StudySkills.com
by SOAR® STUDY SKILLS

SOAR® Study Skills presents…

The Importance of Study Skills

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Special Report: How Do Study Skills Raise Standardized Test Scores?

Educators are under enormous pressure to have students perform well on standardized tests. Since standardized tests assess students' mastery of state benchmarks, it is well known that the best way to improve scores is to provide clear instruction of those benchmarks.

As a result, teachers and administrators are spending vast amounts of time "mapping" their curriculum, carefully aligning their instruction to match state expectations. **However, the most solid curriculum map in the world does nothing to ensure that students will learn that content effectively.**

In other words, you can teach all the right content, but that does not guarantee that students are "getting it." Or, that they will "keep it."

Imagine the path to Benchmark Mastery is a freeway. The students enter the freeway as the teacher introduces the Benchmark to the class. They have a series of reading assignments, lectures, homework, and assessments to complete along their journey.

But, at each mile-marker, there are obstacles that can interfere with their progress towards Benchmark Mastery. Some students overcome these obstacles, but at every interval, several are forced to take the nearest exit ramp. **Very few students will actually reach the final destination.**

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

The teacher had done his part. He has followed his curriculum map, covered the benchmark, and provided plenty of instruction, practice, and assessment along the way.

The problem is, the STUDENTS DON'T KNOW HOW TO LEARN! Take a closer look at some of these obstacles to see how they push students off course:

Mile Marker 1: Reading Assignment
Exit Ramp: Students cannot comprehend the information in the text. The technical structure and advanced vocabulary of a textbook will derail 80% of students, right out of the gate!

Mile Marker 2: Class Lecture
Exit Ramp: Students do not know how to take notes effectively. They struggle to understand the "big picture," therefore do not know how to identify key points, let alone create an effective study guide.

Mile Marker 3: Homework
Exit Ramp: Students do not do homework, or do it poorly. Even "good students" do not know how to do homework properly. They do homework just to "get it done." They do not engage effectively in homework to learn from it. Meanwhile, "struggling students" are frustrated because homework takes too long. They often decide it is not worth their frustration.

Mile Marker 4: Chapter Test
Exit Ramp: Students memorize information for the test, but forget it by the next day. They only know one method for studying: cramming!

Destination: Benchmark Mastery
Some students will avoid all of the exit ramps and reach Benchmark Mastery for the short-term. The problem is, the Standardized Test is three months away…

ENTER: STUDY SKILLS

Students are never explicitly taught how to study or learn effectively. Our education system expects them to just "get it." However, students can apply strategies to homework and studying, just as they do with sports or video games. Someone just needs to show them what to do!

Imagine if students knew how to effectively read textbooks, take excellent notes, and complete homework efficiently? Imagine if they knew how to study so that they were LEARNING, not just memorizing and cramming?

Then, the situation would look like this:

Mile Marker 1: Reading Assignment
Since students know simple, time-saving strategies for reading a textbook, they do the reading. Most importantly, they UNDERSTAND it!

Mile Marker 2: Class Lecture
Students have reviewed the textbook and understand the "big picture," so they can identify key points. They know shortcuts for taking notes and write down important information. Their notes are now an effective study guide.

Mile Marker 3: Homework
Students know strategies for getting their brain into "high gear." They can now complete homework faster AND learn from homework at the same time.

Mile Marker 4: Chapter Test
Students are ready! They have been learning information every step of the way and have no need to cram. They know how to use their textbook to review, they have created effective study guides from their notes, and they have learned from errors on homework assignments.

Destination: Benchmark Mastery
Since the students were equipped to LEARN the content (instead of memorize), they have retained the information for the long-term. They can recall the information quickly. Now, they are ready for those standardized tests!

Special Report: The Cost of NOT Teaching Study Skills

As school budgets are rapidly shrinking, administrators have to carefully consider how to allocate their budget; they need to get the most "bang for their buck." Managing a school budget is an art form involving hundreds of decisions and balancing dozens of demands.

"HOW CAN WE MAKE THE GREATEST IMPACT?"

This question is usually the first consideration and a logical place to start. To answer this question, we must consider the final objective. Most people agree that the purpose of education is to help young people develop the skills they need to be independent, self-sufficient members of society. Of course, we also hope to arm them with skills for achieving their own sense of personal happiness and success.

How do we do that?

We can look at what employers need. In 2008, a large survey of employers in "emerging sectors" were asked what skills they needed most from their employees...now, and in the future. These employers represented fields that are expected to grow significantly in the next 30 years, such as healthcare and technology.

Of the top 57 skills they listed, only 4 related to technology.

The remaining skills were things like:

* Reading comprehension
* Critical thinking
* Active learning
* Written expression
* Time management
* Organization
* Active listening
* Attention to detail
* Learning strategies
* Independence

...these are "soft skills" and they represent 95% of the top skills in the workplace!

The importance of "soft skills" are further supported by a study from the Stanford Research Institute and Carnegie Melon Foundation. After **surveying 500 CEOs, they determined that 75% of long-term career success depends on soft skills, while only 25% percent depends on technical knowledge.**

WHAT, EXACTLY, ARE "SOFT SKILLS?"

Soft skills are the skills needed to be a life-long learner, think critically, and make decisions independently. The skills needed to communicate effectively. They are the skills needed for a global economy!

No matter how much more "advanced" our society gets, soft skills will always be the key to success because they allow people to effectively learn the "hard skills," or technical information, as jobs evolve.

Yet, they are largely ignored in education! I just did an internet search on "soft skills." I combed through the first 60 results before I found one link to any type of educational institution that is addressing "soft skills" in their curriculum...and it was a community college! (Delaware Tech & Community College, if you are wondering.)

The first 59 links were mostly newspaper and magazine articles about how desperate the workplace is for these skills. You don't have to look far to see there is a great divide between the content schools are teaching and the skills needed to stay competitive in the 21st century.

We have already lost millions of jobs to other countries and the hemorrhaging will continue if we cannot right the ship. As a parent, I am arming my children with these skills because it is clear they are the key to their future success. I am personally frustrated that they do not learn how to learn, process information, or have an opportunity to exercise their critical thinking skills in school.

Education statistics support this concern:

* 30% of US High School students drop out of school.

* 40% of US college students must take at least one remedial course.

* 50% of US college students drop out before completing a degree.

* 66% of US high school honor students fall behind in college.

DO "SOFT SKILLS" MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN SCHOOL?

"Soft skills" are synonymous with "study skills" (both categories address all of the skills listed above) and research shows that study skills have a big impact on school performance!

In April, 2009, Ohio State University published a study confirming the dramatic impact study skills can have on college graduation rates. According to the study:

45% was the increased likelihood that "struggling" high school students would graduate from college if they took a study skills class.

600% was the increased likelihood that "average" high school students would graduate from college if they took a study skills class!

Imagine the impact these skills would have on students if they could learn them earlier than college? Imagine what these skills will do for these students after college?

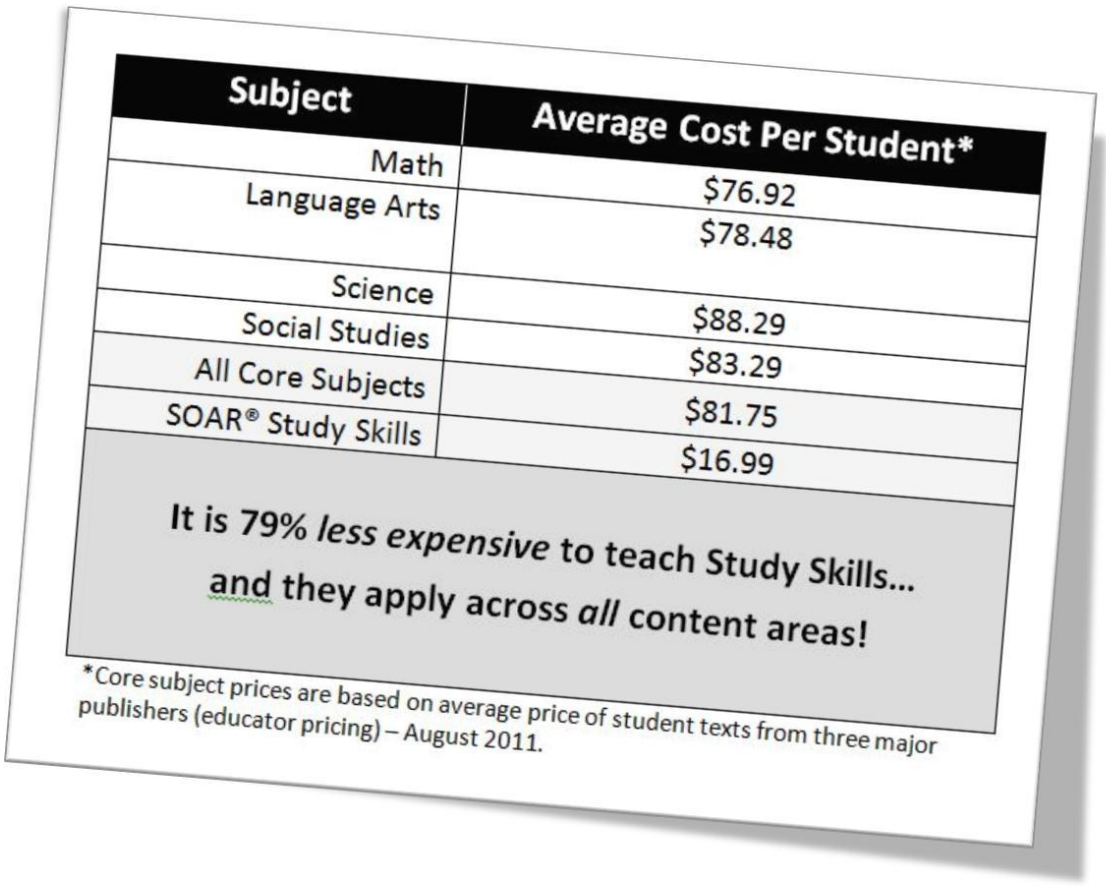
THE COST OF TEACHING EVERYTHING ELSE

Where can you make the most impact with your time and money? Will it be in one subject area that is narrowly focused? Or, will it be on teaching skills that impact all subject areas, improve student performance, and actually prepare them for the workplace?

The average cost per student to teach a core subject* is $81.75. The average cost per student to teach study skills is $16.99.

It is 79% LESS EXPENSIVE to teach Study Skills...and they apply across ALL content areas!

*Average cost per student is based on an average of student texts from three major publishing companies.



Subject	Average Cost Per Student*
Math	$76.92
Language Arts	$78.48
Science	$88.29
Social Studies	$83.29
All Core Subjects	$81.75
SOAR® Study Skills	$16.99

It is 79% *less expensive* to teach Study Skills... and they apply across *all* content areas!

*Core subject prices are based on average price of student texts from three major publishers (educator pricing) – August 2011.

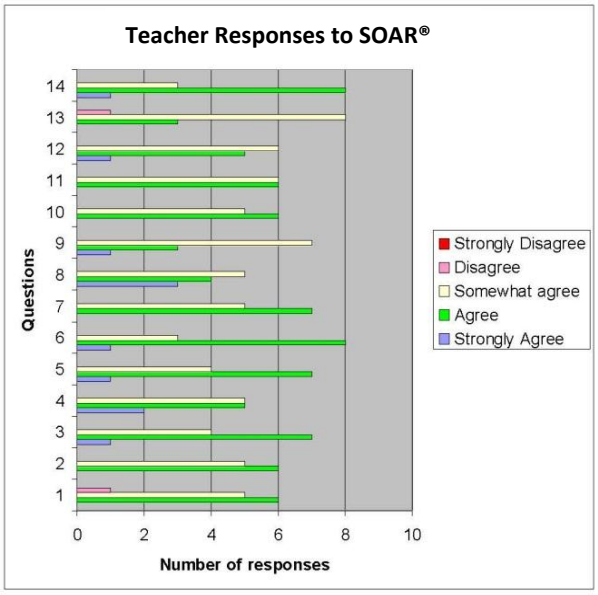
Effectiveness Report: Results From an Inner-City School

SOAR® Study Skills Teacher Survey
Woodward Academy, Detroit, MI ◙ Fall, 2007

Teachers at Woodward Academy, an elementary and middle school in the heart of Detroit, MI, were asked to complete the survey on the left-hand side (below) regarding the effectiveness of the SOAR® System. Teachers attended a one-day workshop on the system at the beginning of the year and completed this survey two months later.*

*This survey was created, distributed, and compiled by the Woodward Academy administration team and was NOT solicited by SOAR®.

Teacher Questionnaire
1. My students have a little more confidence in themselves.
2. My students are learning how to read a text-book more efficiently.
3. My students have are better able to set personal goals.
4. My students are more organized.
5. The frequency of lost and/or forgotten homework has decreased.
6. I have been able to assist students in keeping track of their work.
7. Student achievement has increased as a result of this study skills program.
8. Students have been better able to keep track of their notes.
9. Study Skills has helped me to provide better notes for my students.
10. I have noticed that there is less clutter in student desks.
11. Students are managing their time better.
12. Students are better prepared for class with the proper supplies.
13. Students are better prepared for tests.
14. Students are remembering to take the correct materials home to work on.



See additional comments on next page...

SOAR® Study Skills Teacher Survey
Woodward Academy, Detroit, MI ◙ Fall, 2007
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Please share how you have been reinforcing student use of the SOAR® study skills program and the use of the daily planners:
("x" represents repeated responses)

- We use it every day, I feel they will use it more efficiently with the middle school students
- Daily completion of planners and checked by teacher, place HW and notes into appropriate sections (x,x)
- I check student planners once a week (x,x)
- This makes checking homework easier and quicker
- I Teach a lesson on organization once weekly
- Daily planners are now requirement for HWK *and* goal questions
- We do a monthly locker clean out

Please share any additional comments that you have concerning the SOAR® Study Skills program:

- It keeps students organized
- It helpe to start the complete program at the beginning of the year
- When used consistently, it helps with students' organization

Research-Basis Report

The following information is organized to match the sections of the SOAR® program and details the educational research that supports each section. A bibliography is available at http://studyskills.com/about-us/research-basis/.

SOAR® Section 1

How Are You Smart?

Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences[1]

This theory establishes the premise that all students have talents, even if they have not historically experienced success in school. SOAR® dedicates a whole section to helping students explore their intelligences and develop personal confidence.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder[2,3]

People with AD/HD are usually highly intelligent, but simply struggle with conventional learning and organizing tasks. SOAR® provides student-friendly strategies that are good for all learners, but especially helpful for students struggling with AD/HD. Research by the U.S. Department of Education on "best-practices" for educating students with AD/HD support the strategies in SOAR®.

SOAR® Section 2

Set Goals

Chapter 2 – Establish Your Priorities

Chapter 3 – Identify Your Goals

Chapter 4 – Schedule Time to Take Action

Covey's 7 Habits of Highly Effective People[4]

Stephen and Sean Covey have created what is arguably the world's most recognized system for creating goals and managing time. SOAR® capitalizes on the concept of "prioritizing" to guide students through the process of setting personal goals and creating action plans to achieve them.

SOAR® Section 3

Organize

Chapter 5- Organize Your Papers

Chapter 6 – Organize Your Time

Chapter 7- Organize Your Space

SOAR® Study Skills

Susan Kruger, M.Ed., the author of SOAR® Study Skills, has devised several "student-friendly" organizational strategies, based on her experiences as a student and field-tested through years of working with thousands of students. All strategies are based on principles of organization and efficiency.

SOAR® Section 4

Ask Questions

Chapter 8- Interacting With Teachers

Chapter 9 – Reading Textbooks

Chapter 10 – Writing Papers

Chapter 11 – Taking & Studying Notes

Chapter 12 – Taking Tests

Brain-Based Learning/Neuroscience

Synaptic Plasticity[5]

The matter in our brain includes millions of electronic pathways (similar to wires) that transmit electrical signals that allow our brain and body to function. As we learn new information, the brain forges new pathways to establish the new information. The physiology of our brain is like a super-highway of millions of connections. Every time we learn something new, we change the physical structure of our brain. SOAR® teaches students how to make learning connections to take great advantage of our brains' natural design.

Visual Learning[6]

The brain loves pictures and visuals. This is because the brain can instantly *identify* with the information communicated in a picture, unlike text, which requires several different layers of encoding in order to understand the information. SOAR® guides students to maximize visual aids as part of the listening, note-taking, reading, writing, and test-preparation process.

Chunking[7]

The concept of mental "chunking" describes the short-term memory's increased capacity to remember chunks of related information more than independent bytes. For example, it would be very difficult to remember this sequence of letters: y-n-i-u-t-s-r-d, unless you modify the order and chunk them together in a meaningful sequence: "industry." SOAR® builds on this concept to help students increase their memory capacity and chunk small bits of information together over time, maximizing their learning efficiency.

Learning Structure & Process

Bloom's Taxonomy of Thinking[8]

Bloom's pyramid model of thinking illustrates the different levels at which our brains operate; the most simple level of thinking is on the bottom, the most complex level is at the top. SOAR® teaches the difference between "high gear" and "low gear" learning and how students can shift into "high gear learning" to learn most efficiently.

Schema Theory of Learning[9]

Schema can be described as categories of existing knowledge that a student possesses. The Schema Learning Theory states that students learn new information when they can effectively connect new information with an existing schema. SOAR® teaches students how to access prior knowledge (schema) and connect new information to establish a solid understanding of new content.

Graphic Organizers[10-11]

Graphic Organizers are tools that help students arrange (organize) new information in a visual format. Research has proven that graphic organizers are a very effective tool to help students understand abstract concepts. SOAR® uses a 3-D Graphic Organizer to teach students the abstract concept of organizing information in their writing.

Cornell Note Taking Method[12]

The most widely accepted note-taking method for college students, Cornell Note Taking embraces the concept that students need space to "process" information after they have recorded notes. SOAR® present a slightly modified version of Cornell Note-Taking that is appropriate for all ages, but the emphasis remains on "processing" notes, not just "taking" them.

Memory Skills

Atkinson-Shiffrin Mode1[13]

The Atkinson-Shiffrin model, first published in 1968, established the concept of short-term and long-term memory. SOAR® teaches students the different types of memory and strategies for transferring information from short-term to long-term memory.

Connectionistic Model[14]

The Connectionistic model is based on the concept that memory is a dynamic series of mental connections and that learning is a two-way process. SOAR® teaches students *how* to make connections.

SOAR® Section 5

Record Your Progress

Chapter 13- Tracking Your Goals

Chapter 14 – Monitoring Your Goals

Chapter 15 – Recognizing Your Achievements

Behavior Modification[15,16,17,18]

We often hear self-improvement gurus encourage us to keep written records of our goals and track our progress. This is a widely accepted strategy, but most people (especially students) do not understand *why* it is so effective. We draw on several studies from the Northwestern University Medical School Center for Behavioral Medicine & Sport Psychology to help students understand the impact that recording progress will have on their success.

Curriculum Evaluation Chart

The following chart is designed to help you compare SOAR® to other study skills programs. While we acknowledge that this chart has an inherent bias towards our program, we hope it will help you gain a more detailed insight into the content of the program and careful intentions of the author. This insight will ultimately help you make your own judgment of the program.

Additional rows are included on the last page for you to add your own comments and observations.

Questions to Consider	SOAR® Study Skills	Program 2
What age level is the program designed/intended for...elementary, middle school, high school, or college?	SOAR® Study Skills was designed for middle and high school. We do, however, have several schools using the program in upper elementary (5th & 6th grade) as well as at the college level.	
How complex are most strategies? Are they cumbersome or simplified? How likely are students to do these on their own initiative? **Will students save time *and* increase effectiveness?**	SOAR® was built around the concept of being student-friendly. Our three student-friendly principles are: strategies must save time, they must be effective, and they must apply across all content areas.	
Are the strategies student-directed or teacher-directed? Do you want strategies that will increase teachers' effectiveness or strategies that will empower students to take initiative of their own learning?	SOAR® is designed to be student-directed. Of course, teachers will introduce strategies and encourage regular usage, but the goal is for students to use them on their own. For example, concept maps are a common 'study skill,' but students often do not know *when* to use a concept map. Such strategies are not included in SOAR®.	
Does the program cover skills that you and your staff/colleagues have determined to be critical skills for your students? (Also consider common complaints from parents.)	SOAR® Study Skills covers skills and strategies to help students learn how to: ▪ Identify and capitalize on their strengths with the Multiple Intelligences ▪ Set and maintain goals ▪ Prioritize and manage their time ▪ Do homework efficiently ▪ Use a planner effectively	

	▪ Organize their papers ▪ Organize their locker, book bag, and room at home ▪ Communicate with teachers and parents ▪ Read text-books quickly and efficiently ▪ Write research papers painlessly ▪ Take notes and study them ▪ Take math notes and study them ▪ Prepare for tests ▪ Take tests ▪ Track grades (to help students learn that they *earn* grades and that teachers do not just 'distribute' grades) ▪ Monitor goals for long-term success	
Will most strategies apply across content areas or are most strategies best suited for specific content areas? A good mix is important, but if students are new to the concept of strategic learning/ study skills, it is best to begin instruction with strategies that apply across most content areas, ensuring students will know *when* to use them.	As described earlier, a core principle of SOAR® is to teach strategic learning strategies that apply *across content areas.* The vast majority of SOAR® strategies will apply across content areas.	
How much preparation is required for teachers to implement?	With the SOAR® Multi-Media Teacher's Guide, teachers have dozens of visuals, demonstrations, and interactive activities at their finger-tips. They will only need to read the support material (which is concise and to-the-point) and gather supplies.	
What is the cost of the program?	To answer this question, please reference the SOAR® Study Skills product information page at http://studyskills.com/products/?categ=28 to determine the volume discount that best applies to you.	
What is the cost of the	SOAR® maintains the focus on using	

school/organizational supplies required to implement the program?	minimal supplies to keep the learning process as simple as possible for students. The only 'special' supplies that are recommended are: a 1.5-inch binder, 5-6 poly folders, a specified container to house papers at home (can be as simple a shoe box), and a digital timer (optional).	
Is the program a system of strategies that integrate with one another or is it a "list" of tips?	SOAR® introduces one concept or set of strategies at a time, but each new strategy builds upon the previous one. The inter-related nature of the program helps students make connections across strategies, which is very helpful for long-term retention and application.	
Is there flexibility with the program? Does the program have to follow a specific order or can you pull the pieces you need, as you need them?	While we believe that you will see the best results by implementing SOAR® as a system (as described above) you still have the option to hone in on specific strategies. Just reference the Table of Contents to find the skill you wish to teach. Each section/strategy of SOAR® will stand alone.	
Are there tips and considerations provided for students who live in two homes and students who have ADHD?	Yes, SOAR® has tips and accommodations listed for students who live in two homes and ADHD. Look for the "two homes" icon and the "key" icon.	
Are there support materials for parents?	We provide dozens of free resources for parents at our website, http://studyskills.com/, including our free guide, "Six Steps to Conquer the Chaos." There is also an "Introduction for Parents" included in the student text.	

For Further Information

If you are interested in for further information about the SOAR® Study Skills Curriculum, the following links may be helpful.

SOAR® Study Skills Homepage: http://studyskills.com/

About the SOAR® Study Skills Curriculum: http://studyskills.com/educators/study-skills-curriculum/

Assessment Options: http://studyskills.com/educators/study-skills-curriculum/assessment-options/

21st Century Skills and WorkKeys Alignment: http://studyskills.com/educators/study-skills-curriculum/21st-century-skills-and-workkeys-alignment/

Who Is Using SOAR®? http://studyskills.com/about-us/who-is-using-soar/

Teacher Survey: http://studyskills.com/educators/study-skills-curriculum/teacher-survey/

Information for Administrators: http://studyskills.com/administrators/

Teacher FAQs: http://studyskills.com/about-us/faq/#p2

Case Studies: http://studyskills.com/educators/case-studies/

Response to Intervention (RTI): http://studyskills.com/educators/response-to-intervention/

Study Skills for Middle School, High School, and ADHD/LD: http://studyskills.com/educators/study-skills-curriculum/study-skills-for-middle-school-high-school-and-adhdld/

Contact Us: http://studyskills.com/contact-us/

Educator Product Pricing and Order Information: http://studyskills.com/products/?categ=28

SOAR® Study Skills Guarantee: http://studyskills.com/about-us/soar-study-skills-guarantee/

Sign Up for a Free Preview of the SOAR® Study Skills Curriculum: http://studyskills.com/curriculum-preview/

Request a Free Resource Guide: http://studyskills.com/products/?categ=28