

WHY DO WELL ON TESTS?

ENJOYING A SUCCESSFUL 12-YEAR CAREER.

Tests are “success benchmarks” during everyone’s 12-year academic career. Used correctly, tests actually serve as “success stepping stones” rather than stumbling blocks. Enjoying “test success” both satisfies basic self-concept! achievement needs while motivating a student to strive for personal excellence.

TRIUMPHING OVER “FEAR OF FAILURE”.

Fear of academic failure is the leading “most difficult daily problem” American teenagers face today according to a 1994 Gallup poll. Equipping students with proven “test-taking tools” results in real-success experiences to triumph over imaginary fears. The confidence built from doing well on tests can then be carried into life’s arena when faced with other challenges.

PROVING YOUR KNOWLEDGE IS POWER TO SUCCEED.

The ladder of success is sometimes built with small but measurable steps. (Although sometimes one can take the elevator to the “top”.) Tests can help measure readiness for the next step toward goals. Also, knowing someone has “proven their knowledge” through testing raises the level of trust in them. The days of self-proclaimed experts are over. (Who would trust a “self-proclaimed” surgeon?)

HOW TO DO BEST ON TESTS.

Peak test performance requires today’s students to be “smart” in three ways: “fact smart”, “test smart” and “stress smart.” “Fact smartness” is mastering what you need to know. “Test smartness” is knowing **how** to use facts on tests. “Stress smartness” is learning how to think calmly under test pressures.

“21st century” testing also measures the child’s “whole brain thinking” skills. “Whole brain thinking” goes beyond traditional Left Brain (verbal, factual, logical) thinking, tapping also into Right Brain (creative problem solving, visual, emotional) abilities.

I. GENERAL TIPS FOR HELPING STUDENTS TO BECOME “FACT SMART”

(Mastering what needs to be known)

- 1) Get the “Big Picture”. Encourage students to read summaries, questions, headings and look at any graphs, drawings or pictures before reading the assignment. Have students call “Homework Hotline” from home.
- 2) “Seeing is Believing” for most students. “Teach Smart” by using graphic organizers such as Venn diagrams, flowcharts, and mapping. (See your school psychologist for more information on graphic organizers.)
- 3) Make meaningful memories by connecting to students’ current interests (e.g. teach how percentages work for predicting rain/snow days). Let them know why they are learning something. (Learning to take tests will help them pass their driver’s license test.)
- 4) Teach memory mechanics. The basic rule is repetition, repetition, repetition. Teach students that understanding a fact is not the same as mastering a fact (e.g. one can understand how to shoot baskets without being able to do it).
- 5) Require students to develop their own flashcards and stack the deck with only the memorized facts. Have them submit flashcards as an assignment immediately before the test.
- 6) Encourage note-taking while students are reading or listening, especially if the test requires written responses. Teach that “the faintest ink is better than the best memory” (Chinese proverb).
- 7) Divide and Conquer information overload by encouraging students to study for short sessions over several days/weeks rather than cramming the night before. Suggest a study calendar and weekly “progress check points” for students. Provide positive “feedback” on study progress.
- 8) If appropriate, provide a test-specific diagnostic survey to pinpoint strengths and weaknesses. This will help the student spend the most time on weakest areas while building on strengths.
- 9) As a reward, have students play “not so trivial pursuit” by making up their own questions about material and quizzing a rival team.
- 10) Celebrate “Sticking to their test-prep schedule” with periodic rewards matched to the size of the efforts.
- 11) Make these tips part of each student’s study habits by introducing them at the beginning of the year/course.