

**Study Strategies**  
**A Compilation of Ideas from Upper School and Parents**  
**November, 2007**

The following summary is based on a brainstorming session in May of 2006. Suggestions and insights were offered by the former Head of Upper School and parents. It has been updated and revised. Any additional suggestions would be welcomed by parents!

**Introduction**

In Middle School and before, students have had a lot of hand-holding. In Upper School, **students need to take over**. They need to make studying – learning – their responsibility, though parents can support them. But parents' job is to turn over responsibility to their kids.

Students need to know what they're capable of, and to raise their standards. They need to get to the point where they say, "**I can.**" Parents' job is to help them get there.

**Study Strategies – What parents can do**

**Tests:**

- Provide a consistent time and space – not the bedroom – to learn and study. It is much better for them **not** to study by listening to music with lyrics.
- Move students away from computers (internet) and cell phones.
- Be sure you're sending the message that you think studying important.
- Ask questions, as a way to start them thinking and focusing:
  - What are you studying?
  - What have you been talking about in class?
  - What do you think the teacher thinks is important? What has he or she emphasized in class?
  - What did he or she indicate is going to be on the test?

Answers to these questions can provide a study guide.

- Ask your student to tell you what he or she knows, and then have him or her **write it down**. The act of writing gets students to focus on specifics and also enhances memory by reinforcing the learning.

- Vocabulary can be an important study tool: ask what vocabulary is involved, have your student write down the words (or you can do it), then discuss the vocabulary and the concepts involved.
  - If the student doesn't know the word, he or she should look it up in the Index. Be sure the student understands how to use the Index.
- Flash cards are helpful for studying vocabulary, including foreign language.
- Recommend that the student answer questions or complete problems in chapter reviews; then make sure the student identifies areas he/she is uncertain of, and focuses on studying those areas.
- Make up practice tests, based on review guides, chapter reviews, student's tests from earlier in the term, etc

### **Writing Essays**

- Again, ask questions, get students to talk to you about what they know, and write down notes.
- Brainstorm with them.
- Provide writing software, such as "Inspiration."
- Have the student free write – write in a stream of consciousness, not worrying about organization, grammar, or style, but just to get thoughts down on paper and "unblock."
- If the student is blocked but resists being helped, suggest a "jump start": 5 minutes of questions, brainstorming together, then the student takes the ball.

### **Study and Writing Strategies – What the School Does**

- Tutorials: Offered 3 times every week (Monday, Wednesday and Friday) in each subject
- Student study groups
  - Sometimes, this technique is used by teachers in class
  - Peer tutoring: this is not formalized as an option in Upper School, but it happens spontaneously. Sometimes a teacher will put kids together.

## **Additional Questions and Issues**

- If the student is overwhelmed by the amount of work (e.g., finals, lots of homework or tests due around the same time) :  
Break down the “big mountain” into smaller, manageable chunks
  - Prioritize assignments
  - Help students figure out what they **can** do
  - Help them have the tools to come up with their own solution
  - Have them write down a plan with steps, manageable goals.
  
- The student may need to self-advocate – to go in to the teacher and say, “I’m blocked and need help” or “I’m not ready for the test and will get an F.” Usually the teacher will be sympathetic and flexible.
  
- Developing the “I can” mindset
  - Point out that the student has accomplished a task before – past successes
  
- Motivating students satisfied with “just OK” performance
  - Can be developmental – sometimes the student “wakes up” in 10<sup>th</sup> grade
  - Peer group can also motivate.
  - Prospect of college can motivate: You may take your student to a general information session on college; this can light a fire even if it’s not time for the application process.