

# *LASSI in Action*

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This is the 12th year we have published the LASSI in Action, responding to requests for a means to share and exchange information about the Learning and Study Strategies Inventory (LASSI) and its uses in a variety of educational settings. In this new format of LASSI in Action, we continue our practice of bringing you a variety of reports on the use of the LASSI.

• **LETTER FROM THE EDITOR**

We here at H&H are constantly pleased and often surprised by our contacts with people using the LASSI. Many of you are on a first name basis with one of our staff members (Priscilla, Mike, and/or Beth). Your conversations (phone and email) reflect that type of relationship.

We know that many of you are facing difficult challenges in your work. We know that you struggle with instructional, administrative, institutional, and economic problems. We try to be part of the solution you bring to these difficulties. We urge you to seek our assistance when that may be the case.

One of the major changes that we believe will effect your work in the next few years is a shift from dealing with problem situations to a concerted effort to identify and treat deficiencies before they become problems. We have seen this shift already in many programs that deal with specific at-risk student populations. On the horizon, we expect that same shift in the ways we deal with all students.

LASSI, PEEK, Becoming a Strategic Learner, and technology that bridges gaps in distance and communication are essential elements to implementing a program of attracting, selecting, and preparing students before they ever set foot on your campus.

To claim that these processes are new or revolutionary is not quite accurate because the academic parallels have long been in place for most of our universities. I took the College Boards in 1949 as part of the process at that time for attracting and selecting students to some institutions of higher education. Today most high schoolers take the SAT and/or ACT.

What our institutions have long held important within particular academic disciplines is now likely to be broadened as we accurately measure the study strategies and expectations of our students. We know, and research supports this statement, that LASSI assessments both diagnose problems that may interfere with academic success and prescribe interventions designed to eliminate and/or reduce those problems. We know that student expectations, as measured by PEEK, are another major factor in student retention. Interventions planned around those expectations can have significant effects on students whose expectations are not matched well with institutional realities.

H&H is ready to help you implement new programs that will make you and your institution leaders in this shift toward being proactive rather than reactive to student needs. H&H sees this shift as a needed effort to significantly improve student retention. Students will benefit from early treatment of academic problems just as patients benefit from early treatment for illnesses. Institutions will benefit economically and academically. Our society will benefit from a larger population of well-educated citizens. H&H is excited to be part of your efforts to bring these improvements to your campus. Give us a call if we can help.

Bob Hackworth

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• **ARTICLE 1**

**FIVE A'S FOR SUCCESS**

by Kathy Demarest  
Lower Columbia College

At Lower Columbia College, the LASSI has been used for pre- and post-evaluation each quarter over the past two years with students who enroll in College Success 100. At the beginning of the quarter, students use the first administration to get a baseline of information — strengths and weaknesses that might impact their ability to succeed in college. At the end of each quarter, they use the second administration to measure any change.

As an innovation, now instructors have decided to coordinate the LASSI scales with instruction, class activities, and student reflective writing. Several instructors use LASSI, and this discussion highlights some effective uses.

Once the LASSI first administration is completed, all students write a personal summary of the results. They comment about the validity of the results as they reflect on their past experiences as a student. Some personal summaries take on a more directed approach. For instance, one instructor asks students to focus on the weak areas reported by LASSI and identify the chapters of the college textbook (*College Reading and Study Skills* by K. McWhorter) that will be most important to them. Another instructor guides students to page 50 in the textbook that outlines a variety of learning strategies, and with their LASSI results, students identify the strategies that will be most useful to their improvement.

At the beginning of each chapter or new skill, several instructors have students write a reflection paper that asks each student to examine more closely his/her needs and strengths in a specific area (time management, memory and learning, note-taking, textbook reading, test preparation and test-taking). Then, as the reading, class discussion, and activities proceed, students reflect on paper the knowledge, skill, and strategies that become part of their new learning. At the culmination of a unit or chapter, students complete the third step of the reflection paper in which they write about the new uses, actions, or behaviors these skills and knowledge now provide. They are encouraged to report how they actually use the strategies in their other college courses.

In fall 2004, College Success 100 instructors collaboratively wrote a process paper to guide students through the steps of critically evaluating their progress in student success. Drawing from the use of the reflective paper, as well as guiding students to set their own goals and later report on what they had learned, a packet entitled *Five A's for Success* was

written on each major course topic (time management, memory and learning, note-taking, textbook reading, test preparation and test-taking). Within each packet, students use LASSI to **Analyze** their strengths and weaknesses on that particular topic. They identify a personal **Aim** in regards to the analysis and keep notes of the knowledge and skills they **Achieve**. In the fourth step, they list their **Actions** now in use, and last they **Assess** their results from the second administration of LASSI. After one quarter's use, instructors report that the packets make the correlation between LASSI and course objectives more clear.

LASSI is used on some occasions to group students according to similar scale scores. For instance, students who score similarly on the LASSI Test-Taking score (TST) openly discuss when they recognize that many feel the same way and have similar difficulties. The group lists on poster paper some of the most distressful things about tests. Commonalities appear on the lists. These lists, then posted on the walls in the classroom, are the focal points for class discussion, activities, and skill building. In addition, the poster lists are used at the end of the unit for review and a closing discussion to ensure that all questions have been addressed. At other times, pairing students with non-equivalent scores can provide a partnership to foster peer learning while the two students work on a class activity or project.

When students in all course sections complete the second administration of the LASSI, they are asked to assess the results. In some classes a full summary comparing the change in each scale score is required, while in other classes a general comparison of scores from first to second administration is done. In yet another, a letter which begins – “*Dear Kathy, I don't need you anymore*” encourages students to look to the future with the positive skills and knowledge they have gained. As they reflect on the skills gained, they are able to see that success in this course opens the door to new challenges.

When students use the first LASSI scores, they express personal aims for improvement and tend to take more responsibility for learning. If the instructor correlates the text readings, class activities, and content learning with a student's individual aims, the depth and direction of the learning is in the hands of the student. Through team discussions and reflective writing, students make connections between their aims, their achieved learning, and their actions. By using the LASSI as pre- and post-evaluation, instructors can enable students to be active participants and take responsibility in their journey to become a more successful college student. For most students, it is affirming. Seeing the gains they made by the end of the quarter, self-assessment of the LASSI end scores helps students recognize changes in their actions and behaviors. As one student wrote, “*Dear Kathy, I don't need you anymore. I am a very different student now.*”

### ***Five A's to Success***

#### **Time Management: How do I have time for life?**

##### Introduction:

Learning a new task or skill takes knowledge, practice and time. The first step towards change is to set a personal goal for achievement. It helps to motivate and focus the direction of learning. What do you do if you encounter difficulty? Seek out help from others, try a new direction or give it more time. How do you know when you have learned or achieved the goal? By doing some assessment of your skills and some self reflection of your accomplishments, you can evaluate your progress that you have made.

##### Directions:

***Five A's to Success*** will give you a road map to help you through the process.

#### **Analyze, Aim, Achieve, Act, Assess**

There are guidelines at each step. In order to clearly make progress, you should follow the timeline of due dates.

**Analyze:** Look at the TMT, MOT, ATT scores of your LASSI. If it is below 75%, you may consider making some changes in the way in which manage your time. Think about your answers to these questions:

- a. Do you keep appointments on a calendar or daily planner?
- b. Do you avoid breakfast or lunch to save time?
- c. Is your “in box” always overflowing?
- d. Do you make time – at least a little bit – for yourself each day?
- e. Do you shop for groceries more than twice a week?
- f. Do you wonder how other people are able to get things done and still remain calm?
- g. Do you have good intentions of getting that work done, it just doesn’t seem to always happen?
- h. Do you have trouble just getting yourself to sit down to begin homework?

On a separate sheet of paper, write a paragraph summarizing your analysis of the skills you have. Do you want to make a change? Do you believe that you can/should change? Why? Why not?

Due date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Aim:** A good plan starts with goals. List two things that you would like to learn in regards to managing time. These are things that at present you do not know how to do.

I want to **learn** to:

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_

Many times, we just need more knowledge and/or

practice and time to improve our skills. List two things that you would like to improve upon in managing time. These are things that you know something about, but need some more knowledge or practice.

I want to **improve**:

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_

Due date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Achieve:** On a separate sheet of paper you will take notes from your class discussions, textbook reading, and other source learning about this topic. For each day of class, you should write in your notes what you learned about time management, motivation, and/or attitude. In addition, list what you do when, or if, you had difficulties in reaching your aims. What other strategies or resources did you use? Attach those notes to this project.

Due date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Act:** On a separate sheet of paper list the actions/strategies that you personally now use with this new knowledge, gained experience, and practice. Be specific. Some examples could be:

- Keeping daily to-do lists.
- Using a daily planner.
- Setting aside time for yourself or other priorities that you have each day.
- Setting aside time for your homework.
- Turning off the TV when you do your homework.

Attach that list to this project.

Due date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Assess:** At the end of the quarter, you will again take LASSI. At that time you will compare your scores in TMT, MOT, ATT. But that is not the only means to assess your progress. Your own personal self reflection should give you a sense of whether or not your aims were achieved. Write out your self reflection including a discussion of your LASSI scores. Attach it to this project.

Due date: \_\_\_\_\_

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• **ARTICLE 2**

**DATA-DRIVEN DECISION MAKING**

by Carolyn Byrd

Patrick Henry Community College

Patrick Henry Community College has been an ELASSI user for approximately 10 years (Web LASSI since 1999). We use it in many of our developmental, nursing and some of our first year seminar classes. To a lesser degree we have used it for advising prior to registration. Many of us had confidence that we could tell how a student would do based on certain scores. However, we had not conducted a thorough analysis until recently. The college is involved with a grant project that is focusing on data-driven decision making. We are scrutinizing our data very carefully. We happen to have a large enough database of students who have taken the WEB LASSI to see if the student's scores could be a predictor. We have definitely found that the motivation score has a direct correlation to student success. It appears that the student's score on concentration is a predictor as well, but we will conduct more research to confirm this finding. In the fall, the college will be using WEB LASSI as an advising tool for high-risk students. If all goes well, we plan on expanding use to all incoming students.

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• **ARTICLE 3**

**INSTRUCTIONAL MODULES POPULAR WITH STUDENTS**

by Marilyn Gardner

Pearl River Community College

Our entire Student Support Services here at Pearl River Community College has enjoyed using the LASSI for a few years now. It is user friendly, and the students like taking the test and seeing the results. Last year was the first time our department signed up to use the LASSI Instructional Modules, "Becoming a Strategic Learner" online. They are growing very popular with our students, and I have started having small workshops to enroll students and help them get started working using the online modules.

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• **ARTICLE 4**

**STUDENT PURCHASED WEB LASSI'S**

by Heather Schoffstall, M.Ed.

Liberty University

The Web LASSI is utilized in the study skills classes (CLST 101–College Learning Strategies) of the Bruckner Learning Center. The students purchase the Web LASSI packet from the university bookstore. The Web LASSI pre-test is completed at the onset of the course. Once the post-test is completed at the conclusion of the course, the students will compare the pre- and post-test scores. As a culminating activity for the course, the students participate in a group discussion and write a reflection paper in which they determine their strengths and weaknesses based on the test scores. It has been noted that the students generally improve in most areas and are pleased with the results.