By ANN WAYNICK
Salem Academy

It's summer, and many believe that's the time for lazy days and no school. But for teen-agers in the Wake Forest University Learn to Learn program, it's a time to re-evaluate their learning processes so that the 1974-75 academic year will be more profitable.

Dr. Philippe Falkenberg, associate professor of psychology at Wake Forest, is the director and teacher of the summer program for high schoolers. He said, "I think the thing the course does especially is give the students possibilities and options. Before, they've only known their own system of studying. I give them another way.

Good Notes

"We teach them how to read more efficiently. We also teach them when, why and how to take good notes, and how to work on how to develop better study habits and one method is SQ3R: Survey, Question, Read, Recite and Review. For the first time they are made aware of how they are studying." Falkenberg not only teaches his methods to high school students during the summer, but also to college students during the year. He will have completed three high school sessions this summer by Aug. 16. Each session lasts about three weeks.

The students are participants as well as listeners...the daily classes. Falkenberg lectures about objective tests and exam techniques, and note-taking during the first hour, beginning at 8:30 a.m. A break follows this, and the students come back to practice what was in the lecture. The sessions go to 10 a.m.

The students are in grades 9-12, and some will be freshmen in college next year. Some of the 25 teens in the second summer session which ended last Friday discussed the program.

John Parkinson, 15, of Forsyth Country Day School said, "I was recommended to go, and I knew I needed to improve my reading speed," said Malissa. "I'm really getting a lot out of this course; I'm learning to use my time more wisely, to read faster with comprehension...and generally how to study better. I think everybody needs improvement in some of these areas, and the reading assignments and self-tests are a big help."

Paul Montague, 16, a Reynolds junior, said, "I'm getting a lot out of this because I get much more comprehension out of what I read, and this helps you get more out of what you are doing," said Paul. "The course builds up a habit for working, especially for people who don't want to work."

Beth Barron, 16, a West Forsyth Senior High School student, said she needed the course to improve her study skills. "It's teaching me how to study and understand what I'm studying," she said. "You don't feel like an individual working alone at something in this class. You feel like a team and everyone's working toward the same goal."

Debbie Ramirez, 15, came all the way from Fort Riley, Kan., and Junction City High School to participate in this program. "I thought that this course would help me use my time more efficiently since I used so much time on studying before...I really think it's helping me. I'm learning the SQ3R method, and I'm getting more done in a shorter amount of time."

Shirley Benbow, 16, a sophomore at St. Catherine's School, said of the program, "I think it's good. I'm learning to take tests and how to study for them."

Falkenberg himself has made an impression on the students. Debbie Ramirez said, "He's really cute. I like him a lot!"

Paul agreed. "He's a good teacher."

Lynn said, "He can relate really interesting examples, his illustrations are good, and they make what he's talking about really clear."

He Can Relate

Malissa added, "I love him. He can relate with the students and he makes you want to do your homework and learn."

"I recommend anyone to come here so they'll be able to make better grades," said Lynn.

John said, "If anyone has a learning problem and they've tried everything else, they ought to come here."

Others from Winston-Salem and the surrounding area participating in the session ending last week were: William F. Brock Jr., 16, and William A. Chappell, 15, of Davie County High School; Paul D. Williams, 17, Susan Rogers, 16, Edward B. Pollock, 17, George Baily, 17, and Debbie Fuller, 16, of Reynolds; Richard S. Clay, 15, of Forsyth Country Day School; Janice Debell, 15, and Jane Hopkins, 15, of Salem Academy; Cheryl Kellum, 16, and Robert C. Davis, 16, of East Forsyth Senior High School; and Robert L. Foster, 17, Karen L. Richards, 16, and John S. Clarke, 16, of Mount Airy High School.
WFU Course Helps Many Students

Studying More Efficiently

By Rick Edmonds

StafF Reporter

"Looked at scientifically, the way most students study is a model of inefficiency," Dr. Philippe Falkenberg, an assistant professor of psychology at Wake Forest University, was coming to that conclusion two years ago, just when the college was asking its faculty members to develop courses for a new one-month winter semester.

Falkenberg, whose main scholarly interest is research on memory processes, decided to combine some established wisdom on study techniques with a bit of instruction in do-it-yourself behavior modification. The "Learn to Learn" course worked well enough that Falkenberg has repeated it at Wake Forest and is now making a summer business of offering it to high school students.

Obvious Way

Much of what he teaches defies common sense. Falkenberg concedes, but experiments have shown that the obvious way of going about learning tasks is not always the best way.

For instance, re-reading material, as many students do to pick up what they have forgotten or missed the first time through, rarely results in more than a tiny increase in comprehension. Underlining portions of a textbook, another favorite technique of the conscientious student, is a positive menace in Falkenberg's view, a useless substitute for the work of remembering the relevant material in the book.

"Too many students see themselves as pitchers to be filled up with knowledge by teachers and books," Falkenberg said yesterday. Passivity is the underlying learning flaw his course seeks to correct.

Specific Questions

For instance, he advises students to look over material before they read it, read with specific questions in mind, forget about copying out detailed notes and instead try to recite the main content of the material once they're finished.

"Reading is not learning," Falkenberg said. "Any more than getting the ingredients together is the same as baking a cake." Remembering later is the test of learning, so active practice in recalling and repeating the facts is a very productive use of study time.

"Falkenberg tells his students they can read half as much of a book using this technique and still have learned more than others who plod unquestioningly through every word.

Non-learning typically follows this pattern - "I read it, I understood it then, but now I've forgotten it," Falkenberg calls the phenomenon short-term memory.

Research has shown, he said, that the human memory holds much of the information it receives for only a brief period (somewhere between 20 seconds and an hour) then erases it completely.

The trick for the learner then, is to get the information into his long-term memory system. Scientists have shown that humans do not truly forget anything after those first few minutes, Falkenberg said, so that information in the long-term memory system can always be recalled and used, under the proper stimulus.

Falkenberg's approach to poor study habits is based on another psychological theory. He tells students that inability to concentrate is a behavior pattern they must modify gradually by manipulating the environment in which they study and by offering themselves appropriate rewards and punishments.

For instance, Mrs. Patricia A. Johnson, who is teaching one of the Learn-to-Learn courses on the Wake Forest campus this summer, was advising her students Wednesday morning that they should indulge the natural human urge for variety by taking a break when their minds begin to wander from what they're studying.

But to make sure the reward is for working instead of for quitting, they were told to read for another minute or two from the time they decide they have had enough.

Such practical tips, explained with some elementary behavioral psychology, together with drill on the new study techniques, comprise Falkenberg's course.

Major Improvement

It is not, he said yesterday, a solution for children with special learning disabilities. Nor is there any focus, as in some study courses, in preparing students for specific exams like the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT).

But Falkenberg does give before-and-after reading tests on which he said most of his students show major improvement in three weeks. And he has proved to his satisfaction that the first group of probationary students who took his course at Wake Forest have done better in college than a similar control group whose progress he has also followed.

"I learned to learn and to concentrate while I was a student at Wake Forest," Falkenberg said, "but I can't teach this to students without giving them the proper environment."