



Research Brief

Spring 2013 Structured Learning Assistance (SLA) Program Evaluation Results

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**Summary of Main Findings**

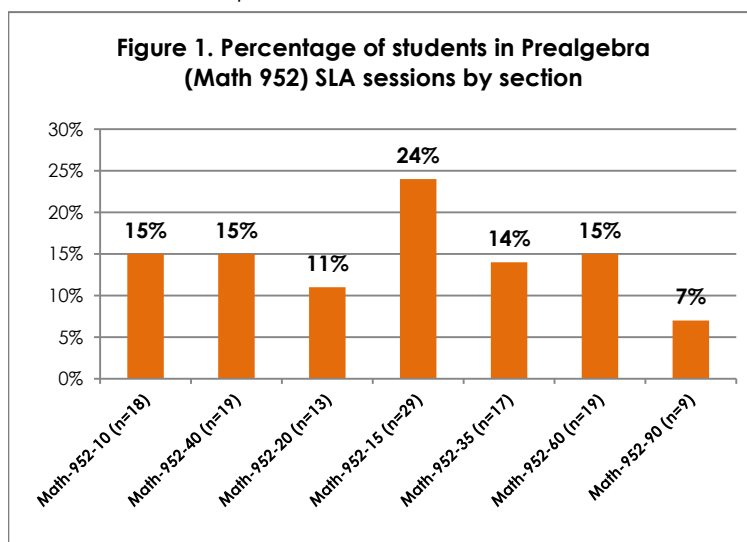
- 85% of respondents attended all or most of the SLA sessions.
- Asking questions/getting answers (40%) and developing learning & studying skills (33%) were the top two activities respondents stated they did MOST at SLA.
- 98% of respondents rated their SLA tutor as very or somewhat effective at conducting sessions.
- 97% of respondents affirmed or somewhat affirmed the SLA sessions helped them with test preparation.
- 96% of respondents stated their SLA sessions helped them understand the course material most or some of the time.
- 81% of respondents rated whether SLA sessions helped them earn a higher grade as definitely yes or probably yes.
- 76% of respondents were required to attend SLA sessions most of the time or they attended equal amounts of voluntary and required sessions.
- 72% of respondents preferred SLA sessions to be held 2 days per week, immediately after the course lecture or had no preference.

**Overview**

Structured Learning Assistance (SLA) at Crafton Hills College is an academic support program in the Tutoring Center that incorporates content specific study and learning strategies into traditionally challenging courses. The program is a series of weekly review sessions that provide students the opportunity to collaborate with their peers in order to compare notes, discuss important concepts, and develop studying strategies. SLA sessions, led by trained tutors, are open to all students interested in improving their understanding of course material and their grades. If a student's grade drops beneath the specified guidelines set by the instructors, however, SLA session attendance becomes mandatory. This brief analyzes the results of the SLA program evaluation completed by student respondents enrolled in Spring 2013 Prealgebra sections.

**Methodology**

An evaluation designed by the Tutoring Center staff for the Spring 2013 SLA sessions supporting students enrolled in seven different sections of Prealgebra (Math 952) were completed by 123 students. The evaluation prompted student respondents to answer 17 multiple choice questions about their experience with their SLA sessions and were also encouraged to provide general open-ended feedback and/or make suggestions on how to improve the program. Figure 1 and Tables 1-3, illustrate the results of the respondents answers to the evaluation. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness, Research and Planning (OIERP) recommends that any future evaluations be developed in collaboration with the OIERP to improve the validity of the information and the efficiency of how the data is processed.



Source: Spring 2013 Prealgebra SLA Evaluations

## Findings

This section provides a summary of findings as a result of the SLA program evaluation. The results have been organized into seven themes by the researcher (refer to Table 1 and 2).

### Attendance

- 85% of respondents attended all or most of the SLA sessions.
- 76% of respondents were *required to attend SLA sessions most of the time* or they *attended equal amounts of voluntary and required sessions*.
- 72% of respondents preferred SLA sessions to be held *2 days per week, immediately after the course lecture* or *had no preference*.

### Tutor Effectiveness

- 98% of respondents rated their SLA tutor as *very* or *somewhat* effective at conducting sessions.
- 95% of respondents stated their SLA tutor was *very open* and approachable when they had questions.

### Time Dedicated to Studying

- 74% of respondents spent *4 hours or less per week* studying for their course aside their SLA sessions.

### Grade Improvement

- 81% of respondents rated whether SLA sessions helped them earn a higher grade as *definitely yes* or *probably yes*.
- 79% of respondents rated the effect SLA had on their overall course grade as *my grade is much better (1 letter grade)* or *my grade is a little better (1/2 letter grade)*.

### Understanding of material

- 97% of respondents *affirmed* or *somewhat affirmed* the SLA sessions helped them with test preparation.
- 96% of respondents stated their SLA sessions helped them understand the course material *most* or *some* of the time.
- 95% of respondents stated SLA sessions *definitely* or *sometimes* helped them understand their professors' presentations (lectures).
- 70% of respondents *affirmed* that the SLA learning and studying techniques helped them master the course material.

### Activities

- *Asking questions/getting answers* (40%) and *developing learning & studying skills* (33%) were the top two activities respondents stated they did MOST at SLA.

### Satisfaction & Utility

- 95% of respondents *plan to use* the study skills presented in SLA in the future.
- 94% of respondents *would recommend* others to enroll in a course tied to SLA.
- 92% of respondents stated they were *glad* they participated in SLA for their course.
- 72% of respondents thought the SLA sessions were *exactly* or *somewhat* what they expected.

**Table 1. Respondents' answers to multiple-choice questions.**

Respondents rated if their attendance was voluntary or required after the first two weeks of class.		
Response	#	%
I attended voluntarily most of the time	21	17
I attended equal amounts of the voluntary and required sessions	32	26
I was required to attend most of the time	61	50
I did not attend after the first two weeks	8	7
I did not attend at all	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>100</b>
Respondents' SLA sessions scheduling preference.		
Schedule	#	%
1 day per week in the mornings (8-noon)	21	18
1 day per week in the afternoons (1-5 p.m.)	9	8
1 day per week in the evening (6-9 p.m.)	4	3
2 days per week	31	26
Immediately after the course lecture	28	23
No preference	27	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents' time spent studying for the course aside the SLA sessions.		
Hours/week	#	%
7 or more hours each week	9	8
5 to 6 hours each week	22	19
3 to 4 hours each week	53	46
Less than 2 hours each week	32	28
<b>Total</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>100</b>
Respondents rated how often the SLA sessions helped them understand the course material.		
Response	#	%
Most of the time	76	66
Some of the time	35	30
Seldom	4	3
None of the time	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>100</b>
Respondents stated whether SLA sessions helped with course test preparation.		
Response	#	%
Yes	73	63
Somewhat	39	34
Not really	3	3
No	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>100</b>
Respondents stated whether SLA sessions helped them understand their professors' presentations (lectures).		
Response	#	%
Definitely yes	61	54
Helped sometimes	46	41
Rarely Helped	5	4
Definitely no	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>100</b>
Respondents rated whether their SLA session tutor conducted effective workshops.		
Response	#	%
Very effective	91	78
Somewhat effective	23	20
Not very effective	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>100</b>
Respondents stated whether their SLA tutor was open and approachable when they had questions.		
Response	#	%
Very open	110	95
Somewhat open	6	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>100</b>
Respondents rated attending SLA workshops helped them earn a higher grade.		
Response	#	%
Definitely yes	37	33
Probably yes	54	48
Not really	20	18
Definitely no	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>100</b>
Respondents rated the effect SLA had on their overall course grade.		
Response	#	%
My grade is much better (1 letter grade)	38	34
My grade is a little better (1/2 letter grade)	51	45
There was no effect on my grade	22	19
My grade is worse	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>100</b>
Respondents rated how many SLA sessions they attended.		
Response	#	%
All of them	44	39
Most of them	52	46
Approximately half of them	13	11
Only before an exam or test	5	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>100</b>
Respondents' stated whether they were glad to have had an SLA workshop for their course.		
Response	#	%
Yes	105	92
No	9	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents' stated whether they would recommend others to enroll in a course with SLA.		
Response	#	%
Yes	106	94
No	7	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents' rated whether the SLA workshop was what they expected.		
Response	#	%
It was exactly what I expected	35	31
It was somewhat like I expected	46	41
It was nothing like I expected	11	10
I didn't have any expectations	21	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents rated whether the SLA sessions' learning & studying techniques helped them master course material.		
Response	#	%
Yes	78	70
I'm not sure if they helped me	32	29
No	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents stated if they plan to use the study skills presented in SLA in the future.		
Response	#	%
Yes	107	95
No	6	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>100</b>

Note: Responses are missing on this table because some respondents did not answer all of the questions.

Table 2. Respondents' rated what they did MOST of the time at the SLA sessions.			
Response	#	N	%
Asking questions/getting answers	49	123	40
Practice testing	27	123	22
Developing learning & studying skills	41	123	33
Completing homework	31	123	25

Note: Various respondents selected more than one category.

Comments from the open-ended feedback in Table 3 indicate that respondents were generally satisfied with their participation in SLA. Some respondents pointed that the Spring 2013 SLA was "better than the last one" and that it was "very effective". The respondents were least satisfied with the scheduling of SLA and its mandatory attendance. Additionally, the open-ended comments provided indicated that respondents were generally satisfied with SLA tutors.

Table 3. Respondents' open-ended comments about their SLA experience and/or suggestions on how to improve SLA.
<p>General favorable feedback (N=31)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I enjoyed the class and felt it was a good review for actual class. I feel that it has helped my grade tremendously.</li> <li>• I liked the workshop on its own day because I wasn't too burned out to ask questions and focus. We did learning and confidence building. I needed both and enjoyed it.</li> <li>• I think it's a great opportunity to understand what's going on. It helped me get a second look at things I didn't quite understand. I hope I have the opportunity in my future courses to take the SLA classes. I'm sure I will need them.</li> <li>• I think taking an SLA course was very beneficial. I was able to ask questions and get useful answers without feeling like a burden or feeling stupid.</li> <li>• I thought the SLA workshops were very effective; wish I would have utilized it better!</li> <li>• I thought this SLA was better than the last one I was in because we didn't mostly work on worksheets. We also played games that were based on the material that we went over and I think that is a good way to remember material.</li> <li>• It's nice to learn from a different person because sometimes my SLA teacher would explain things better than my regular teacher.</li> <li>• My SLA experience was very good. I enjoyed it a lot because it felt like a place where everyone could be open and ask questions.</li> <li>• My SLA experience was very good. It gave me more personal time to ask questions other than bothering the teacher in front of the whole class.</li> <li>• SLA was very helpful if I didn't understand what we learned in class, I would ask questions in SLA and they would show me step by step how to solve the problem and answer all my questions.</li> <li>• SLA was very helpful to me. I found myself learning more as well as retaining more of the information that I learned. SLA makes you see the work more often and acts as a refresher for the material being studied.</li> <li>• Thank you very much; not only me, but I am sure that many [other students] will succeed because of SLA. Thank you.</li> <li>• SLA was helpful in some ways but not to the point where I would love to take it again. Having the extra help is always helpful.</li> <li>• We discussed everything from homework, tests and random questions we needed help with.</li> </ul>

- Yes it's very helpful. It makes you understand the problems much better.
- SLA was very helpful and I learned a lot in the class than you for the help.
- Helped with questions that were hard to understand in class.
- Had lots of fun with it and learned many new strategies for math.
- I believe it made it easier to get help and being able to ask questions.
- I was great very helpful. Helped me remember what needed to know for the test.
- It helped warm up my math skills each time I attended math class.
- It was my first time taking an SLA course and I thought it was great help.
- Best idea to have SLA.
- Good experiences
- Great job!
- I really like SLA. It helped me a lot.
- My SLA experience was very helpful.
- Nice; helpful.
- My SLA experience was amazing.
- It was excellent. I would do it again.
- SLA was wonderful.

#### SLA tutor commendations (N=13)

- [Name] has been a great SLA tutor. She is patient and takes her time explaining how to work through the problems. Also, her power points helped a lot. The SLA course was great in helping me to understand the math concepts more.
- [Name] was an awesome tutor.
- [Name] was an excellent SLA. She helped a great deal. I wish I could have her more, but what she gave to us on Fridays was beautiful. She is also great at offering an open ear. Thank you [Name].
- [Name] was great. I just didn't like SLA. I would have rather not take it.
- [Name] was super sweet. I didn't care for SLA but I worked one on one with [Name] and she is awesome.
- I love [Name]!
- Our tutor [Name] did an excellent job. He helped me to do better on the quizzes, tests, and answered questions on the homework.
- SLA class was a really big help, and the tutor helped a lot.
- Love [name]!
- I like how the tutor made it fun and explained what we need to know in an easy to understand way. I learned and understood more in SLA than actual class.
- It was helpful. Although the instructor needs to focus more specifically on each section other than that. [Name] was great.
- It was great. Tutor was always willing to help even after SLA times.
- This SLA workshop was better than when I had one 2 semesters ago. The tutor helped us a lot more. I enjoyed going and getting extra help. I understood the course a lot better.

#### Improvements suggested/program challenges (N=17)

- Why are they going to make the SLA workshops really long now?
- It would have been better if the SLA was after class.
- I would have liked to have the SLA after the actual math class. I think it would have benefited more.
- SLA should be offered after course lecture. It would be better to go over the new material. It's not always easy to remember the material and it gets confusing at times.
- Don't have SLA on a different day. Have it a couple hours after lecture.
- One time per week.
- Don't lower grade if not attending. Don't make people stay if they don't get an A+ on tests.
- I do not feel that our grade should be altered if we do not attend the SLA workshops. That is unfair and it should be voluntary.
- I feel like SLA should be mandatory for everyone without the option of the tutoring center. I feel like students will learn more when they are all on the same page. The tutor's in the Tutoring Center don't know exactly how our teacher is teaching.
- They should teach the things exactly as the teacher does. Having more than 2 or 3 ways gets confusing when your math teacher teaches you a certain way.
- Tutor could slow down a little in presentations; speak louder.
- I think it is useful, but the tutors need to cover more material that the students have trouble with. Not just review everything.
- More effective study techniques can be presented.
- My difficulty was not being taught the text material. We only saw the teacher do problems. I was not here for a refresher class. I know nothing about pre-algebra.
- Only comment is class needs better markers!
- SLA experience went really fast; too fast for me.
- I did not like SLA. It didn't help me. It just confused me.