

TEST CORRECTIONS

I started this a number of years ago when a young man came by my room after every exam to go over the items he missed and take notes. He would then ask me questions if he was still puzzled. This went on all year, and no extra credit was given. Test after test, he scored a low B, and in no quarter did he earn higher than a B. When AP results arrived and he had a 5, I recognized that I had been neglecting a powerful tool!

I wanted the students to be encouraged to do test corrections, but did not want to use an incentive that would reward students who were ill-prepared on exam day with a score approaching what they might have made had they prepared in advance. Students can come in before or after school, during free periods or at lunch, and work on their corrections. Tests, answer sheets, and students stay in my room. They need to write an explanation of what they did not know or misunderstood, and for what in some cases may amount to four pages of writing by a diligent student who missed quite a few, the student will receive 1/4 point back per question on their test score. Not much, but it is enough to move a low grade a bit. Grading the work is quick--I collect them all from the folder on a date agreed on by us, and just count how many they did and divide by four, writing a comment if answers are sparse or insufficient.

If a student is struggling but does not do test corrections, there is an immediate tool to help them do better in the future. We couple this with giving very small amounts of extra credit for doing Reading Guides, which are turned in on test day. To improve performance, a student should do both, a point we will make with both student and parents. Yesterday was the first day for corrections this year, and over half the class came in during the day. One young man spent two sessions, asked me a number of focused questions after school, and made good observations about changes he would make in his preparation. For instance, he was surprised by how many questions were answered in his notes, which he had just "looked over"! Many students will ask for clarification on items, and this allows us to focus on just what an individual student needs, one of the reasons I want them to do this work in my room.

I encourage them that their performance on the cumulative semester exam can allow me to reevaluate their final average. Unit exams are tools to help them gauge progress during the semester. Our goal is for them to leave at the end of the year with a body of knowledge and skills in biology.. This strategy helps them be well-prepared for the AP Exam in May.

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A posting to the AP Biology ListServe