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Your Student, The Common Core State Standards and Study Skills

by Michelle Sagalyn

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There's no doubt that there are myriad demands placed upon students these days. Between new and rigorous academic goals set forth by the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), state testing pressures, concerns over getting into college, requirements of schools, and extracurricular commitments, it's a wonder that students can even find the time to think.

How can parents do their part to support and make sure their student is less burdened by stress and better able to succeed happily in today's competitive academic landscape?

One answer seems very simple at first glance—perhaps too simple: Teach them study skills. In other words, make sure that they know how to study, process, and remember what they learn.

Common Core State Standards and Your Student: Going Deeper

The Common Core State Standards are set of academic goals adopted by 46 state departments of education and, voluntarily, by a number of private and parochial schools across the country. They are shared, measurable goals and provide consistency in expectations for student achievement and prepare students for success in college and careers. The goals are ambitious; they set an intention for students to become adept at critical thinking and analysis.

The CCSS are not a curriculum, nor do they require or provide curriculum. What, specifically, is taught to reach the aims of the CCSS is left up to teachers and districts. However, the standards require students to approach their studies in a different way and teachers to teach material in a different way.

For example, students have always been taught that they need to invert before dividing fractions (for example, $\frac{1}{2} \div \frac{1}{4}$ becomes $\frac{1}{2} \times \frac{4}{1}$). Now, under CCSS, they will need to understand and explain the concepts behind the procedure of inverting, says Dr. Bill Glass, Deputy Superintendent of Schools in Danbury. In other words, they must be able to explain *why* inverting is necessary, rather than simply memorizing the idea that a fraction must be flipped before it can be divided. This is a different level of teaching and learning. "This shift will require teachers to learn new strategies and approaches to teaching," adds Dr. Glass.

Key Skills Needed to Succeed

While teachers are busy organizing lessons to meet CCSS, they likely will not have the bandwidth to teach basic study skills—if they ever did before. But imagine how much easier life would be for teachers, students, parents and districts, if students arrived in class already knowing how to approach, learn and delve deeper into their studies.

By focusing on key learning methods, processes, and strategies, students can establish a foundation for high-level thought, greater retention and deeper understanding of their academic material.

To have the best chance at success in today's classrooms, students need a collection of skills, strategies, and systems, which can be classified into three main categories.

1. Active reading and listening: Note-taking, self-assessment techniques, building on knowledge, determining main ideas and supporting details

2. Time management: Planning out assignments and study time, using a planner, setting goals, setting priorities

3. Executive functioning: Breaking down large tasks into smaller pieces, self-evaluation, choosing the right strategy for the task at hand, making decisions

When practiced, good study skills can lead to better:

- Classroom engagement
- Focus

- Motivation
- Preparation for class, tests, and projects
- Information synthesis
- Understanding of the material
- Retention
- Confidence
- Independent learning

Learning key study systems provides a sturdy scaffold upon which students are able to build their learning. With practice, these study methods become habits that provide a platform for achieving academic success, and eventually, career goals and opportunities. With a well-equipped toolbox, students are able to take ownership of their learning and are more confident, independent, and successful in their academic work and their lives beyond.

More info: corestandards.org

Free study skills booklet offered

School is out, but that doesn't mean that parents shouldn't start preparing their student for the next grade. Both parents and their students may be nervous about making the transition from elementary to middle school, or middle school to high school. Or, perhaps they're excited, but just unsure of what, exactly, to expect. Each transition takes students to a new level of responsibility and expectations—as well as great opportunities and experiences.

To help ease these transitions, S4 (Successful Study Skills 4 Students, LLC, located in Southport) is offering two complimentary e-books; S4's Successfully Transitioning to Middle School and S4's Successfully Transitioning to High School. In each guide, parents and students will learn about key skills that will help students succeed in a new School:

- Self-advocacy
- Active learning
- Planning
- Time management
- Confidence
- Responsibility

The strategies are adapted from S4's study-skills workshops, which will in July and August in Connecticut and Westchester counties. The workshops offer a more in-depth approach to studying, note-taking, time management, project management, and self-advocacy," according to a release.

Parents may download the free e-books at S4StudySkills.com.

S4 partners with public, independent, charter and parochial schools to offer "an accessible, logical, and easy-to-implement study-skills system. The program is designed to work with all curriculum. To date, more than 1,000 students have participated in the S4 program to learn valuable skills for better classroom engagement, increased focus, and better preparation for class, tests, and projects, according to a release. In addition to, hosting student workshops, the company also offers professional development and parent workshops

