

December 2018

Yes! Winter Break time! I hope everyone has a great vacation, a great time with family and friends, and returns refreshed and refocused for our journey through the winter of 2019. Based on past experiences, we know we will get through winter - eventually. You ask, "but what about exams?" Answer: We got through the week. It's a great week! We have an open campus, fewer classes each day, and early release. And at the end of it all, we have grades, report cards and half of the year is complete. We're halfway home! For our Frosh of '22 - you are $\frac{1}{8}$ of the way through high school. Do you feel as though you know that much? Keep working and learning, you are off to a good start. And our Seniors, '19, we're heading down the stretch. One last semester at our beloved Alma Mater. Happy (last) New Year at ALHS - enjoy it - and finish proud and strong. Everyone - Make GOOD choices!

So. What about the exams? What do we get from them? What is the takeaway? What do they mean? If the answers to these questions are grades, stress, and not much more - then we're missing the mark!

Educators have serious and passionate discussions about (semester) exams. There are many perspectives within and outside of our school about the purpose and meaning of these assessments. At ALHS, we are committed to meaningful assessment and grade reporting practices.

One of the stated reasons for exam week at ALHS is to prepare students for college. Traditionally, colleges have "exam weeks," during which students take finals that, traditionally, have determined their grade in that course (which would seem to explain why it might take 2 hours, or more). After all, if the final exam is an assessment of all of the content considered in a course, a student's exam score tells what they know and can do. Simple. If that's what our students will face in the future, let's get them ready, just like we do with English, Math, Science, Government, etc. The question here is how to deal with our attendance and assignment requirements, which are generally not the same as at the college level.

Another reason for our semester/final exams is the opportunity for students to demonstrate for the last time what they've learned. There are three viewpoints on this thought. First, by the end of the course, kids should have GBED! Second, if students know the material better at the end of the year, the school should report what they know, not what they didn't know at the beginning. Third, if a student has mastered things during the year, what happens if they have a bad test day?

Of the many other exam discussions, a traditional one seems to be the most common: exams give students the opportunity to earn more points to boost and pad their grade. Therefore, are exams needed after 90 days of learning/attending? At what point do we know what a student knows, and what have we done about it? As mentioned above, what happens if a student's exam score is totally different than what has been observed/recorded for 90 days? It shouldn't, but sometimes does, happen.

Our goal is to prepare you for life after ALHS. Your performance on OST/ ACT/SAT exams help you access post-high school opportunities, and all of our courses, tests and reports give us

information about how you should expect to do on these assessments, as well as your potential for success.

We expect your best effort on EVERY test, quiz, unit exam; on every classroom assessment and during exam week. Your futures depend on it!

We will continue to review your exam results and share the evidence of learning you provide with the faculty, district and your families. The school receives data of your learning. You receive a report for the learning you have done (YOGOWYPI - You Only Get Out What You Put In!).

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!

GBED and give YBED(Your Best Every Day)!

Peace

Joseph J. Mueller, Principal Avon Lake High School