



Lincoln Savage Middle School

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Hello Lincoln Savage Families.

OAKS testing is well under way for the 2011-2012 school year. We have been doing several things this year to better prepare our students for success on these tests: testing schedule changes to increase instructional time, focusing on testing students in the morning hours, encouraging students to eat good meals, sleeping habits, even wearing your favorite pajamas to bed.

We can teach, reteach and train our students how to be successful in many ways but stress and test anxiety are it tough nuts to crack. Below are some strategies on how to help students with reducing or eliminating test anxiety from an article in *Teaching Exceptional Children*, SUNY. We are doing what we can at LSMS to use many of these strategies. Read through this article and find ways you can help your child beat test anxiety.

- *Identify students with test anxiety.* Teachers can watch for telltale signs during testing and also pick up information from conversations with students and family members. Elementary students tend to show physical symptoms (including excessive perspiration, sweaty palms, headaches and stomachaches, nausea, shaking body parts, rapid heartbeat, dizziness and light-headedness, muscle tension, tics, flushed skin color, and difficulty sleeping, eating, and toileting before tests); secondary students are more likely to exhibit behavioral and affective symptoms. In many cases, triggers and symptoms can interact: students may perform poorly because of insufficient preparation, family pressures, learned helplessness, or badly designed tests, and their poor performance can cause difficulties with concentration, attention, self-esteem, and memory during subsequent tests, causing further anxiety.

- *Teach study skills.* There's nothing like effective studying to reduce test anxiety, says Salend, but many students don't know the best ways to study. Here are some tips:

- Give students study guides that address the purpose, content, and format of the test.
- Ask students to work in groups to predict the content and test items that will be on the test, quiz each other, and create study materials and memory aids.
- Use educational games and simulated tests to review and practice possible test content, questions, and conditions.
- Give students a list of items that may be on a test – for example, essay questions.
- Give study tips, including creating a schedule of study sessions, identifying difficult material that may require further explanation by teachers, focusing on specific goals, having the necessary resources and materials on hand, creating an outline, summary, or visual aid of key points and questions and resources, and using games, flash cards, and mnemonic devices to remember key items.

Here are some online resources on test anxiety:

- Test anxiety scale: <http://www.learningskills.com/test.html>
- Are you anxious? <http://istudy.psu.edu/FirstYearModules/TestTaking/AnxietySurvey.html>
- Achievement: <http://www.wright-counseling.com/checklists/TestAnxietyAssessment.html>

• *Teach effective test-taking skills.* These can help students stay relaxed, focused, and motivated during tests:

- Do a memory dump or download as soon as the test is handed out, jotting down key points, definitions, formulas, dates, mnemonics, drawings, memory clues, and names you are likely to use in the test.
- Work on the easier test items first to build confidence.
- Budget time according to the time allotted, the value of each test item, and difficulty level.
- Highlight essential parts of test directions to focus on specific details (for example, *Answer three out of the five essay questions*), types of answers being asked for, aids, resources, and assistance you can use, and time, length, and space constraints.
- Use specific strategies for answering multiple-choice, matching, true-false, sentence-completion, and essay questions.

• *Teach and prompt the use of anxiety-reduction strategies.* These include arriving at the test site on time, rather than early, to avoid interactions with other students that can heighten anxiety; politely avoiding conversations with peers about what was studied, answers to questions, and false rumors; using encouraging self-statements; wearing comfortable clothes; taking a few minutes to relax and focus on your goals and plans for success; using anxiety-reduction techniques including meditating, praying, taking deep breaths and breaks, tensing and relaxing muscles; using a squeeze ball; engaging in positive self-talk; focusing on past successes; and listening to guided imagery, affirmations, meditation recordings, or calming music.

• *Offer attribution training.* Students with disabilities may approach a test with low expectations for success. “As a result,” says Salend, “they ascribe their poor performance to bad luck (e.g., “I got the hardest questions”), teacher mistakes (e.g., “The teacher didn’t teach that”), lack of ability (e.g., “I’m not good at that”), and other factors that they view as out of their control.” Attribution training is designed to counteract these thoughts by getting students to focus on the events and actions that contribute to their success and failure on tests and engage in positive attributions that credit effort and factors they can control (e.g., “I worked hard studying for this test” and “I learned that material”). The key insights are:

- Understand how attributions and effort affect your test performance.
- Interpret poor performance as a signal to work harder and identify ways to improve.
- Acknowledge and analyze successful outcomes to identify behaviors that need to be continued and enhanced.
- Discuss and learn from mistakes.

“The role of teacher feedback is critical to attribution training,” says Salend. Teachers can reinforce effective effort (“You really worked hard to learn this”) and get students focusing on the right kind of reflection after tests (“Can you think of another way you could have answered this?”). After tests, students might be asked to respond to these prompts: I did well on this test because _____. I struggled on this test because _____. The things I can do to be successful on future tests are _____.

• *Create accessible and student-friendly tests.* Avoid surprise tests and quizzes, urges Salend. “Tests that cause confusion and distraction can make students with organizational and attention difficulties feel anxious before they begin,” he says. Give tests with adequate study time, a reasonable amount of content

focused on the key concepts and skills of the curriculum unit being studied, relevance to everyday life, clear directions, a logical sequence, and student-friendly graphics.

- *Involve students in the testing process.* They can be asked to devise possible test questions, and tests can give them options on which items to answer.

- *Provide appropriate testing accommodations.* These can include timing, scheduling, and settings, as well as readers, scribes, cues, hints, coaching, and information when permitted.

- *Use technology-based testing.* Taking tests on computers can be a boon for some students with disabilities, especially if the test can be customized to give choices of format, conditions, and accommodations.

- *Consider collaborative test-taking arrangements.* For some students, cooperative-group testing minimizes stress.

- *Consider a range of scoring methods.* These might include granting partial credit for correct aspects of an answer, offering extra-credit options, awarding bonus points for certain items, and letting students earn back points by revising incorrect answers or retaking the test using different questions assessing the same content.

- *Collaborate with students' families and other professionals.* This includes providing information about tests and test anxiety and working with family members to come up with the best strategies and interventions to reduce test anxiety.

- *Evaluate what works and what doesn't work.* This involves touching base with students, teachers, and family members.

“Addressing Test Anxiety” by Spencer Salend in *Teaching Exceptional Children*, November/December 2011 (Vol. 44, #2, p. 58-68), no free e-link; Salend can be reached at salends@newpaltz.edu.

Have a great Holiday Season! Safe Travels to all of you and your families.

Sincerely,

Damian Crowson
Principal
LSMS

Medications at School

The district reserves the right to reject a request to administer prescription or nonprescription medication when such medication is not necessary for the student to remain in school.

Written instructions from parent or physician should include:

- 1) Name of the student
- 2) Name of the medication
- 3) Dosage
- 4) Route
- 5) Frequency of administration
- 6) Other special instructions if any

Medications are to be submitted in their original container.

Medications are to be brought to and picked up from the school by a parent.

It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that an adequate amount of medication is on hand at the school for the duration of the student's need to take medication.

It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that the school is informed in writing of any changes in medication instructions.

Family Advocate News

We would like to help some of our families with Christmas this year. If you wish to help with our efforts, or if you or someone you know is in need this holiday season, please contact Nancy Abruzzini, Family Advocate @ 862-2171. Thank you!

Parent Assist

Enclosed in this newsletter you will find a parent assist form. If you would like to have the ability to check your child's grades on line please fill out the form and return it to the office. You will be notified, by email, with directions.

6th & 7th GRADE SCIENCE PROJECT INSTRUCTIONS

A. All 6th & 7th grade science students in Mr. Zurhellen's class are required to complete a science project to be turned in for a grade by the **6th of February 2012**. These science projects and write-ups will make up about 25 percent of your 2nd trimester grade in science. Science projects will be presented to the class from the 6th of February through the 10th of February. Students are required to give a 5 minute presentation of their projects. The presentation can be done and given on power-point. Projects must be displayed on three-panel display boards.

B. Science projects can come from any science related field of your choice. This includes Life Science (Biology), Physical Science, Earth and Space Science, Health or any other area directly related to these fields. You can check the library or Internet for ideas or talk to friends, relatives, teachers or people in the community. You are limited only by your imagination. *All projects must be done individually (No Partners). There cannot be duplication of projects (in other words two people cannot do the exact same project). Project ideas will be determined on a first come basis. The student who has the idea first will be the one who gets to do that project. The sooner you decide what you would like to do the better.

C. Your grade will come from how well you follow these instructions, meet the deadline dates for turning in required information, the display of your project and experiment, and the complete write-up of your project in your science journal. The entire project will be worth 410 points. Please give it your best effort. Projects done the night before will be easy to spot and will be graded accordingly, so get started now.

D. All projects must include the following:

1. **A Title**
2. **Introduction**- Purpose of the experiment and what it is about.
3. **Hypothesis**- What the student thinks will occur. *Be sure to use If, Then, Because in your hypothesis.
4. **Variables**- List Independent and Dependent Variables.
5. **Constants**- List everything that stays the same.
6. **List of Materials Used**- Should include all tools, equipment, substances, and measuring devices used to make and conduct the experiment.
7. **Procedures**- Include the steps you followed to set up your experiment and obtained your results.
8. **Results**- Briefly state what happened and what was learned. This will include data tables.
9. **Conclusion**- Did the experiment prove or disprove the hypothesis, include charts and graphs made from data tables.

*Use your Lab Books as an example

****Your entire project must be recorded in your lab book.**

E. Displaying your project: You must use a three-panel display to present your project. Your panels can be made from poster board, construction paper, cardboard, styrofoam, wood, or any other materials. Pictures and/or drawings of the process and steps you followed are encouraged and should be placed on your panels. Materials used, models, and products from your experiment must be placed in front of your three-panel display.

F. Deadlines: (These are the last dates to receive the points; you are encouraged to work ahead and submit early)

Nov. 30th, 2011- Return Parent Notification Signed. **(10pts)**

Dec. 5th, 2011- Subject of Project and Title must be turned in for approval. **(25pts)**

Dec. 14th, 2011- Introduction and Hypothesis must be recorded in Lab Book and turned in for grade. **(50pts)**

Jan. 10th, 2012- Variables, List of Materials and Procedures for grade. **(50 pts)**

Jan. 25th, 2012- Students' names drawn for order of presentation.

Jan. 26th, 2012 - All Lab Books completed and turned in for grade. **(25pts)**. ***Hand back the 30th of Jan.**

Feb. 6th– Feb. 10th, 2012- All projects presented for grade. **(50pts)**

*****Students can earn up to 100pts for completed projects and up to another 100pts for completed lab books.**