

Applied Scholastics
Study Technology Programs in
Inner-City Community Settings

(Los Angeles Area)

Introduction:

The following is an initial report on two Applied Scholastics programs that utilize Study Technology in after-school inner-city community settings. Both programs are based in the Los Angeles area and are targeted to assist students by providing unique methods that assist them in taking charge of their own learning process and self-correct as they encounter difficulties. These students are illiterate or semi-literate when they come to these programs, i.e., 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, therefore, puts them at risk of school failure. The programs teach metacognitive strategies by which a student can monitor his/her own comprehension and identify and remedy breakdowns in understanding when these occur. The goal is to help the students develop skills so that they can self-correct as they encounter difficulties in a subject area.

The goal of these programs is to fill a critical need in relevant learning skills by providing students the tools to not only stay focused, stay in school and master their studies, but to also become strategic, self-motivated, self-sufficient, life-long learners who know *how* to learn.

The majority of the participants come from local area public schools. Some have dropped out of school or are in alternative schools/programs and are referred by other community organizations and agencies. In addition, a small percentage of adults participate in the program. These adults come into contact with the program either through children in their family participating in the program or by simply walking into the center to get help with their literacy problems. The academic content addressed in these programs is comparable to that found in the public school curriculum.

Background of Study Technology:

The two community programs in this report, the World Literacy Crusade (WLC) and the Hollywood Literacy Project (HELP), both utilize a method of study skills known as Study Technology. The term “Study Technology” uses the word technology 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 how to learn. Study Technology was developed by author 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 utilizing Study Technology in the United States and other countries are licensed under Applied Scholastics International, a U.S. based non-profit organization.

Instruction in Study Technology includes training the student to identify barriers to study, so he/she can monitor his/her own comprehension. When the student encounters one of the barriers to study, i.e., when comprehension breaks down, the student is trained to pinpoint the precise difficulty and correct it. The student masters the technique in a 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.

Study Technology links the skills of learning to read to those skills which enable students to read to learn.

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, refine reading skills, and treat 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.

After-school Study Technology programs such as WLC and HELP provide students with specialized tutoring to develop these skills.

The educational standards documents 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.

While virtually all states include comprehension instruction under the areas of reading and language arts, some students require additional direct instruction in reading comprehension strategies. Community assistance, such as after-school programs, can provide the additional one-on-one instruction necessary to fill this gap.

Two Applied Scholastics Inner-City Community Programs:

World Literacy Crusade (WLC):

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) and community leaders, ministers, parents, youth, and educators concerned about the growing rate of illiteracy and related social ills in their

communities. Rev. Johnson incorporated Study Technology into his existing inner city youth program to form the World Literacy Crusade. The program has since grown to twenty-seven chapters in the U.S. and seven chapters overseas.

The World Literacy Crusade is oriented to the goal 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.

World Literacy Crusade works in the community with both youth and adults and provides one-on-one tutoring and training. WLC tutoring and training are delivered by a corps of volunteers recruited from the community and trained through an in-house training program on the specialized methods. The program also delivers tutorial programs in the local schools such as the Gompers Middle School program discussed below.

Demographics:

The participants in the program reflect the ethnic composition of the local communities from which the program draws – Compton, Lynwood and Watts – predominantly Black with a substantial Hispanic population.

Hollywood Education and Literacy Project (HELP):

The Hollywood Education and Literacy Project (HELP) began in 1996. This community program is non-profit, staffed by paid employees and volunteers that works with local youth and adults teaching them study and communication skills. The program has received some funding from the State of California's Youth Mentoring Initiative and been acknowledged by the Hollywood Police Activities League for its community services for at-risk youth.

The program has received the Spirit of Mentoring Award at the National Mentoring Conference. Additionally, HELP board member, Tom Cruise, was recognized by the National Mentoring Partnership with their annual Mentoring Award for his work with HELP.

The center is open six days a week from 10 A.M to 9 P.M. weekdays, with shorter Saturday hours. Services are provided by tutors/mentors who volunteer for the program. They come in through word-of-mouth promotion from the community and are trained in Study Technology. Prospective tutors are screened and receive forty hours of intensive training to be a tutor/mentor in the project. Upon completion, the volunteers make a commitment to assist a student for the length of the student's program and are then assigned to work one-on-one with a student four hours per week.

Demographics:

The demographics include the following breakdowns:

Gender:

50%	53	Male
49%	52	Female
1%	1	No data

Ethnicity:

58%	62	Hispanic
16%	17	White
10%	11	Asian
8%	9	Black
4%	4	No Data
3%	3	Other

Age:

6%	6	5 though 9 years	8%	8	25 though 35 years
28%	30	10 through 12 years	8%	8	36 through 50 years
22%	23	13 through 15 years	1%	1	Older than 50
18%	19	16 though 18 years	1%	1	No data
9%	10	19 through 24 years			

The HELP program has expanded to 21 projects in the continental United States. Each program is a volunteer organization utilizing the same system and organizational pattern as the original Hollywood program. The Hollywood center, while maintaining its delivery of assistance to the local community, has also become the training organization for these projects and for those who wish to utilize the HELP model and Study Technology in their community.

An Overview of the Intervention:

The World Literacy Crusade program and the Hollywood Education and Literacy Program are very similar in their programmatic implementation of the Study Technology. Both programs consistently achieve a high level of study improvement in the students – both young people and adults.

The essence of these programs is the training of the student in the systematic strategic learning methods which are part of Study Technology. Thus both programs embody similar approaches in working with the students.

The essential features of the intervention

The essential features of both programs are:

- An initial interview and testing for the purpose of determining the skill level, particular areas of difficulty and particular concerns of the new student. For assessment purposes WLC uses WRAT (Wide Range Achievement Test) and HELP uses CTBS (Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills).
- Based upon the information learned in the initial step, the student is given an individualized tutoring and study program. This may include phonics instruction,

remedial grammar and addresses specific subject areas which may be problematic for the student.

- A key element emphasized throughout the program is for the student to understand the definitions of the words he/she is reading so that the materials can be fully comprehended. Thus there is extensive work with dictionaries and a persistent emphasis upon the student fully understanding the material being read. Both programs utilize the books, *How to Use a Dictionary Picture Book for Children*, *Learning How to Learn*, and *Grammar and Communication for Children*, based on the works of L. Ron Hubbard. One of the important strategic learning techniques in Study Technology is precisely helping the student to become an aware learner who is able to identify when he/she is no longer effectively comprehending the material being read – and then being able to apply the correct Study Technology strategy to correct the non-comprehension. This often involves finding the words which are not adequately understood and using a dictionary to fully clarify their meaning.
- As the student progresses through WLC or HELP program, he/she gains additional knowledge of the Study Technology learning strategies and becomes skilled in the self-application of these tools. To this end, both organizations include training the student on the Study Technology materials using the books *Study Skills for Life* or *The Basic Study Manual*. The core materials of these programs facilitate the student's ability to develop strategic learning skills.
- Finally, both programs include a course in interpersonal communication skills. Students who have had significant study problems often have communication difficulties. By increasing the student's ability to communicate, the student becomes far more able to *apply* the learning skills he/she has acquired.

Strategic Comprehension:

Study Technology programs are comprehensive strategic learning programs emphasizing learning *how* to learn. The goal of these programs is for the student to be able to *comprehend and apply* the material being studied, to become self-aware and able to identify when his/her comprehension is failing, and to know and be able to proficiently apply the appropriate strategic tools to correct the difficulty.

The Use of Tests to Measure Reading Level:

WRAT and CTBS tests are useful for the programs to help establish the initial skill levels of the students. Thus it became logical to test the students at the end of the program using the same tests which were utilized at the beginning of the program. Of the various components of WRAT and CTBS, the reading test is the one which most closely taps the skills and knowledge which the programs address. The reading test scores are a relevant measure.

Because the program relates primarily to understanding written materials, the reading tests give us one measurement of how well a student is understanding what he/she is reading.

As the attached graphs and data show, both programs produce significant results and success for those who undertake the program.

Voluntary versus Required Participation:

In the main, students in both the WLC and the HELP programs are enrolled on a voluntary basis. Students – whether youth or adult – come to the program and participate in it because they wish to become better learners.

However, in the Gompers Middle School program which was run by WLC, the students were required by the school to attend the program, as it was delivered during normal school hours.

Test Results:

The following results are compiled from a database of 323 students. The students participated in these two intervention programs for approximately one year. 53% of these 323 students increased their reading level by more than 1.5 grade levels over the course of one year. Additionally 31% increased their reading level by more than 2.5 grade levels.

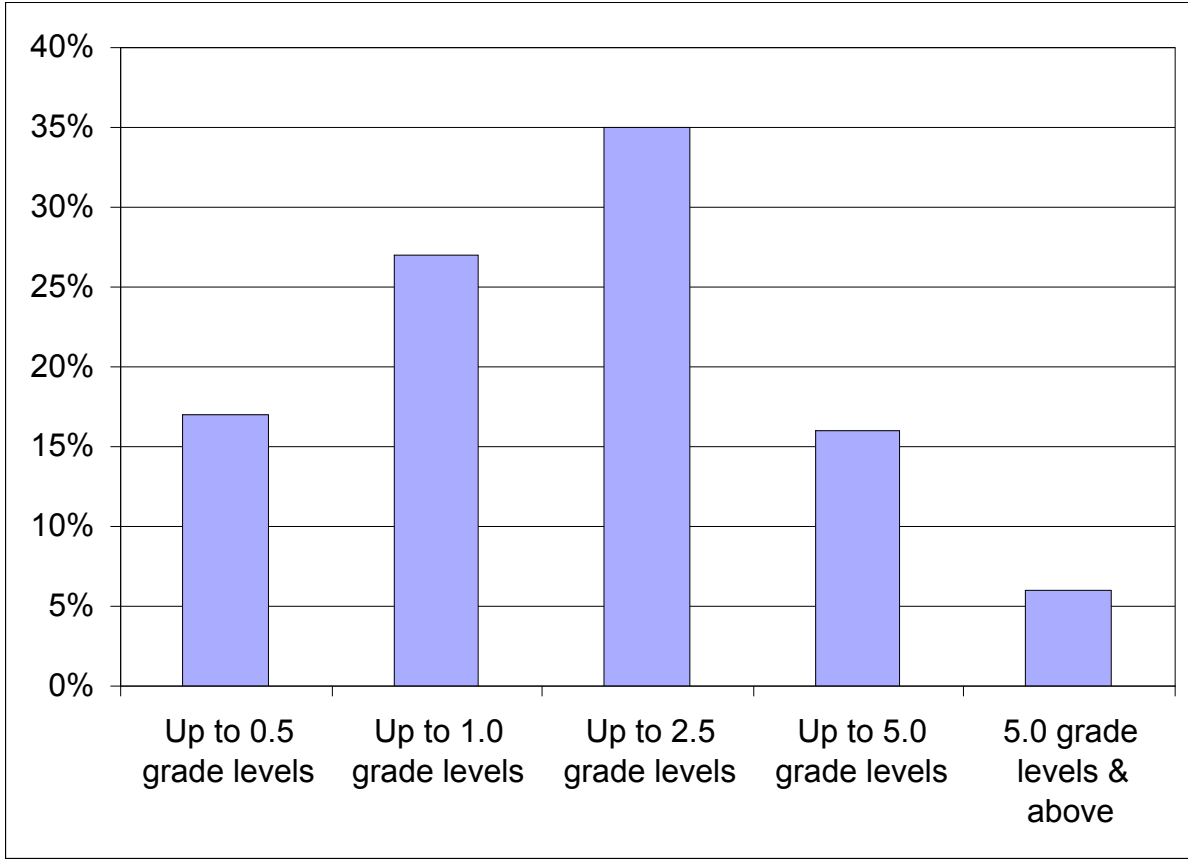
Below are summaries of the “before” and “after” test scores from the World Literacy Crusade and the Hollywood Education and Literacy Program.

At the WLC, 199 individuals were pre and post tested. An additional 24 individuals tested in the program at the Gompers Middle School. This makes a total of 223 tested students in the database. WLC uses the WRAT test. The data reported here is the WRAT Reading test. In the past, WLC has used two forms of WRAT tests – WRAT2 and WRAT3 Tan Reading Test (which is the form currently being used). However, in each pre and post test, it is consistent that each student was given the WRAT2 or WRAT3 Tan Reading Test.

100 individuals in the HELP database were pre and post tested. They were tested using the CTBS test published by McGraw-Hill. HELP uses the same “Level” of testing material in their pre and post tests – the “Level” to be used is established through the use of the Locator Test which is given when the person starts the program. The Locator Test and the “before” and “after” tests are available for review.

The test scores from WLC and HELP have been compiled into a single Excel spreadsheet contained in the Appendix. The spreadsheet contains the names or initials of the students, general demographic data, the date of the initial test and test scores (by grade level), the date of the final tests and the test scores. (In some cases for HELP the student took an intermediary test. This data is included where it exists, although the computation of the “before” and “after” tests have relied only on the first and the final test scores.)

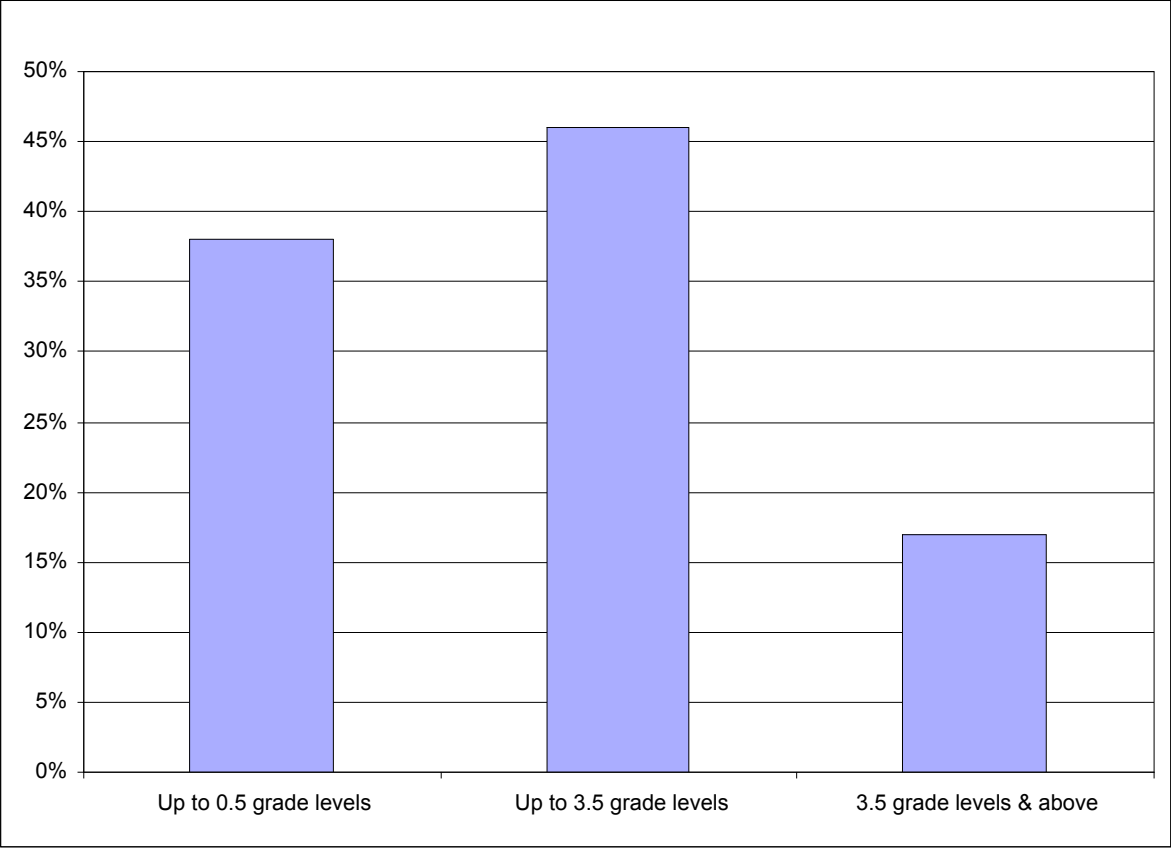
**World Literacy Crusade Program
(Voluntary Participation)
Grade Level Improvements
(WRAT Test Scores)**



17%	34	Up to 0.5 grade levels
27%	53	Up to 1.0 grade levels
35%	69	Up to 2.5 grade levels
16%	32	Up to 5.0 grade levels
6%	11	5.0 grade levels and above

Close to 50% of the students attending the WLC program are between the ages of 12 and 16. About 35% are in the 7 to 11 year old range. These students come from a challenging inner-city environment. 58% improved at least one grade level through the program, with many progressing two or more grade levels.

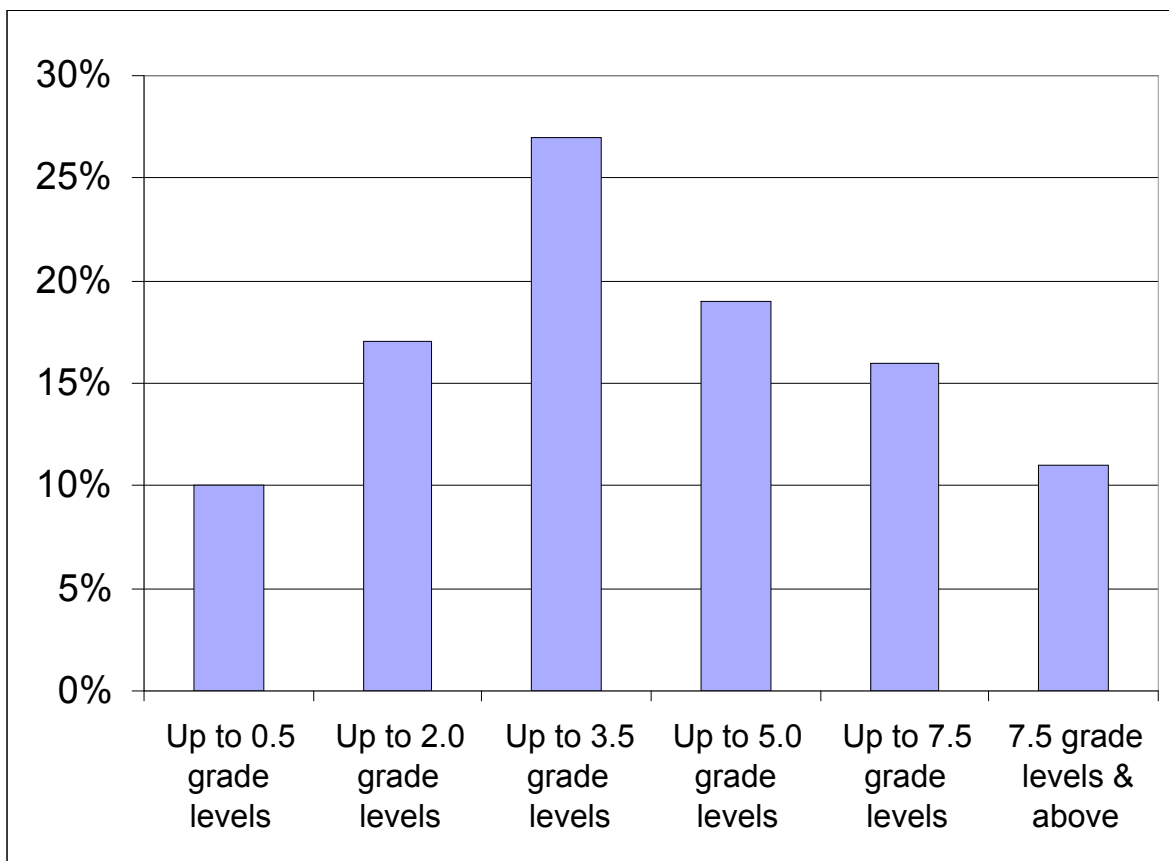
**World Literacy Gompers Middle School Program
Grade Level Improvements
(WRAT Test Scores)**



38%	9	Up to 0.5 grade levels
46%	11	Up to 3.5 grade levels
17%	4	3.5 grade levels and above

The Gompers program was conducted in an inner-city middle school with students who were 11 to 14 years old. The program lasted one school year. Although the program addressed students who previously had not been progressing well, with the intensive work and the well structured environment of an in-school program, more than half of the students improved by a minimum of a full grade level with many achieving increases of three or more grade levels.

HELP Program
 (Voluntary Participation)
Grade Level Improvements
 (CTBS Test Scores)



10%	10	Up to 0.5 grade levels
17%	17	Up to 2.0 grade levels
27%	27	Up to 3.5 grade levels
19%	19	Up to 5.0 grade levels
16%	16	Up to 7.5 grade levels
11%	11	7.5 grade levels and above

50% of the students at HELP are between the ages of 10 and 15. About 6% are younger and the remainder older, with 9% older than 36 years of age. 62% of the students are of Hispanic origin. HELP intervention improved reading scores by two or more grade levels in 73% of the students tested. HELP is also able to achieve such results on students well beyond the fourth grade in formal schooling. In fact, 48% of the tested students in the database presented here are 13 years of age or older.