

S-4 teaches students how to study

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Many high achieving students in local high schools understand complex concepts but have difficulties retaining the information because they were never taught how to study.

For the past two years, Michelle Sagalyn has worked with youth in New Haven, Fairfield and Westchester counties on implementing studying techniques that result in improved test scores.

As president of Successful Study Skills 4 Students, or "S-4," Sagalyn hires professional teachers with masters' degrees to lead workshops for students, parents and even other educators.

To prepare students for upcoming mid-term exams, S-4 Study Skills is hosting a 3-

hour workshop at the Fairfield Public Library on Saturday, Dec. 8 and Saturday, Dec. 15; programs begin at 1:30 p.m. both days.

Participants should register for one of these sessions; the fee is \$250.

As mid-term exams approach, students are typically fraught with stress and anxiety, Sagalyn explained.

"They don't have the structure in place to study," Sagalyn said. "They don't know how to prepare for the test. However, when you give them a plan for how they're going to tackle the subject and study for the test, they feel completely relieved."

And, when a teenager is happy, so is the rest of the family. Sagalyn said it's not uncommon for parents to share in their daughter or son's anxious feelings.

"The whole family gets sucked into this angst-ridden situation," Sagalyn continued. "Through our program, we try to give families some peace of mind as well as the students."

Although the library workshop is specifically geared towards preparing for mid-terms, S-4 also sponsors more extensive study skills workshops.

Students gather for one and a half hour sessions for five weeks, Sagalyn said. This gives young people the opportunity to apply what they've learned directly to their academic subjects. If questions arise, they could address their concerns the following week with S-4's instructional leader.

S-4's curriculum includes how to take notes during a class lecture and also while reading from a text book. Sag-

alyn said there's an emphasis on using visuals to retain information, asking questions in class and using a planner to stay organized. Time management skills are a part of the study program, too.

Writing a summary of materials covered is another way to effectively process information. Being able to consolidate the lecture's salient points is a great way to ensure that a student thoroughly understands all that he or she has heard.

"These are not just tools for becoming efficient in school — they're also tools for life," Sagalyn noted.

Parent Lynn Moore of Fairfield is pleased with the learning her son Morgan received as a freshman a few years ago. Currently a senior at Fairfield Ludlowe High School, Morgan also took a workshop during winter break of his junior

year when he was enrolled in "the most rigorous class at Fairfield Ludlowe — American Studies — which is an Advanced Placement, combination class of history and literature."

"The most important thing I noticed as a parent is that Morgan learned how to study," Moore said.

Because he didn't learn these "helpful techniques" in school, though, Morgan "didn't know what he didn't know."

Once he learned how to prepare for a test by attending S-4 workshops, the test itself became much easier.

"I learned how to read and use a note-taking system that changed the way I experienced school," said Morgan.

Over the years, Moore observed her son gain confidence that enhanced his over-

all academic success.

Although Sagalyn's professional background is in business development for media companies, she founded S-4 Study Skills because she saw a need for a study skills program among her own family and those around her. Children in elementary schools may be taught the rudiments of studying but as each grade level progresses — and the curriculum becomes increasing complex — there isn't enough time to devote to the art of taking the test.

To help her youngest son's sixth grade class, Sagalyn led a study skills workshop.

"The response was overwhelming," Sagalyn said. "S-4 naturally evolved from there."

Information about the program is available at 203-307-5455 or SuccessfulStudySkill s4Students.com.