

*What works is work!*

## **Note-taking Results in increased Student Achievement**

When asked, memory researchers reported the number one “memory aid” which they themselves use is *write it down*. Teachers should require students to take notes in all classes. Note taking keeps students engaged in learning, helps them complete their daily homework assignments, enhances their study, and acts as a foundation from which to prepare for tests. Also, since students are not allowed to keep their textbooks, the student notebook is usually the only mechanism available for review in later years for high stakes tests.

Note taking is a process used by students to record important information that they are trying to understand and need to remember. Notes should usually include a title, the date they were taken, objectives, definitions, identifications, pattern or concept development that leads to some conjecture, a formalized rule or algorithm, and an number of example problems used in guided practice. Teachers should also encourage students to write an explanation of what led to the procedure being used to manipulate or solve problems. Explanations are especially important when a problem-solving method might be construed as a “trick” and whose rationale would not be immediately obvious to the student when reviewed at some future date.

While note taking is a student responsibility, teachers need to hold students accountable for taking notes. This need not be complicated or time consuming, but it must be done frequently and consistently to further encourage students to take notes.

Hanlon recommends that teachers should be very directive and prescriptive in the note taking process. That is, teachers should tell students what to write in their notes, how to write it, and where to write it in their notebook. During the note taking process, something out of the ordinary occurs, students refer to it as a trick, students should be given time to write an explanation in their notes so when they return to study those concepts and procedures months later, they will understand what occurred.

In other words, a student taking notes in the first row - first seat should have notes pretty identical to a student sitting in the fifth row-fifth seat. An old axiom in education is “expect what you inspect”. If classroom teachers do not take an interest in student notebooks, they may be missing an important factor in determining why some students are not achieving in their classroom.

By the same token, if building principals do not check to ensure students are taking notes, then classroom teachers may not have a high expectation their students take notes.

Bottom line – good notes will help students complete their daily homework assignments, study more effectively and efficiently, prepare for tests, and provide students a way of doing long term reviews and refreshing their memory while preparing for high stakes tests – resulting in increased student achievement.