

#### **4.) Tips for Teachers – Improving Student Performance on ALL Types of Assessments**

*Plus... Things that Parents can do to help students do their best on tests.*

- ◆ Teach students the skill of ‘Process Writing’. Focusing on metacognition, the thinking about their thinking, will enable them to articulate how to solve problems.
  - ◆ Process Writing can be done in the form of journal writing and learning logs. This can also be done as a closure and summary activity, ‘write about the concept/process that we learned about in class today.’
  - ◆ Following a logical and sequential order of events when writing indicates knowledge and understanding about the topic being studied.
- ◆ When constructing teacher-made tests, and modifying tests that accompany textbooks, include a variety of types of test-question formats especially selected-response and constructed-response items.
- ◆ Include ‘negative exemplar’ (“NOT”) questions on tests and quizzes. These types of problems force students to think differently in order to solve the problem correctly.
- ◆ Construct problems in class that have multi-step directions. Have students show their work for each step. Give partial credit for the portions of the problem solved correctly.
- ◆ Analyze test results and share the findings with the students. Highlight their areas of strength and need. Then discuss ways to correct their errors and re-teach if necessary.
- ◆ Teach test-taking skills throughout the school year.
- ◆ Teach test language, especially the direction words commonly found in test questions.
- ◆ Demonstrate to students how to respond to a question, indicate what steps to follow, and ways to determine what to do to correctly solve the problem.

- ◆ When students encounter words or parts of a question that they don't know have them learn to follow these steps:
  - ◆ Look it up
  - ◆ Ask someone
  - ◆ Use context clues
  - ◆ Structural analysis
  - ◆ Phonetic clues
- ◆ Include 'open-ended questions' on tests and in class work. Many students find it difficult to grasp that more than one answer is acceptable. Emphasize that credit is given when a student is able to articulate their thinking and explain the answer that they have given.
- ◆ Conduct 'mock tests' to simulate real testing environments. Student's levels of concern and anxiety increase when time restrictions are imposed during a test.
- ◆ Remind students how to pace themselves during a test. If there are 10 questions and 10 minutes to take the quiz, how much time can they spend on each question?
- ◆ Introduce students to the **FORCE** strategy. This is a systematic way for students to prepare for a test. The steps are outlined below:
  - ◆ Find out
    - ◆ When the teacher announces a test, quiz, etc... ask questions like: "What will the test cover?", "What types of questions will be on the test?"
  - ◆ Organize
    - ◆ Collect all of the materials for the test: notes, books, old homework papers, etc...
  - ◆ Review
    - ◆ Go over everything, skill reviews, charts, maps, summaries from class work, notebook, journals, vocabulary lists, etc...
  - ◆ Concentrate
    - ◆ Make a study sheet that highlights the important information that may be on the test.
  - ◆ Early Exam
    - ◆ Take a practice test BEFORE the real one happens. Work with another student and ask each other questions. Make up a test containing possible test questions that may be on the real test.

Here are more mnemonic devices to remind students about how to prepare for a test.

- ☒ **PORPE** (*helpful for essay tests*)
  - ☒ **P = Predict** what the test questions will be
  - ☒ **O = Organize** the information needed to answer the questions
  - ☒ **R = Rehearse** the information in notebooks, journals, notes, etc..
  - ☒ **P = Practice** writing the answers to the questions that were predicted to be on the test.
  - ☒ **E = Evaluate** student performance on practice activities.

➤ The **STAR** strategy for test success (*useful for timed tests*)

- **S**urvey the test to get an idea of how much time students can spend on each question, and which questions students will be able to answer quickly. Pay attention to the number of points for each question.
- **T**ake the time to read the directions carefully. Studies have shown that poor test-takers tend to misread directions and questions.
- **A**nswer the questions. Start with easy questions to boost confidence. No points earned for questions that are not answered.
- **R**eread the questions and the answers. Make any changes that are needed.

⇒ Take a **CHANCE** (*to predict possible test questions*)

- ⇒ **C = Critical Ideas** – focus on the key ideas in the chapter.
- ⇒ **H = Higher-Order Questions** – be prepared to write more than a one-word answer, explain your thinking.
- ⇒ **A = Accuracy** – interpret what has been taught by having students articulate what they heard/studied. Listen/read for incorrect interpretations.
- ⇒ **N = Number** – predict a large number of questions that may be asked on the test. Cover all of the material that has been studied.

- ⇒ C = Clarity – Confusion about a topic prevents clarity from coming through in a written response and/or oral presentation. Choose words carefully to compose the answer.
- ⇒ E = Examine – Take a close look at student performance in a mock test. Anticipate all possible problems and be ready for them, before the test is given.