

FOCUS ON STUDENT SUCCESS: 2008 FDEA Scholarship Award Winners (continued)

Student Success Essay Contest

The student success essay contest winner this year is Betsy Unger. Betsy is a student at Palm Beach Community College. Her essay was chosen because of its vivid, compelling prose. This is her entry.

~Tammy Cherry

Must it be called a Test?

Your palms begin to sweat. Your stomach churns. You convince yourself you will not do well on this test. You have TEST ANXIETY! Being nervous about a test is a natural thing. One often wonders if they studied hard enough, did they study the information that will be asked, or will they draw a complete mental blank. Test anxiety in a small amount can be beneficial. It can inspire a student to work harder to pass an exam. However, in more extreme instances, a student may "freeze up" and, subsequently, what he or she feared most,

failure, is the outcome.

There are many techniques that can be employed to relieve some of this anxiety, and, as a Supplemental Instruction Leader for Preparatory Algebra II, I have often suggested to students ways in which they can feel more prepared and less distressed before an exam. Some tactics include avoiding "cramming" the night before, taking a deep breath before a test, reading through the entire test before beginning, skipping the more difficult problems and returning to them later, and rechecking your work and answers at least once before submitting the test. Sadly, there are students who are not helped by these activities, and fail regardless of their efforts.

Although testing a student's knowledge and comprehension of material is paramount to the furtherance of their education, one wonders if

there might be an alternative form of assessment. In my supplemental instruction sessions, I have witnessed students who work hard, study constantly and seem to have a grasp of the concepts on which they will be tested. Yet, they take the exam and fail. The question then comes to bear, would the situation improve for these students, if the concept of "test" were different? Would the absence of the label "test" remove some of the anxiety from students, allowing them to relax and be more successful? Would "that which we call a rose, by any other name smell as sweet"? Would a test by any other name be less intimidating? I do not have the answer to these questions. I found no documentation of research in which students were tested without the label "test". However, I think it is something worth investigating further.



The Addison Wesley Longman Award (continued)

procrastination habit that can take many forms: ignoring the task, hoping it will go away, underestimating the work involved in the task or overestimating the ability and resources, spending endless hours on computer games and surfing the Internet, deceiving yourself that a mediocre or bad performance is acceptable, and becoming paralyzed when having to choose between two alternatives.

The second benefit that I found in my Guide to College Success was identifying keys to enhance my study skills, such as where to study. For example, a private, quiet, well lit, and comfortable temperature. Also, determine a specific schedule to study using the weekly planner, but it is very important to review the notes right after class. Moreover, plan what to study using the daily and weekly calendar.

Being a good time manager and enhancing study skills are two of the subjects that the amazing Guide to College Success included. I had the opportunity to learn and improve my skills and I will continue using my book during the development of my classes and also in my daily life because I think it is a great resource and anybody can take advantage of that treasure.

~Luz Adriana Rivera