

CASE STUDY: CRISTA HOPP

Students with Learning Differences Respond to Anti-Boring Approach

Outdated study methods slow student learning

Crista Hopp started Connected Pathways Coaching in 2014. She wanted to help students with ADHD, executive function (EF), and learning challenges build school and life skills. Part of her approach was to design personalized study strategies to help them learn more effectively and build confidence.

“Personalized study skills are critical for every student,” Crista said. But for many of the children who come to Connected Pathways, the study methods typically taught in schools don’t work.

In fact, the most common strategies—filling out study guides or re-reading the textbook before a test—are the least effective ways to retain information for any student. For students with ADHD or other learning disorders, these strategies often don’t work at all.

Students struggle with working memory

Working memory has to do with taking in information, manipulating it, and using it. You use it to hold individual digits when you multiply numbers, for example, or to remember a sequence of “to-do” items when a teacher gives directions. For students with EF challenges, some of these bits of information get dropped.

These students also have a harder time recalling information, staying on-task, organizing their materials, getting started, and staying focused. “These kids are challenged with working memory and processing speed, so receiving a study guide at the very last minute is really hard for them. They can’t retrieve that information, process it, and store it in such a short amount of time,” Crista explained.

Many common study methods aren’t in line with newer research on learning. “We have kids that are struggling with their own challenges and with the way they’ve been taught to study – with study guides and cramming for tests. I wanted a structured system that makes sense and is based in neuroscience.”

Neuroscience-based strategies help students learn

Hopp found the *Anti-Boring Approach to Powerful Studying* program through a colleague. She immediately signed up for Gretchen Wegner’s free online course, *Study Cycle 101*.



EDUCATOR

- Crista Hopp, Executive Function and ADHD Coach
- Director, Connected Pathways Coaching, Virginia
- 7 years coaching with children, teens, parents



STUDENTS

- Students with ADHD and LD
- Parents of younger children



CHALLENGE

- Students have a wide variety of learning differences and challenges
- Most study tools don’t address needs of young students



SOLUTION

- *Anti-Boring Approach* provides neuroscience-based tools for coaches
- Add *Art of Inspiring Students* training for all Connected Pathways coaches
- *Anti-Boring Educator’s Community* bolsters coaches and their students



RESULTS

- Students motivated and ready to learn advanced material
- Young students and parents learn to use the *Study Cycle*

Crista was impressed by the course's focus on neuroscience. "It was exciting," she said. "I wasn't seeing a lot of that in Academic Coaching before this."

The Study Cycle uses brain science to help students learn any subject. It's a 3-step process that shows why some study strategies work well and others don't—and why some popular study methods (like re-reading notes) actually get in the way of learning.

"It was clear to me that Gretchen Wegner's approach was so much better than everything else out there," Crista recalled. "I was still teaching students about how to identify their learning style, and new research shows that that isn't even a strategy that works."

A game-changing alternative to 'cramming'

She especially appreciated that Gretchen's course taught the "why" of learning. "In coaching, finding a way to connect to kids is key," she explained. "Especially with teenagers. If you don't explain why a process works, you're just another adult telling them what to do."

After the free course, Crista signed up for *The Art of Inspiring Students*. She immediately incorporated the new study skills and organizational tools into her work.

"Teaching effective, personalizable study skills is something that has really helped our students succeed in all their classes," she said. "It's an unexpected win for parents too, who also learn the new tools. They don't always realize when they come to us that their kid needs to learn not just how to stay organized, but also how to study."

Educator's Community tackles biggest student learning challenges

Crista was so impressed by the *Anti-Boring* tools that she joined the *Educator's Community*. Every month, this group of educators teaches practice Anti-Boring mini-lessons, brainstorms new ways to use the toolkit, and discusses how students learn.

Crista brings her most pressing questions to this group. Then Gretchen and fellow educators suggest new strategies to try. They also share new ideas, resources, and their own

student successes. Crista appreciates the way they learn from each other. "Collaboration is so important for coaches and educators," she said.

Parents use *Anti-Boring* strategies to help younger kids learn

Crista has used the *Anti-Boring Approach* with students as young as 3rd graders. With these young students, she coaches the parents too. Once parents learn the a few of the basic *Anti-Boring* tools, they can reinforce their child's progress. This makes studying for young kids much more effective.

"Even seven and eight-year-olds understand the concepts in the *Anti-Boring Approach*", Crista says. For example, one of her third-grade coaching clients uses the *Study Cycle* to memorize his weekly spelling words.

"Parents are astounded to learn that their child no longer has to cram for two hours a night before a test." Instead, Crista's students study in more efficient ways that help them retain the material over the long term.

Anti-Boring Classes Required for Connected Pathways Coaches

The *Anti-Boring Approach* has become a staple in Crista's coaching practice, and she requires all *Connected Pathways* coaches to complete the training. It gives Crista's coaches a collection of powerful strategies to use with students. It also provides a framework in which coaches can invent their own tools.

"The *Anti-Boring* training is accessible and powerful," she says.

That means that when her staff comes together, the group has a common understanding of how students learn. They can use a common language when they communicate with students, parents, and each other.

"Not many ADHD and executive functioning coaches are offering something like this," she said. "But for us, it's important. Every coach that works for my practice goes through the *Anti-Boring Approach to Powerful Studying*. I have found it to be *that* beneficial."

Gretchen Wegner is the industry expert in what every student needs to know about how to study, and what every parent and educator needs to know about how to inspire students to study. Find out more about her anti-boring coaching, courses and community at gretchenwegner.com.