

PARENT TEACHING TIPS

... on Preparing for Final Exams and State Competency Tests

By Bill Welker, EdD

As the end of the school year approaches, many students will be confronted with those dreaded final exams and state competency tests. Naturally, the key is proper study throughout the entire year. Still, students are apprehensive when it comes to the “big tests.”

You’re not alone; everyone has feelings of anxiety pertaining to evaluation measures, including the most experienced test-takers.

The following are some helpful hints for parents and their children who are preparing for important examinations.

The Night before the Big Tests

- Hopefully, you’ve studied diligently throughout the year. If so, relax and do something you like, because cramming the night before an exam has never been very effective.
- Gather all the materials you will need for the morning test. This would include pencils (No. 2), paper and any other items requested by the teacher.
- Most importantly, get a good night’s sleep.

The Morning of the Big Tests

- Get up early and take a refreshing shower.
- Dress in clothes that make you feel good about yourself.
- Eat a well-balanced breakfast. If you like coffee, beware. Tests make everybody nervous; you don’t need added abdominal discomfort during the

exam.

The Big Tests

- **Report to the exam room early so you can start as soon as the test session begins.**
- **Listen attentively to all the directions given by the teacher regarding the exam.**
- **Carefully read all written directions on the test.**
- **Examine each test question word for word before recording your answer.**
- **When in doubt about an answer, stick with your initial response.**
(Experience has taught me never to second guess myself during tests.)
- **Do not read too much into a question. Base all your answers on the information given, not on your opinions.**
- **Answer all the questions you know first. Then return to the ones with which you had trouble and answer them.**
- **Pace yourself so you don't spend too much time on one question or section of the exam. For example, if the test is one hour in length and there are four equally scored sections, devote 15 minutes to each part. (Do not forget your watch.)**
- **Should you be confused by a question, ask the teacher for clarification. And note, it is better to take an educated guess than not respond at all.**
- **If you complete the test early, check over your answers in search of careless mistakes. (Keep in mind, words like "not" or "always" can completely**

change the meaning of a test question. In fact, I earned a “C” on a college final examination because my eyes skipped over the word “not.”)

There is absolutely no reason to panic if you have properly prepared yourself for a test. Allow me to cite a personal experience I encountered with a college examination.

While reviewing for an American history final examination, our professor told us what specific topics we should study for the test. Unfortunately, another professor in the history department developed the final exam. While perusing the test, I realized that none of the essay questions was ever emphasized in my class. I must confess, for a moment, I was shocked and started panic.

But then I was reminded of a quote my grandmother (a firm believer in God and the power of positive thinking) once shared with me: “No matter how bad a situation seems, the sun will come up in the morning.”

Consequently, I opened the exam booklet and wrote a brief note to my professor, explaining my dilemma. Then, I developed essay questions of my own, answering them with everything I studied for the test. Even though I did not answer a single essay question asked on the final exam, my reward for this effort of last resort was an “A” in the course.

So just remember, the keys to successful test-taking are thorough preparation and keeping your “composure” during the examination. With this practical approach to learning, you should never fear examinations in school or throughout life...because you know you did your best!

Parent Proverb

“Never lose your head. It’s the best part of your body.”

- Art Rooney

Next Month’s Column: “Making Reading a Family Tradition”

(Editor’s Note: Dr. Bill Welker is a retired reading specialist who was a K-12 classroom teacher for 40 years. He was selected as a former “Teacher of the Year” by the Wheeling Area Chamber of Commerce. Dr. Welker is also a nationally recognized expert on amateur wrestling who has published hundreds of articles and two books on the subject. His e-mail is mattalkwv@hotmail.com.)