

Test Preparation: We have it backwards...

When my children, who rarely ate breakfast, were in elementary school they would come home and tell me, "Dad. We have to get a good night sleep and have breakfast tomorrow."

As a teacher, department chair and beginning consultant and trainer, I knew what they were going to say, but I played dumb and asked, "Why?"

"We have testing tomorrow!" they answered.

"Oh, so when you are only learning the rest of the year you don't need to get a good night's sleep or have a good breakfast?"

"Oh, Dad!" They would say with exasperation.

But, they knew I was right.

Let's look at a different situation.

If you wanted to be sure to do well on your annual physical exam, would you tell yourself to make sure and get a good night's sleep and have breakfast before you went to the doctor? No, if you want good results, you exercise regularly, eat healthily and develop good sleep habits on a consistent basis.

Grant Wiggins, in an ASCD update, wrote, "To practice the physical gets it backwards", he said "I should practice being healthy, and then the physical will take care of itself." Similarly, he argued, educators should use good teaching practices and let state tests take care of themselves.

In fairness, I said the same thing to my students. I just didn't realize at the time that I had it backwards! A more effective message would have been to remind the students before they went home to, "make sure you get a good night's sleep and have a good breakfast tomorrow; we have a lot of learning to do."

Thanks for listening!

References:

Grant Wiggins - An excerpt from Education Update, Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development, Alexandria, VA. January 2001, page 4.

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