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# THE 5 C'S: A PROBLEM-SOLVING APPROACH TO STUDY SKILLS

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The most expansive and mobilizing impression a student can acquire is that *what is, may be, but it can be otherwise*. The attitude that all life and circumstances are amenable to analysis and some measure of modification is the avowed purpose of the strategy to improve "Study Skills" described below.

A set of guidelines has been evolved which simultaneously aids the student to meet various reading/learning/study needs while internalizing the fundamentals of problem-solving. This we have called PASS, a Problem-solving Approach to Study Skills. There are two critical features of this approach. For one, an oral language/thinking interaction occurs between the teacher and the class in which the teacher, in the role of facilitator and resource person, serves as a model of effective language and problem-solving behaviors. Second, the student joins with the teacher in the common cause of diagnosing and dealing appropriately with personal learning needs. This approach tends to reduce much of the dependency and child-like behavior students often exhibit when involved in more traditional basic skills instruction.

Five C's code our rendition of a problem-solving approach to study skills. The teacher may wish to employ other problem-solving approaches which he/she finds compatible with his/her thinking.

## *THE 5 C's:*

### COUNT:

A list of common study skills is presented to students. They are asked to indicate their judgments as to the severity of each as a problem to them. By simple count and averaging, it can be determined how problems should be ordered for class discussion and treatment.

### CHARACTERIZE:

Once a general problem has been identified, the teacher/convener guides students in defining the problem and themselves in specific terms. A general problem may come to be seen in different ways. In test taking, for example, for some, the problem may be lack of systematic preparation; for others, the problem may be anxiety. In any case, the problem often is

in the student in some way as well as in the situation. Thus in this step, the teacher should urge the student to take diagnostic tests of his skills, abilities and such, and thereby reach a firmer sense of himself as a learner. (See recommended instrumentation.)

**CONSIDER:**

Next, students are led to consider how they intuitively have dealt with a particular problem. The likelihood that better learning habits will be “learned” is felt to be increased when initial credence is given to the methods students gravitate toward personally. The discussion should revolve around whether there is merit in such intuitive means for coping.

**COLLECT:**

At this point, appropriate myths, “old saws,” and standard techniques related to the particular reading/study problem are discussed. (See partial bibliography of standard techniques.) Each is examined in terms of “what aspects of the problem it solves and what problems it presents.” As procedures are examined, they are judged on the basis of whether they are compatible with the student’s habitual patterns of behavior and temperament. Thorough examination should reveal what, of the student and/or the procedure, can be altered readily, and what might require a level of extraordinary—perhaps to the point of warping—effort . . . and therefore might better be accepted as a technique of marginal effectiveness, unless an alternative plan can be devised.

**CREATE:**

Where standard procedures have not sufficed, and marginal performance cannot be tolerated, inventive strategies are sought, through creative problem-solving. Depending upon how sensitive and complex the problem, this can be done through group discussion of an individual’s problem, or in private with the instructor during a conference period.

*How Effective is PASS?*

The evidence for a problem-solving approach to study skills is mounting slowly, but steadily. Traditional lines of empirical research are difficult to follow due to the complexity of the objectives, the extemporaneous nature of the strategy, and the paucity of literature and common concern with the general idea. Careful case studies of several students currently are being gathered over a year long period to see the extent to which these support earlier impressions and the anecdotal reports of teachers trained in the strategy.\*

A recent book, *Personal Problem Solving in the Classroom* (Mor-

rierson, 1977), follows a line of reasoning and approach to learning which parallels the one recommended. Morrison, who calls his approach a “reality technique,” also developed his support in an anecdotal manner.

We agree, too, with Morrison that this type of teaching methodology must be appreciated first from an ideological point of view as one which is needed.

One of the major supportive reasons for the inclusion of this form of teaching methodology in a study skills class can be stated in this way: identifying, articulating and solving nagging problems, which is the primary purpose of PASS, is a powerful means of realistically raising hope and fighting failure. Hope, observed O. H. Mowrer, the hard-nosed learning theorist, is an attitude with an accompanying body chemical change which is unparalleled for its impact on motivation to learn and to move forward.

PASS lessons, then, are addressed to attitudinal, affective, and cognitive factors. The belief is that this more holistic approach will prove to be more effective than current methodologies which tend to focus rather exclusively on reading/academic skills as if these somehow were entities apart from other human attributes and foibles.

#### Partial List of Diagnostic Instruments Which We Have Found Useful

##### *Reading/Study Skills*

1. Textbook Diagnostic Test (see David L. Shepherd, *Comprehensive High School Reading Methods*. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1973).
2. Wofford and Willoughby Study Practices Inventory (available from T. Lee Willoughby, University of Missouri-Kansas City).
3. Watson-Glaser test of Critical Thinking (Psychological Corporation).
4. Brown-Carlsen Listening Comprehension Test (Psychological Corporation).
5. Critical Judgments test (available from Manzo and Casale at no charge).

##### *Affective/Attitudinal/Learning Styles*

1. Estes Attitude Scale (*Journal of Reading*, Nov., 1971).
2. Manzo Learning Preference Inventory (available from author at no charge).
3. Manzo Bestiary Inventory (available from author at no charge). Projective Test
4. Brown-Holtzman Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes (Psychological Corporation).

*Intelligence and Verbal Ability*

1. Tests of General Ability (K-12, Science Research Associates).
2. Gorham's Proverbs Test (Psychological Test Specialists).
3. Slosson IQ test.
4. Peabody Picture Vocabulary test (American Guidance Association).
5. Raven Progressive Matrices (Psychological Corporation).

*Bibliography of Standard Techniques for Students*

BFAR (A reading-study method)

Clark McKowan, *Get Your A Out of College*, Northernaire Publishers, Martinez, CA (1979).

CORNELL NOTETAKING SYSTEM (& OK5R)

Walter Pauk *How to Study in College*, second edition, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1974.

MAPPING

M. Buckley Hanf "Mapping: A Technique for Translating Reading into Thinking" *Journal of Reading*, January, 1971.

PANORAMA

P. Edwards, "PANORAMA: A Study Technique" *Journal of Reading*, Vol. 17, 1973.

REAP

Anthony V. Manzo & Marilyn Eanet, "REAP: a strategy for improving reading/writing/study skills" *Journal of Reading*, 1976.

SQ3R

Francis P. Robinson, *Effective Study*, fourth edition, New York: Harper and Row, 1970.

STATEMENT-PIE

Laia Hanau *How to Play and Win with "Statement-PIE,"* New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1974.

TQLR (listening technique)

Don H. Parker, *Instructor's handbook to SRA Laboratory IVA*. Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1959.

WRECK (notetaking system)

Fred Duffelmeyer, Drake University.

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\*"Preliminary assessment of PASS—or 5 C's—A Study Skills Methodology for Professional School Use." Ula Casale & Brenda Kelly *Journal of Reading*—in press.