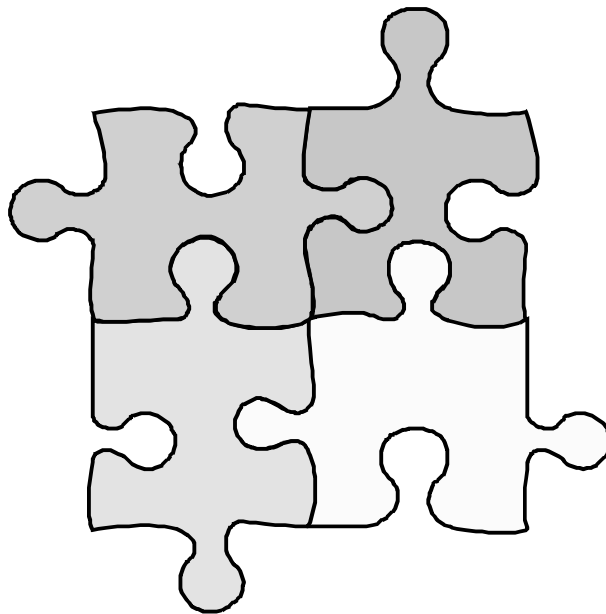


# **Academic Success**

## **The Six Secrets to Extraordinary Success**



**By Michele LoBosco & Jacqueline LoBosco, Ph.D.**

## Meet the Authors



**Michele LoBosco** received her bachelor's degree in psychology and completed graduate coursework at Columbia University. She has over a decade of experience in the independent education industry, and has lectured and authored extensively on the topic of education and academic success. She is co-founder of **Academics Plus Tutoring Center**, a premier tutoring and training company that specializes in personal development and academic enrichment programs for individuals of all ages. Academics Plus employs a staff of learning specialists and educators that assists

students of all grade levels and abilities achieve academic and personal success by providing a wide range of coaching services based on their one-of-a-kind success model.



**Jacqueline J. LoBosco, Ph.D.** received her bachelor's degree in psychology from Boston University, her doctoral degree in neuropsychology from The Graduate Center: CUNY, and completed clinical training at Yale University's School of Medicine. Though a clinician by training, she is an educator by choice, as well as the co-founder and Director of **Academics Plus**. At Academics Plus she puts her training in neuropsychology to practical use by offering academic coaching and remediation to students with

and without learning disabilities, as well as helping supervise a staff of tutors committed to working with students with a wide range of learning issues. As an alumna of Hunter College High School, Jacqui is familiar with the competitive NYC high school curriculum and helps students navigate through their challenging course loads to achieve academic and personal success. She helps students increase their own self-knowledge, identify and eliminate negative "self-talk," explore their own obstacles to success, and decrease stress, worry and fear by incorporating breathing, focusing, and de-stressing techniques into her work.

### Books by these authors

*How to Ace the SAT\* Without Losing Your Cool*  
*The Academics Plus SAT Success System: Academic Workbook*

*How to Ace the SAT\* Without Losing Your Cool*  
*The Academics Plus SAT Success System: Personal Workbook*

# Academic Success: The Six Secrets to Extraordinary Success

## Step One: Align with the Correct Knowledge, Perspective and Action Plan

The first secret to achieving success is comprised of three components:

- 1) Align with the correct knowledge.
- 2) Align with the correct perspective.
- 3) Align with the correct action plan.

When you learn about these three components as well as the remaining five secrets and apply this knowledge to your study and test habits, you will be able to achieve significantly higher levels of success than you have ever before. How can we make such a claim? Because we tutor and coach hundreds of students each year and when they integrate the six secrets into the way they prepare for exams and homework assignments, not only do they increase their levels of success, they increase their levels of motivation, efficacy and confidence. So, as you read the pages to follow, pay close attention and ask yourself how you can make some adjustments in the ways you study and complete homework assignments. You will be pleasantly surprised!

Let's take a closer and more explorative look at each of the individual steps listed. We will review each in a fairly superficial way, and if you are interested in learning more, please visit our website and download our complimentary e-book titled [The Three Little Known Secrets to Academic Success](#).

*Align with the correct knowledge.* If you want to increase your capacity in a certain area, you must develop your knowledge base in that area. Makes sense, right? But let's get even more specific. Not only do you have to develop more knowledge about the task at hand, you will also have to develop increased knowledge about the strategies and methodologies available to help you reach that goal. For instance, if your goal is to become a world class kickboxing fighter, you will not only have to learn about the sport itself, its rules and regulations, as well as the concepts and philosophies regarding it, you'll have to learn about the various moves, kicks, and body positions that you can use that will allow you to conquer your opponent. Thirdly, you have to develop knowledge about yourself with regard to the sport. If you have a strong left kick and a weaker right kick, it would not serve you well to get in the ring and continually use your weaker side. Developing increased self-knowledge will increase the potential of your achieving your goal because the information will help you accentuate your strengths and navigate around your weakness so you have the best chance of winning. So, in summary, aligning with the correct knowledge requires the development of knowledge about the task at hand, the strategies available for implementation, and about yourself. Excellent, let's move on.



*Align with the correct perspective.* Learning how to align with the correct perspective is equally as important as aligning with the correct knowledge. Typically, people who want to achieve success know that they will have to increase their knowledge; however, they often do not take into account that they have to develop a winning attitude; that they have to align themselves with a winning perspective. What is a winning perspective? It is a perspective that promotes the attainment of the goal. The way one views something has a tremendous impact, and how one thinks can be just as important as what one knows. Henry Ford, one of the most successful businessmen of the 20th century, was aware of the importance of a winning attitude when he said "Whether you think you can or think you can't, you're right!"

*Align with the correct action plan.* Not only do you have to align yourself with the correct knowledge and correct perspective, you have to take action that promotes the attainment of the goal at hand. If your goal is to become a masterful kick boxer, you most likely need to receive some instruction, perhaps work individually with a coach or take a class with other students. You will also have to practice the skills you acquire so your body is able to perform at will and execute the skills with ease and proficiency.

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## Step Two: The Law Of Attraction - Focus on What you Want, Not What You Don't Want

Those of you who have seen the movie "The Secret" are already familiar with the Law of Attraction. For those who have not seen the movie, the Law of Attraction essentially says this: when you place your attention, or focus on, a particular goal, you increase the potential for achieving that goal. Oprah Winfrey continually makes reference to this law, often saying, "What you focus on expands."



How can you make use of this powerful law? Keep your focus on that which you seek to accomplish rather than on what you seek to avoid. It is a common phenomenon for students to come our tutoring center with the hopes of getting a high score on the SAT. This is great! We support that! But what is very important for the student, in addition to having this goal, is to keep the focus on the goal rather than the temporary setbacks that often happen along the way. See if this sounds familiar. A student sets a goal, something along the lines of *I intend to increase my chemistry grade from a C to an A*. So they study for the weekly quizzes, take

better notes and pay more attention in class. And they do a little better. All good so far, right? Then, the teacher gives a particularly hard quiz, and the student's score drops down a bit. The student is crushed. The entire walk home, she tells herself *I am so stupid, I am never going to 'get' chemistry, I am not smart enough, what's the use?* That evening, her best friend calls and asks about the chemistry test, and the negative focus continues, *I messed up! I can't believe I did so poorly, it's no use, I just suck when it comes to science*. What is this student focusing on? What is she reaffirming to herself? The exact opposite of her original goal!

It is much more valuable to focus on what you want to achieve. An alternative response to the temporary setback of the more challenging chemistry quiz grade would have been, *okay so what can I learn from this? What information can I extract from this situation that will better help me to achieve my goal of an A in chemistry? Perhaps I can ask the teacher for some outside help after class; perhaps I can compare the questions on the quiz to my notes and figure out if the teacher tends to pull the question from the textbook or from the notes covered in class so I can maximize my potential for success. Okay, that's exactly what I am going to do. These steps will definitely lead to an increase in score*

This continual focus, along with your intention and goal setting process discussed in secret three, will maximize your potential for academic success.

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## Step Three: Learn and Implement the Important Tool of Goal Setting

If you read the biographies of some of history's most successful men, you will find that they had definitive goals, visions, or aspirations of what they wished to achieve. Yogi Bera, a fifteen-time All Star American League baseball player who holds numerous World Series records acknowledged the importance of goal-setting when he said, "If you don't know where you're going, you'll end up someplace else." In the book *The Eleven Commandments of Wildly Successful Women*, Pam Gilbert interviewed one hundred twenty five women who achieved extraordinary success in their work and personal lives. She found that most had one thing in common, they had goals and definitive plans, and they focused on making them happen.

Napoleon Hill, in the book *Think and Grow Rich*, says that to achieve your dreams you have to focus on what you want your life to be about. After studying the most successful people of his time, people like Thomas Edison, Rockefeller, and Andrew Carnegie, he concluded that those who had set intentions and goals found it easier to prioritize their time, effort, and money and ultimately to reach their dreams. He called this developing "Definiteness of Purpose" and definiteness of purpose is nothing more than setting an intention and a series of specific goals.

In a study at Harvard more than 40 years ago researchers polled the graduating class of 1953 to find out how many students actually had clearly written specific goals and a plan for achieving them. This being a class of highly intelligent people at one of the most renowned universities, you'd expect them all to have articulated a plan to reach their goals – but only 3% had taken the time to write down their goals. Twenty years later the researchers polled the same group to see how they fared in life. It turned out that the 3% who had written their goals accumulated more wealth than the other 97% combined.

Here is a modern day story illustrating the importance of goal setting; perhaps you've heard it before. Before Jim Carrey was a household name and was a struggling actor predominantly making his living by doing stand up and impersonations, Jim Carrey wrote himself a check for 10 million dollars. He dated it Thanksgiving Day 1995, and he kept the check in his wallet for a few years. When times were rough he would look at the check to remind himself of his ultimate goal. After a number of years, his luck began to change. He got recognition for his role on *In Living Color* and *Ace Ventura* and *The Mask*. And get this, in November 1995, the month and year he had written on the original check, he was offered \$10 million for *Mask 2* and the following year he was paid \$20 million for *The Cable Guy*.

To achieve success in any area, including any pursuits that are academic in nature, it is important to participate in a goal-setting process. The first step is to select a **LONG-TERM GOAL** and articulate the reasons for wanting to attain this goal. Once you have stated your long term goal, you have completed an important part of the process; you have stated your intention to achieve this goal to the physical universe. Now you are ready to move to the second and even more important phase of the process. The second phase is the means to accomplishing your goal – this is your how-to phase. You will choose small, **SHORT-TERM GOALS** and then take every step necessary to achieve them. When those goals have been achieved, you will establish a new set of goals that are also small and achievable. Again, you will take every step necessary to achieve them. This procedure will be followed until your **LONG TERM GOAL** has been accomplished.

This procedure is highly successful because it will keep your attention on steps that can be achieved rather than on the overwhelming long-term goal which can often be intimidating and daunting. Each time you achieve a short term goal, it is important to acknowledge and celebrate your success, a step that will be further explained and explored in Step 4 of *The Six Secrets of Success*.

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## Step Four: Celebrate Success

In step three, we discussed the importance of goal setting. We reviewed how the most famous and successful people in history are often those who have acknowledged using the process of goal-setting to help them achieve their success. We spoke about the importance of articulating a long-term goal, and the importance of identifying a series of short term goals that will get you to that ultimate goal. We left off at the point in which we shared that, during this process, accomplishments must be celebrated and successes acknowledged.

Celebration of success is very important step and is a large part of the work we do at our tutoring center. Here's why. Although students succeed each and every day, they often give more attention to their setbacks or "failures" than to their daily successes. And by concentrating and focusing on their supposed failures, they are constantly wiring themselves to believe that failure is a more likely outcome. It becomes almost an expected thing. It is incredibly helpful, rather than to continually focus on your failures, to acknowledge your successes. Now, we certainly encourage you to take note of strategies and methodologies, or habits that have been ineffective or have not brought about the desired goal. But use this information to help identify new strategies, and view these experiences as an opportunity to try a different strategy that may yield a different outcome. And at the same time, pay lots of attention to the strategies that are yielding success. Each time you achieve a short term goal and have accomplished a certain level of success, CELEBRATE! Continually saturate yourself with the knowledge that you are capable of succeeding, that you are capable of accomplishing what you set your mind to. Keep focusing your attention on that which you have achieved; this will lead to a healthier self-image, a greater sense of independence, and an increased ability to creatively and constructively overcome obstacles that stand in your way. You'll notice that you experience higher levels of motivation because this process helps you believe in your own capacity for success, and when you believe you are capable of achieving the goal at hand, your chances for success are hugely maximized. By acknowledge your own success; you are setting yourself up for future success.



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### **Step Five: Identify your Own Learning Preferences and Advocate for Yourself**

Socrates, an early Greek philosopher, was a proponent of self-knowledge. In fact, one of his most famous maxims is “Know thyself.” This is valuable advice for anyone, but is especially important for students who desire to improve their school grades or standardized test scores. Students who have comprehensive knowledge of their own learning styles, preferences, skills, talents, strengths and weakness are in the best position to achieve the highest level of success. Not only will increased self-knowledge help you to navigate exams and homework assignments with less effort, increased self knowledge will help you effectively communicate with educators so that they can help you in the ways that will best support you.

Everyone learns differently: some students are excellent visual learners and learn best when instructors draw pictures, graphs and diagrams on the board; some students are auditory learners and learn best when instructors speak their lessons out loud; others are kinesthetic learners and learn best by doing things (there are, in fact, many additional learning preferences, but we will just mention these three for now). When students have a clear understanding of how they learn best, they can encourage their teachers to present material in ways that increase their own comprehension. For instance, if you are a visual learner, and your teacher simply reads the lesson of the day out loud from a textbook, you might not absorb some, or perhaps even any, of the lesson. If you know you are a visual learner, you can make a personal request (or ask one of your parents to ask on your behalf) to incorporate a written component into the lesson as well. Simple adjustments such as these on the part of the teacher can make all the difference between your being able to be an active participant in the lesson and or an outsider who loses track, focus and eventually concern for what is going on in the classroom.

We know that it is not fun to sit in a classroom when you don’t have a clear understanding of the material being presented and that when prolonged periods of non-comprehension occur, it can result in loss of interest, self-confidence, and motivation. At our tutoring center, we really encourage students to develop their self-knowledge as it increases the ease and effectiveness with which the learning process takes place.

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## Step Six: Know You Are Capable of Success

It is so important to know that you are capable of accomplishing great things. Yes, sometimes the accomplishment of big goals require hard work, but if you apply the six secrets to academic success, you can accomplish more than most people would think possible. Let's review a few people in history who, despite being "burdened" with seemingly insurmountable limitations, went on to achieve more than individuals without limitations would be expected to achieve.

### **Helen Keller**

When Helen Keller was two years old, she was struck with an illness that left her deaf and blind. Her ability to communicate with the outside world came to a sudden standstill. The following few years proved almost impossible for Helen and her family. Helen's violent outbursts and continual tantrums caused relatives to encourage Helen's parents to place her in an institution. Rather than further isolate her, they sought the help of Anne Sullivan who was able to establish a bond with Helen and teach her to communicate. Helen went on to graduate from Radcliff College, cum laude. After college, she began giving impassioned public speeches, speaking out for the rights of African Americans, females, and other oppressed populations. She went on to publish dozens of books and was the author of scores of essays, articles, and speeches. She continued for the majority of her life to tour widely, delivering her speeches in favor of various groups and causes.

### **Wilma Rudolph**

The twentieth of 22 children, Wilma was born with polio and suffered from serious bouts of scarlet fever and pneumonia as a young child. These ailments resulted in a "bad leg" that some said would prevent her from ever walking. Her family refused to accept this depressing diagnosis and sought out physical therapy. Wilma was fitted with a leg brace that she wore from the time she was five until she was 11 years old. Then, one Sunday, she removed it and walked down the aisle of her church. She went on to become a remarkable track and field athlete and in 1959 became the first American woman to win three gold medals in a single Olympics. In 1960, she set the world record for 2000 meters and earned the title of the "World's Fastest Woman." That same year, she was named by the Associated Press as the U.S. Female Athlete of the Year, and won United Press Athlete of the Year honors.

### **James Earl Jones**

Most people know James Earl Jones. Although James Earl Jones is an accomplished actor who has appeared in dozens of movies, what he is most often appreciated for is his deep, rich and confident voice. His commanding presence and his resonant and rich voice made him a perfect choice for the voice of **Darth Vader** in the long-running Star Wars film series, as well as the face and voice of the Verizon Wireless commercials. Most people would be shocked to know that when James was five, he suffered an emotional trauma that left him with an incapacitating stutter. On National Public Radio (NPR), it was said that when James was a boy, he "had such a severe stutter that, for eight years, he refused to talk and was functionally mute." Obviously, the story doesn't end there. James overcame this disability, and in 1963, at a time where serious jobs for black actors were scarce, he made his screen debut and has since gone on to appear in over 50 films. He has won two Tony Awards, a Golden Globe, and was nominated for an Oscar in 1970.

The list of people who, despite limitations and handicaps, achieved extraordinary levels of success goes on and on. Here are a number of famous people who overcame some form of learning difference, or a physical or environmental limitation: Albert Einstein, Oprah Winfrey, Tom Cruise, Nelson Rockefeller, Galileo, Sylvester Stallone, Cher, Thomas Edison, John F. Kennedy, Mozart, Whoppi Goldberg, Charles Schwab, Walt Disney, Leonardo da Vinci, Henry Winkler, Harry Belafonte, Danny Glover, F. Scott Fitzgerald, John Lennon, Robin Williams, Greg Louganis, Louis Pasteur, Winston Churchill, Henry Ford, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Robert Kennedy, George Bernard Shaw, Alexander Graham Bell, Magic Johnson, and Beethoven.

We give these encouraging personal accounts of amazing individuals, and have listed other individuals into whose history you can do further research, because we want you to understand that human potential is practically limitless. If you search through the journals of history, you will find an individual who has accomplished nearly every impossibility that existed until that individual made it a possibility. Know that you are capable of great things! Know if you increase your own self-knowledge and fortify yourself with positive self statements, align with the correct knowledge, perspective and action plan, use the powerful tools of goal setting, focusing and success celebration, you will surprise not only yourself but those around you.