

Sun Valley Primary School

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My dear Grade 4 -7 students (my clients)

ASSESSMENT WEEK

Next week is Assessment Week. We do this four day event twice a year at the end of each Semester. Being able to write an examination and regurgitate information is not a life skill - it is a survival skill. The only reason we do it is to teach you how to SURVIVE High School and University where the people doing the teaching and lecturing haven't been taught how to *assess people while they work*. (Perhaps it's because they studied a subject and not the art of teaching!)



At your school, teachers are trained to first TEACH you the work, then give you various activities so you can DEMONSTRATE if you KNOW what has been taught and only afterwards, when they feel that you have mastered it, they give you a TASK or assignment to see if you can DEMONSTRATE the learning MEANINGFULLY.

TEACH - DEMONSTRATE - TEACH - TASK - TEACH - TASK - ASSESS MEANING



So here is the good news! All of the above has been done. I have seen all your results and I am a happy, 'chappy' Principal!

Some of us struggle with Maths and we need a truck load of GRIT to get things right. Others battle with Languages and we seem to make so many spelling mistakes that we sometimes think we are 'stupid'. We are NOT!

So here's more good news. You will be working on a computer one day that has Spell Check! And the Maths strugglers probably have a stunning artist or sportsman wrapped up inside just bursting to get out. And when they squeeze out as you grow into an adult - you will discover that all the worries you had about examinations were so unnecessary.



So why do we write examinations? We do it to train you how to get through High



School and University where your performance will be directly linked to your ability to sit on your bottom for hours on end and regurgitate (aka vomit) information from your short-term memory - and then forget it. That is why it is a SURVIVAL SKILL. We have also taught you how to take the information that we are going to TEST you on and divide it up into a two week “study timetable”. This is called TIME MANAGEMENT and this is a fantastic LIFE SKILL. Get that right and you will be mighty successful. The useful part of Assessment Week is not the TEST, but the preparation. While preparing we are teaching you vital LIFE SKILLS.

- Time Management
- Organisation
- Prioritisation
- Working Memory (Teaching the brain to hold a lot of data for a short period of time)
- Impulse Control (How to sit and study when your body is shouting to go and play)
- Flexibility (How to realize that this is a three week slot in a six month period and you just have toDo it!)
- Empathy (How to ‘feel’ for those who battle in some subjects that you find easy and give them support.)

And here’s the last bit of GOOD NEWS. If we placed you in a fMRI brain scanner and you DO the seven bullet points above in the fMRI scan, the section of your brain that lights up, is your PRE-FRONTAL CORTEX. This is the part of your brain that instructs your whole body. It is your CEO.



So what is my message? Learning for the examinations is FAR more important than writing the examination. The results mean nothing! It’s the preparation that GROWS neural pathways.

So use this last weekend to make sure you have got your CEO ready to SIT the examinations next week. The results mean nothing. We will give the examination papers back to our Grade 6 and 7 classes so they can see how they did, but the Grade 4’s and 5’s - you are still learning to DO this thing.

Enjoy the week, have fun, don’t feel anxious, sleep well, eat well and continue playing during your brain-breaks so that your BRAIN is FIT for this *horrible* experience..... and tell your Mom to “chill!”

You can do it.

PRINCIPAL
Sun Valley Primary School
Friday 10 November 2017

