

World Literacy Crusade

Introduction

The following report describes the application of Study Technology in an inner-city community setting in Los Angeles, California, known as the World Literacy Crusade (WLC). The program assists school age and adult students by helping them take charge of their own learning process and self-correct as they encounter learning difficulties.

More specifically, the object of the program is to turn students into strategic learners who become self aware and able to identify when comprehension is failing. Strategic learners know and can proficiently apply the appropriate tool to correct any learning difficulty. Thus they are able to comprehend and apply the material studied.

Students are illiterate or semi-literate when they come into this program. They may be able to identify words on a page or with difficulty be able to align letters into words, but are not able to comprehend the words they read. They have not made the transition from “learning to read” to “reading to learn”. This deficiency in ability to comprehend and apply what they read results in an ever widening achievement gap that puts school-age students at risk of school failure and drop-out and adults at risk of being unemployable.

Most of the program’s participants come from local area public schools. About 50% are between the ages of 12 and 16 and about 35% are in the 7 to 11 year range. Some have dropped out of school or are in alternative schools/programs and are referred by other community organizations and agencies. The academic content addressed in the program is comparable to that found in the public school curriculum. A few participants are adults who come into contact with the program either through children in their family participating or by simply walking into the center to get help with their literacy problems.

The ethnic composition reflects the composition of the local communities from which the program draws—Compton, Lynwood and Watts—predominantly African-American with a substantial Hispanic population.

Study Technology

The success and impact of WLC derives from its reliance on pedagogy known as Study Technology. The word “technology” is used in its original sense, meaning “the application of an art or science” rather than referring to the use of computers in the classroom. Study Technology is, therefore, a method of application of specialized academic skills

and principles that provide the student with methods of learning. Study Technology was developed by humanitarian and educator, L. Ron Hubbard. It is in use in 54 countries in public and private schools, community programs, as well as in job training and job readiness programs. Programs using Study Technology are licensed under Applied Scholastics International, a non-profit organization now based in St. Louis, Missouri.

Instruction in Study Technology includes training the student to identify learning barriers and to monitor his/her own comprehension. When comprehension breaks down, the student is trained to pinpoint the precise difficulty and correct it. The student masters the technique in step-by-step fashion. Vocabulary and dictionary skills are emphasized. Graphical aids, hands-on materials and manipulatives are used to increase understanding. Cooperative learning, peer tutoring and communication skills are also elements of this methodology. Progress through the program is self-paced.

Scientifically-Based Instruction

The authors of the publication, *Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading* (1985) described the characteristics of a good reader as one who:

- Can construct meaning from text
- Reads fluently
- Is a strategic reader, controlling his/her reading in relation to the purpose and nature of the material being read
- Is motivated to read and can sustain attention and interest
- Continues to practice and refine reading skills
- Treats reading as a lifelong pursuit

Research has emphasized that in order to create strategic, active readers, students should be given direct instruction on steps to take when using comprehension “fix-up” strategies. They should not only be taught comprehension strategies explicitly, but should be taught how, why, and when to use them. Students need to be able to monitor their reading process and repair breakdowns in understanding when they occur, thus becoming self-directed, purposeful, independent learners. The WLC program provides students with specialized tutoring to develop these reading/study skills.

The educational standards created by each state delineate what students should know and be able

to accomplish by grade level across the basic content areas. Underlying the comprehension of each of these content areas is the skill of being able to read for understanding and application.

Background and Organization of the World Literacy Crusade

World Literacy Crusade is a non-profit, educational organization that was formed in 1992 as a community response to the Los Angeles riots by Reverend Alfreddie Johnson, a Baptist Minister from Compton, California. Reverend Johnson was joined by community leaders, ministers, parents, youth and educators concerned about the growing rate of illiteracy and related social ills in their communities. WLC was formed to incorporate Study Technology into an existing inner-city youth program. The organization continues to work in the community with both youth and adults, providing training and one-on-one tutoring and consistently achieving a high level of study improvement in the participants. The program has grown to twenty-seven chapters in the United States and seven chapters overseas.

An Overview of the Intervention

World Literacy Crusade has the purpose of salvaging inner city youth from gangs, crime and drugs by providing them with educational skills that will enable them to achieve success in life. The essence of the program is the training of students in the systematic strategic learning methods that are part of Study Technology.

Initially incoming participants are interviewed and tested on the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT) for the purpose of determining skill level and particular areas of concern or difficulty. Based upon the information gathered in this first step, the participant is given an individual program of study and tutoring, which might include any or all of the following:

Learning how to learn, using books such as *Learning How to Learn*, *Study Skills for Life* or *Basic Study Manual*, the core materials for developing strategic learning skills

- Phonics instruction
- A grammar and communication course
- Training in use of the dictionary
- Interpersonal communication training

One of the strategies of Study Technology that the student must learn is to identify when comprehension of study material has broken down – and then apply the correct tool to achieve understanding. This often involves finding the words that are not adequately understood and using a dictionary to fully clarify their meaning. Thus, there is extensive work with dictionaries and the book *How to Use a Dictionary Picture Book for Children*.

Students who have had significant study problems often have communication difficulties. By increasing the student's ability to communicate via interpersonal communication training, the student becomes far more able to apply the learning skills acquired.

Services are delivered by a corps of volunteers recruited from the community and trained in-house in the specialized methods of Study Technology. Tutoring programs are also delivered in local schools.

Use of Tests to Measure Reading Level

The reading section of the Wide Range Achievement Test is used initially to establish the skill levels of students. It is administered again later in the programs of students to track their progress. Of the various components of the WRAT, the reading test is the one which most closely taps the skills and knowledge the program addresses.

Results

To demonstrate the effectiveness of the WLC program, the records of 199 participants for whom both pre-test and post-test data had been collected were examined. The usual length of participation was about one year.

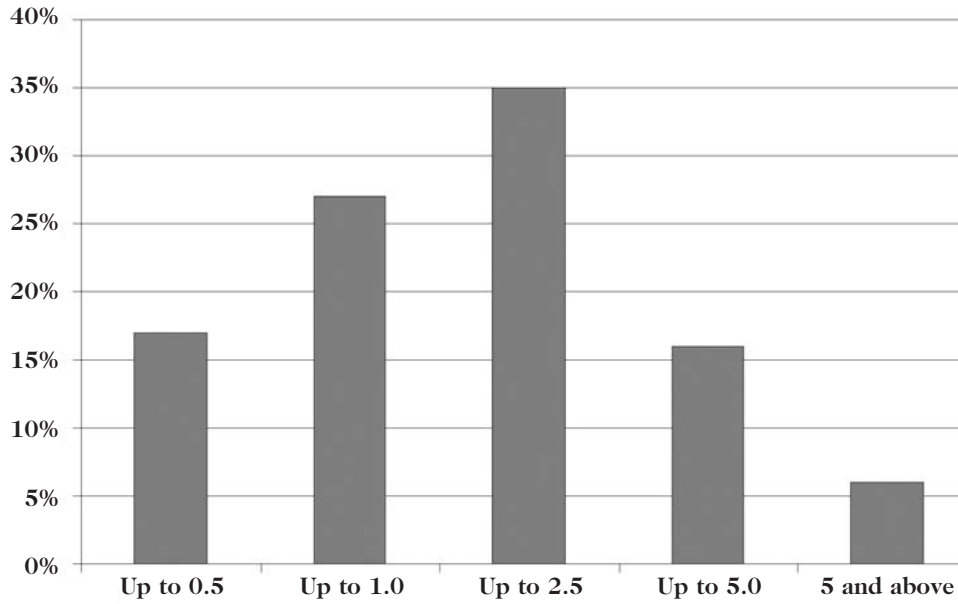
The graph on the next page shows the grade level improvement for participants in the sample.

Summary of Results

The results shown in the graph would be outstanding even if there were not the challenging inner-city environment. Literacy improved substantially for these 199 participants.

- 57% of the 199 participants increased their reading level by 2.5 grade levels or better.
- 22% achieved an increase of five or more grade levels.

**World Literacy Crusade
Grade Level Improvements (WRAT Scores)**



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