



INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

Published by the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD) • College of Education • The University of Texas at Austin

STUDY SKILLS MARATHON FAIR

The importance of learning effective study strategies for college success has always been a major thrust at Berkshire Community College. Historically, students have obtained this information in a variety of settings such as classes, workshops, online tutorials, and individualized instruction. In order to approach this information from a new perspective, and to heighten awareness and interest in the benefits of learning and applying proven study skills strategies, a new approach to the teaching of study skills was instituted: The Study Skills Marathon Fair.

Experts in the various study skills resources offered by the college, as well as a few in allied disciplines, met to map out the Study Skills Marathon “course.” The group represented faculty and staff from both student affairs and academic affairs. Twelve booths, each representing a different study skill or allied discipline, comprised “the course.”

Learning Styles: An assessment tool was given to all participants to determine their preferred method of receiving, processing, and learning new information. Based on their individual strengths and weaknesses, participants were taught study strategies to improve their learning effectiveness.

Listening and Notetaking: Individuals were taught strategies on being active listeners and effective notetakers. Specific information on the Cornell Method of Notetaking was presented.

Memorization: Participants explored various memorization techniques including visual mappings, hierarchies, matrixes, time lines, pictures, and flash cards. These techniques were applied to class material in various disciplines. In addition, students had the opportunity to play the Memory Game and to discuss how the strategies they used playing the game could be applied to their academic classes.

Stress Management: Students discovered how stress could be harmful and beneficial. They were provided with instruction in relaxation techniques, proper breathing, and visual imagery.

Test-Taking and Test Anxiety: Participants learned general strategies for exam preparation and specific strategies for taking essay, multiple-choice, and true/false exams. Relaxation techniques to deal with test anxiety were discussed.

Textbook Reading: Students had the opportunity to learn and try the SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review) Study System for reading a textbook.

Time Management: Participants learned to set goals, monitor time, prioritize tasks, and create a weekly time management plan.

The Help Centers: Information was disseminated on the English and Mathematics Drop-in Help Centers offered on our campus. Additional assistance was offered on writing strategies and study strategies for mathematics.

Library and Research Skills: Students had the opportunity to learn reference skills for researching term papers and assignments. Featured highlights included information on the eight-step research process, databases at Berkshire Community College, the difference between scholarly journals and popular magazines, the anatomy of a citation, and the citation of web sources.

Plato Learning System: Participants explored the uses of the Plato Learning System, a comprehensive, computer-assisted instructional program that provides on-line tutorials to support classroom instruction. Students had the opportunity to set up their own personal accounts for future use.



ADD, ADHD, and LD Screenings: Private screenings were made available for attention deficit disorder and learning disabilities. If appropriate, referrals were made for comprehensive evaluations.

Career Development: Students had the opportunity to take an interest and skills assessment, to do career exploration, to obtain tips on resumé writing, and to learn job search strategies and interviewing techniques. BRIDGES.COM, a computerized career guidance system, was available for their use.

Current and prospective college students, area high school students, interested parents and educators throughout Berkshire County were invited to “run” in the Study Skills Marathon Fair. Interest was piqued by posting red, orange, and yellow running sneakers on campus walls for two weeks prior to the event. Each day the sneakers moved closer to the “starting line” of the marathon. One week prior to the start of the marathon, posters were hung alongside the sneakers to provide specific information on the upcoming event. In addition, all college students received notification of the marathon in their orientation packets. High school participants, parents, and area educators received notification of the event through posters distributed at the schools, telephone calls, and articles in the local newspaper.

At 10:00 a.m. on the day of the Study Skills Marathon, with the sound of the bell and excitement in the air, all participants were off and “running.” Upon arrival, each participant signed the attendance sheet at the Welcome Booth. At this booth, participants were given the rules of the marathon as well as a survey to complete at the end of their “run.” The challenge was to “run” 26 miles through the series of study skills booths. At each booth, students had the opportunity to take an assessment tool to help identify their areas of need and to discuss specific study strategies for college success. Upon completion of the activity at each booth, students were given an orange ticket worth eight miles. By turning in the completed survey to the Welcome Booth at the completion of their marathon, participants were given a red ticket worth two miles. Participants who visited three booths and turned in a completed survey accumulated the required 26 miles to receive a complimentary lunch and a free water bottle printed with the name and date of the event. Participants were strongly encouraged to visit more than the required three booths, and many did.

On one-half of the red ticket received at the Welcome Booth for completing the survey, participants were instructed to print their name and telephone number in

order to enter the Study Skills Marathon raffle. The Director of the College Store donated study materials to be used for the raffle. All the materials were placed inside a gym bag in keeping with the marathon theme. The winner of the raffle was drawn at the conclusion of the Study Skills Marathon. Participants then visited the Food Booth to obtain their complimentary lunch and free water bottle. Couches, chairs, and tables were set up around the room where participants could eat, relax, and socialize.

The survey inquired about study skills the participants hoped to explore while at the marathon, key skills they learned, and their assessment of the effectiveness of the booths they visited. The surveys compiled at the completion of the Study Skills Marathon Fair indicated that 54% of the participants rated the information presented at the booths to be very helpful, 24% rated them helpful, and 18% rated them somewhat helpful. Written comments indicated that the participants found the Study Skills Marathon Fair to be an enjoyable and profitable learning experience. The faculty and staff at the various booths were very encouraged by the response of the marathon “runners” and look forward to planning next year’s Study Skills Marathon Fair.

Janie Pellish, *Coordinator of Tutorial Services*

For further information, contact the author at Berkshire Community College, 1350 West Street, Pittsfield, MA 01201. e-mail: jpellish@cc.berkshire.org