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Sal Piacente of Florence concentrates as Jennifer Adkins calls cards at Three Rivers Middle School. At Argosy Casino, he trains supervisors to spot people trying to beat the system.

Memory expert gives tips to learn more, study less

By Brenna R. Kelly
The Cincinnati Enquirer

CLEVELS - He could be Rain Man - but with a thick Brooklyn accent, shaved head, goatee and a heavy gold chain.

In seconds he can memorize a deck of cards, a list of 25 objects, or the serial number on a dollar bill. In two hours, he can memorize a magazine - down to a phone number in an ad on page 50.

"That's awesome," exclaimed 14-year-old Tommy Joyce while watching Sal Piacente demonstrate his skills Wednesday for eighth-graders at Three Rivers Middle School.

Though Piacente, 39, has been perfecting his memory skills for 20 years, his message to students is they can do it, too - through SAL.

Simple Associated Learning. Trying to remember what Vita-

min A does for you? Picture an ape with skin, covered in eyeballs. Vitamin A helps skin and eyesight.

How about Vitamin B? Picture a nervous bumblebee. Vitamin B is good for the nervous system.

"The motto here is, study smarter not harder," Piacente said. "If you use this system it will cut your study time by 75 percent, and you'll know it better."

Piacente began studying memory techniques for his job - catching cheaters in casinos.

"There are ways to beat blackjack with a strong memory," Piacente said. Today, he's a game protection specialist at Grand Victoria Casino in Rising Sun, Ind.

Piacente, his wife and two children live in Boone County.

Ever since, he's taken his talents to schools, including Boone County's Ockerman Middle and Ste-

phens Elementary and Holmes High in Covington.

"I think it's so important to put into schools," Piacente said. "So many kids today don't take advantage of their education."

At Three Rivers, Piacente showed memory and card tricks, including his "Rain Man" trick named after the 1998 movie in which Dustin Hoffman's character counts cards at a casino. Piacente looked at half a deck of cards, then recited the remaining cards in the deck.

"Could you remember that?" teacher Phil Scandy asked one of his students.

"If could remember that," he said, "I'd remember my homework."

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