

Cassette 2-14 Tape Transcript  
Kwantlen Career Tape (07/81): Reading & Study Skills

**Interviewer:**

*This is an interview with David Barnett, an instructor with the Study Skills program at Kwantlen College, Richmond campus. David, why do people take Reading and Study Skills program?*

**David Barnett:**

*Well, they take them for a number of different reasons, I think. One of the first reasons that students tell me they're taking that course is they come back, they're coming back into the college situation after being out for a while, or not taking any courses or classes, and they want some kind of course to get them back into college and see if they still have skills left, or to get some background that'll help them get started. Now, another reason that they may take course, their course is they feel that they have to a lot of reading at college and they wonder if they have the proper skills, and I guess the third reason is they are not sure whether they have the correct study skills to carry on in college.*

**Interviewer:**

*I see. Now, you've referred to reading and study skills, are there two courses, or one course?*

**David Barnett:**

*That's right, that's right. There's a reading course and a separate study-skills course.*

**Interviewer:**

*Could you possibly explain the difference to us?*

**David Barnett:**

*Well, the Reading course is designed to help people with textbooks. Help them handle the kind of materials that an instructor may assign, and it's directly, directly tries to help them improve getting information from print. The Study Skills course, on the other hand, is designed to help them with a broader range of problems, like: time tabling, writing essays, listening techniques, note-taking in classes, what to do, you know, how much studying should they do a week, how to set up a study [... unintelligible], and so on.*

**Interviewer:**

*The, the latter, the Study Skills, really sounds great. Would you recommend that one over the Reading, or, how would you go about determining which course a student should take?*

**David Barnett:**

*Well, the primary benefit, I think, of both courses, other than to give specific skills is the amount of confidence it gives a student to deal with the various problems at school, and I wouldn't recommend one over the other. I would say you could take them both in sequence, I wouldn't recommend taking them together because of workload.*

**Interviewer:**

*Oh, I see. Now, lets talk about workload. How much is entailed? If I'm taking a full course load, for instance.*

**David Barnett:**

*Okay, what we're trying to do there is, with work load, is we know that students are taking, who are taking these courses want to know how to cope with work, they don't want to have more work to do. So, the work load is fairly light compared to the regular courses they would be taking. In other words, they may get away with something like two-hours of homework per week, directly related to the course. Directly related to things they've learned in the course. In other words, practical experiences they can take home and try. There are very few, there's no testing as such. In other words, there are no quizzes or exams that put an additional learning load on them, or increase the tension they feel about taking courses.*

**Interviewer:**

*Well, what you're saying then, it would benefit me, if I'm returning to school, or I'm coming from high school into college. It would give me the skills then to, to cope with a college or university level course?*

**David Barnett:**

*That's right, because it is quite a different environment, but a large number of the students who come into our courses are adults, who've been out in the work world. You mentioned people coming directly from school. A large number of our students, as I said, are adults who want to know if they've, they've lost some skills etcetera, or what's to be expected in this new environment. Now, that applies to adults as well as for the regular students.*

**Interviewer:**

*Or perhaps have never have learned, I assume [... unintelligible].*

**David Barnett:**

*And in fact, what we find, what our college experience is, usually, is that adults, coming back to school, bring with them a wealth of new experiences that help them cope with the work load, in a*

*much more mature fashion than the student who may, say, come straight out of high school. So, there are advantages for the adult.*

**Interviewer:**

*I'm still concerned about this "work load", you know. Like, here I am, I've returned to school and I know it's going to benefit me, but would I be able to take some of the material that I'm learning in one of the courses. Let's say, for instance, if I'm taking psychology, could I derive help from that, for that specific course? [... unintelligible]*

**David Barnett:**

*Exactly. What we, in both the courses we would encourage students to bring assignments in, so that we can talk about practical, real-life things. In the psychology course that you mentioned, for example, they would bring in the textbook and we'd talk about what problems are created by dealing with that kind of textbook. In the Study Skills course we would talk about how to prepare for certain assignments. How to deal with assignments that may take more time than just two-or three-days preparation before the assignment is due.*

**Interviewer:**

*I see. You know, I listen to the radio and there's a, quite an infamous, or famous [... unintelligible] in the town, that offers speed reading, and I don't know, that's, sometimes, rather tempting. Will I learn a skill like that, in your course?*

**David Barnett:**

*Well, our courses, the people teaching our courses, teaching our Reading Skills courses, are university trained reading specialists, and the people who teach the Evelyn Woods Reading Dynamics courses, and courses like that essentially have people who come off the street and are instructed in how to present this package to people. So that, in essence, you're not getting the proper professional care in a course like that, and unreasonable claims are made. In other words, they promised that you can read at high rates of speed when actually what you're really taught to do is skimming, and of course skimming is a component of our course. The cost for those kinds of courses, over \$400, as I understand it now. Where as, our courses may be included with your tuition.*

**Interviewer:**

*So, you, not only are you going to get, learn how to, at least, improve your skill where necessary, but you're going to learn much more in your course [... unintelligible].*

**David Barnett:**

*That's correct, that's correct.*

**Interviewer:**

*Now, something, I know an area of weakness for me, and I suspect a lot of people, is spelling. Would, could I possibly learn how to improve my spelling skills in your Study Skills course?*

**David Barnett:**

*Well, what we tend to focus on are skills that may present more of a direct problem to your studying. As I mentioned, we would talk more about time-tabling, which is a, or planning your time, or coping with larger assignments. We will talk to you, of course, about what you can do about spelling on your own time, because it's something that you could work on if you're willing to spend the extra time at home to work on it. We'll show you how to do it. But, for example, somebody can use a dictionary when they have to hand in an assignment, and professors often allow certain spelling mistakes on examinations, where the student doesn't have a dictionary handy. So, we tend not to emphasize that kind of skill, instead we emphasize skills that are more directly related to the problems you would come in contact with.*

**Interviewer:**

*Well, which brings me to my next question. The media, both, you know, news print and television, have had a lot of focus on learning disabilities. If I have one, and have had it diagnosed as such, or I suspect I've got one. Would I be able to have that addressed in one of your programs?*

**David Barnett:**

*Well, I'm a trained, I'm a trained clinician, which means that I'm trained to deal with those kinds of problems at, I was trained in the master's program to deal with those kinds of problems. So, definitely, you would get help there. But, quite often you may be labelled incorrectly, and if you come in and we give you a testing program, we may find out, indeed, you don't have a serious problem, or a problem that may have been defined some five or six years ago in a school setting, that is no longer relevant to you now. In fact, if you do have that, if it turns out that you do have some problem standing in the way of your learning, maybe we can come up with ways of coping with that. That sort of planning I think we can do together.*

**Interviewer:**

*Well that's encouraging though, and I know I can go to an expert to [... unintelligible]-*

**David Barnett:**

*Well, [... unintelligible] call me an expert if you want but, it's certainly there is the opportunity for flexibility in the program, whatever your needs.*

**Interviewer:**

*I think a lot of people, and, certainly I do, find libraries very intimidating, and, although the one at the Richmond campus is, you know, small and comfortable, and have a very obliging staff. Can I learn how to use a library effectively in one of your courses?*

**David Barnett:**

*Well, there is a library course offered in the Skill Development program, separate from our Study Skills course, but as a small component of our Study Skills course, we do show you what's in a library, and show you new ways of dealing with accessing library materials. Now that sounds kind of strange. I guess what I'm saying is, we show you how to look for specific information in relation to, say, a specific assignment, and that's a little different than the, a general tour of the library that you may get from a, a librarian when you, say, when they give a guided library tour. So, we give you a bit of, we show you specifically how to use the library, in relation to a specific assignment, and then if you find that there's something you find interesting there, you can take the library course offered by the librarians, which goes into more detail, and will, just simply improve your skills more along those lines.*

**Interviewer:**

*Now, David, in the event that I'm, I'm unable to fit one of your, what I would now feel comfortable calling a "life saving" course, at least where my studies are concerned, but if I'm unable to fit one into my program, perhaps, given the intensity, if I'm in a career program, or if I have already done a program with you, would I still be able to, I-*

**David Barnett:**

*Come back and [... unintelligible]-*

**Interviewer:**

*Come back and see you, yeah-*

**David Barnett:**

*Well-*

**Interviewer:**

*-and make use of the materials?*

**David Barnett:**

*Sure, and what we wanted, what we, what we're trying to do, on the Richmond campus, and that involves the people in the counselling, and support, areas. What we're trying to do is provide help whenever the student asks for it, where the student asks for it, and in relation to what the student's looking at. So, certainly, we see it as part of our job if a student has a problem dealing*

*with materials, assignments, so [... unintelligible] and they come and talk to the people in the Study Skills area about those kinds of problems, just like, I'm sure, the councillors would encourage people having conflicts with professors or whatever, or with other students, would go and talk to the councillor. So, we, sure we encourage that kind of follow-up.*

**Interviewer:**

*Great, [... unintelligible]. I've certainly had a lot of [... unintelligible] oh, good-*

**David Barnett:**

*Let me finish off with, let me finish off with one thing that I think is a reaction we get to our course, two reactions I'd like to finish up with. One is that, in the midst of the course, quite often a student will say: "why weren't we taught these materials, why weren't we taught this kind of information a long time ago, when we really could have made use of them even then, and so they perceive this as, our courses as offering something that they haven't had, as to this point and time because we're dealing, we're looking at problems, I think, from the student's point of view, and they really appreciate that. Now, the second point I'd like to make about our course is the reaction we get from students, is that they say: "it increased my confidence to deal with course materials", and if, I think if I were to take any kind of pride in what we're putting out in the Reading and Study Skills area, it is in that final comment that we help students increase their self-confidence in dealing with the college setting, and we really feel that's important. So, we shape our courses in that direction. That may be the biggest outcome of the course. Not, so much, increased reading speed, or more ability, in terms of planning your time in the Study Skills course, but generally a feeling that, all in all, you're better equipped to deal with a college setting.*

**Interviewer:**

*Or whatever you're going to, if you are transferring to BCIT or-*

**David Barnett:**

*Right.*

**Interviewer:**

*Whatever institution you do move on to. David, I want to thank you very much because you really have cleared up a lot of questions I have about, or had, about study skills, and I hope we have for our listeners. Thank you very much.*