

February 2010

Our mission is to create a learning community that prepares all students to be productive, responsible, and successful.

“Spring” into Testing

With the cold, wintery weather we have had lately, it is hard to imagine that spring is only a little over a month away. While March and April will hopefully mean a change to warmer weather, it also brings with it state testing for students. Each year, 3rd, 5th, and 8th graders are tested in reading, math, and writing; 4th and 7th graders are tested in reading, math, and science; and 11th graders take the PSAE which is a combination of the ACT and Workkeys which tests the students’ knowledge in reading, math, and science. Although 9th and 10th graders are not given state tests, they do take the EXPLORE and PLAN which is a precursor to the ACT and gauges their future performance on the ACT as juniors. The data from the tests given in the spring is analyzed and used to guide the curriculum and the instruction needs for the students and the district. Below are some tips for students and parents that will hopefully maximize the students’ performance in the spring

Test Anxiety

Students may experience anxiety about tests and may experience heightened anxiety before a testing situation. This could be worse for state assessments because of the communication to the students about the importance of doing well on the tests. While a certain degree of anxiety is normal and may actually help students prepare and work more efficiently and be more focused, too much anxiety can have a negative effect. To lessen student anxiety:

- Take advantage of test review-Prior to the state tests, significant review of the important concepts is conducted. The more prepared a student feels for the test, the less anxiety he or she will experience on test day.
- Think of the test as an opportunity to show what you know. Many times, anxiety comes from the student’s fear of not knowing something. Looking at the test as an opportunity to show what a student knows as opposed to what they don’t know can greatly reduce anxiety and lead to better performance.
- Remember the test is only one way your academic performance is measured. While the state assessments are important and every student should do his or her best, the score is not the only measure of academic success. The only expectations for students should be that they work hard to prepare and give their best effort on test day.

Student Test Taking Strategies

- Read and pay careful attention to all directions. A major key to success is understanding what is expected in each section.
- Read every possible answer-the best one could be last.
- Read and respond to items one at a time rather than thinking about the whole test. Looking at all the questions to be answered can sometimes be overwhelming. The best strategy is to focus on one question at a time.
- Don’t expect to find a pattern in the positions of the correct answers. Always select what appears to be the best answer regardless of whether it fits a pattern.

- When unsure of an answer, make an educated guess. The state tests do not penalize wrong answers. Be sure to answer every question and if unsure of an answer eliminate answers you know are wrong and make an educated guess.
- Don't spend too much time on any one question.
- After completion of the test, use any remaining time to check your answers and ensure you have recorded all answers in the correct place.
- Keep a good attitude. A confident and positive attitude on test day typically translates into better performance on the test.

Parent Strategies

- Gather available test preparation materials. By conferring with your child's teachers, you will be able to determine review opportunities that exist at school as well as what can be done at home to help prepare for the tests.
- Help your child learn how to find information independently. Much of the test material will measure your child's ability to find and locate information. When helping your child with homework or working on test preparation material, focus on helping to develop these skills.
- See that your child is rested and eats breakfast.
- See that your child arrives at school on time and is relaxed.
- Encourage your child to do the best work possible.

Important Upcoming Dates:

February 10-Midterm

February 12-Midterm Reports Sent Home

February 15-No School-Presidents' Day

Through the school improvement process, we hope to promote a positive atmosphere and increased communication and welcome your input and suggestions on ways to accomplish this. Please use the opinions and ideas link on our website at www.okawvalley.org to share any ideas or concerns.

“Education is learning what you didn't even know you didn't know. “
~Daniel J. Boorstin