August 31, 2018

Dear Griffin Parent or Guardian,

In education, teachers and administrators focus a great deal of time and energy on the subject of literacy. We work to ensure that every student can read, write, and make meaning of the printed text. However, there is growing concern that students are far from literate in test taking. Students for one reason or another are provided limited opportunities and, therefore, lack the skill and proficiency in taking tests of various constructs. Test literacy, defined here as the ability to take and make meaning of tests of multiple constructs, takes a great deal of practice to master.

Test literacy is as fundamental to academic success, college and career readiness, and continued job growth, as any topic learned in school. The ability to take tests comprised of various test components—true or false, essay, short answer, multiple choice, matching, or combinations thereof—is a learned skill worthy of our attention. Students who are test literate could score as much as 10-15 points higher on tests of all types. Since most of our students go on to college after they graduate, test literacy could affect students’ SAT and GRE scores, and ultimately acceptance into the college of their choice. Test literacy is also not foreign to trade schools. At the middle level, preparing students for the rigor of the high school curriculum and testing program are two important charges we take very seriously.

Teachers develop tests based on their own preference in style and format. Learning how a teacher tests is as important as the test itself. It provides insight into how to study. For instance, essay questions will require students to be able to defend a position or argument. It demands that students have a broad understanding of topics and concepts, but does not necessarily require rote memorization. On the other hand, answering multiple choice and true-false questions, for instance, calls for students to remember discreet pieces of information. Essay, multiple choice, and true-false questions will necessitate that students use different study strategies.

The NYS, teacher-made, and Regents tests required for course credit and graduation, are opportunities at the middle level for students to become test literate, more confident, and successful learners before entering the high school. Faculty, staff, and administration hope to do more to advance the notion of test literacy in the coming school year.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to your child’s teachers, school counselor, or administrator, if you have specific questions regarding any aspect of the testing program.

Sincerely,

Dr. Steven H. Shuchat, Principal
Van Wyck Junior High School

The mission of the Wappingers Central School District is to empower all of our students with the competencies and confidence to challenge themselves, to pursue their passions, and to realize their potential while growing as responsible members of their community.