polloway, Patton, & Serna, 2001). Because these skills are an essential part of independent learning, it is important that high school teachers incorporate study skills in their instruction so that all students with learning disabilities acquire these necessary skills.

Preparing to Study

- 1 Explain to students that 60 minutes of daytime study is equivalent to 90 minutes of nighttime Study. Encourage students to use time provided in class and study halls to work on assignments.
- 2 Assist students in establishing a routine. Reinforce using planners every day and encourage students to set aside a specific time each day to study.
- 3 Help students decide on a study area at home that is quiet well lighted, and free of distractions (e.g., telephone, friends, TV).
- 4 Instruct students to collect their materials (e.g., study guides, textbooks, notebooks, lecture notes, daily planner, pencils sharpened) before they begin to

study.

5 Teach students to set a study agenda. Generally, it is a good idea to schedule the most difficult task first.

6 Provide an assignment guide that breaks longterm assignments down into weekly tasks and include boxes where students can check off tasks as they are completed.

7 Instruct students to begin long-term projects as soon as they are assigned.

8 Remind students to have a positive attitude as they begin to study by replacing negative (e.g., "I can't do this") with positive self-talk.

Studying in the Content Areas

9 Show students how to prioritize their assignments and focus on one specific task at a time, rather than jumping from one assignment to another unrelated one.

10 Teach students to Plan their study time in 60-minute blocks: 50 minutes for study followed by a 10-minute break (Pauk, 1989).

11 Instruct students to preview a book chapter by reading the title and major subheads, looking at graphics, and reading the questions to be answered before they begin reading.

12 Demonstrate how to identify and paraphrase the main ideas at the end of each subheading in the chapter.

13 Use graphic organizers to summarize key information and show relationships among main ideas (e.g., Venn diagrams, concepts webs, flow charts, time lines).

14 Teach students to identify information they do not understand. If they do not understand the information the first time, tell them to think about the information again. If they still don't understand, then instruct them to choose a solution

(e.g., ask a teacher, do a Web search, look in a reference book).

15 Explain the importance of making positive statements to themselves while they study (e.g., I am doing a good job; I did a great job finding the answer myself; I am making progress.).

Following up After Studying

16 Work with students to move class materials they are not using daily out of their notebook and into an accordion file or a larger notebook so it is available for study by chapter, unit and end-of-year tests. Before they move the materials into the file, instruct them to paperclip all related materials together. For example, if they read a chapter in physical science, did homework for the chapter, and took a quiz, they would clip these together. Ideally, they would write a summary of key ideas covered in the clipped materials (Sedita, 1999).

17 Practice writing three questions students would like to discuss in class based on what they have read or studied. Remind them that one of the last steps in studying is to follow up by writing these questions. Perhaps you could provide 5 minutes at the end of class for this activity to help students establish this routine.

18 Encourage students to ask, "How does what I have read relate to the unit as a whole?"

19 Have students write a reminder at the bottom of their planners to put completed homework in their notebooks and backpacks to turn in at the end of the class period.

20 Teach students to give themselves a reward at the end of study time (e.g., watch TV, call a friend, play a game, listen to a CD).

Persons interested in submitting material for 20 Ways To . . . should contact Robin H. Lock, College of Education, Box 41071, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX 76409-1701.

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