

SOUTH TEXAS VIRTUAL ACADEMY

PHOENIX NEWS



Issue no. 3 Holiday Issue 2022



"Loco"- doodle by Noah Pina



Apple by Camila Rojas



Acrylic Pumpkin by Lucia Fuschetto



Top Test Taking Tips!

By Joseph Martinez



This December We, the students of Virtual Academy, will be taking semester exams to gauge the amount of knowledge we have accumulated during this semester. As many of us know, the semester exams can be both brain-draining and very tedious for both, the students and teachers. But with my help, you can learn the five best strategies to help you ace your semester exams.

Stay positive



The first test taking strategy is for you to stay positive before, during, and after the test. This attitude can help your confidence level be at its highest contributing to favorable performance. This tip can also avoid feelings of anxiety which can lead to losing focus on what is important, preparing for the exams. Staying positive allows you to not spend unnecessary time worrying about one of your answers and the grade you will receive.

Use everything your given

One of the main issues most people forget to use or do is to listen to instructions, read everything, and use your time wisely. For example, listening to the instructions may seem like a waste of time but in reality sometimes you can get some extra details which can be key to your success. Another way to use everything you have is to read everything before answering the questions because you may be able to find some hints. And lastly you need to use all your time wisely even though you believe that you have finished as it will allow you to check your responses thoroughly and ensure all questions were answered.



Be prepared

For many of us students it is very difficult to create a study habit which is the crown jewel of the testing strategies. But another way to prepare for any test is to take some time to study and understand the topic, not just memorize it. We can also take some time out of our week to ask the teacher for a tutoring session just in case you don't understand a specific topic. Another manner of preparing for a test is by creating good habits like sleeping early, eating healthy meals for every meal, and drinking water. Finally we have to remember that we can't only prepare beforehand but we can also be prepared during the test by answering all the questions.

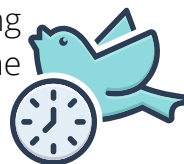
Answer every question



The biggest challenge most students face is not knowing the answer to a question which can lead to being stuck and having to rush through the test to finish. But the main way we can overcome this mountain of a problem is to skip questions you don't know and answer them once you finish the test. Once you get back to the difficult questions most students don't answer them but that is one of the most common mistakes. The solution is to eliminate the answer you know are wrong and base your answer off the best of your abilities.

Enter the classroom 5-7 mins. early

By entering your class 5 to 7 minutes early you can ensure that the k12 site is working and that your Wi-Fi is functional. Apart from this, you can also spend part of your free time relaxing and clearing your mind in order to focus on the semester exam.



EVERY
THING

Virtual Academy Staff that's on "fire"

Journalism students take the time to get to know some of the VA teachers

Mr. Patrick Davila, Science 8th-10th grade

Interview by Krishna Chengankal

Mr. Davila is the Chemistry teacher at South Texas Virtual Academy. At first, science was not his strong suit because at his elementary school the curriculum was taught in Spanish to him and it was difficult for him. He first expressed his love for science in middle school when he started learning about space, animals, bacteria, viruses, and the various projects assigned to him. One of his favorite types of movies is zombie movies. "And it's funny, just from zombie movies, I grew really interested in learning about disease... I guess you could say that zombie movies were the gateway drug for me falling in love with science and then end up teaching it".



Mr. Davila would describe himself as a teacher who wants to make their students feel welcome. Mr. Davila would also say that he is more of a laid-back and flexible teacher and lets the students have their space. Mr. Davila says that he is this way because of unpleasant memories of his teachers when he was a student. If Mr. Davila weren't a teacher he would probably end up as a game show host, a forensic, or a pharmacist. He would say that his favorite topic to teach in science is ecology. The reason is that you can see how everything interacts with each other and the world. He thinks that it is beautiful how everything works in complete harmony. He enjoys playing Magic The Gathering because it requires strategy. Mr. Davila is a nice teacher that is laid-back and puts his students' needs above his own.

Mrs. Denise Ochoa, Physical Education

Interview by Bianca Olivares



Coach Ochoa is the Physical Education teacher at Virtual Academy. Similar to other VA teachers she takes her curriculum seriously. She is a hard working, determined and strong minded individual. Her goal as an educator is for all her students to be healthy and pass their classes.

Ms. Carmen Boffil, ELA 6th-7th grade

Interview by Raziel Garcia

I had a recent opportunity to interview Ms. Boffil who educates students on ELA from 6th to 7th grade. To begin with, she opened up about her education which happens to be outside of the RG. She attended Texas A&M University in College Station where she majored in Interdisciplinary studies which allows her to teach History and English. Of course, English is her main focus and preference in teaching where it allows her to be interactive.



Ms. Boffil's love of English extends to her love of reading. She states that her sister recommended a particular piece of literature called: "I am not your perfect Mexican daughter." which is her favorite book and her favorite genre is fiction. Ms. Boffil likes any type of music that makes her happy, she isn't bound by just one genre. She likes music that makes her feel pumped. Examples of this are hip-hop, pop, etc. She loves Mexican food, it's her favorite type. She spends her holidays here in the valley and does not travel much.

Mr. Danny Garcia, Science 6th-8th

Interview by Joseph Martinez



Supportive family, favorite subject chemistry, favorite place to be is the beach and educating others are factors that make Mr. Danny Garcia, our very own Science Teacher at Virtual Academy. He is currently in his 6th year of teaching and this year is privileged to inspire, motivate and aid in the development of our 6th, 7th, and 8th graders.

Mr. Garcia's unexpected career surfaced from opportunities to teach others, He had the benefit to have taught throughout his life starting as a substitute teacher, teaching his little sister, and even completing an internship at a University. Mr. Garcia's favorite subject/grade to teach is 10th-grade Chemistry which he loves to teach due to his manner of connecting chemistry to real-world situations. Additionally, he is no stranger to mini obstacles in life but we all can relate in that we all have people who inspire us. Mr. Garcia is thankful to have his fiancée and little sister as his inspiration due to their support for him even when he's down. His life motto is that life is like a roller coaster but when life keeps kicking you down, there is only one way to go and that's UP.

Top Holiday Songs to Bring a Jolly Good Time

By Latte



Andy Williams' Most Wonderful Time of the Year surely brings you back to the times of 1960's where Christmas was filled with snowy shopping centers playing vintage Christmas jingles on the stereo. Andy Williams' voice is charismatic and joyous with the feeling of enjoying every note he sings. Must that be what adds to the wonder, I wonder?

Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas sung by **Frank Sinatra** is a more relaxing song to hear while sitting near the fire with a warm large mug of hot cocoa. There are some beauties that cannot be forgotten with the test of time, with the beauty of an orchestra, and its emotional choir.

In the back; those additions amplify the charming voice of the famous singer Frank Sinatra, making it unforgettable and comforting all at once. So what are you waiting for, light that fire and - well, guess it doesn't matter as we're dying in heat anyhow.



Sleigh Ride by the Ronettes is a fun song to listen to to get your dancing and prancing with your loved one, twirling and curling with your friends, and hoppin and... and.... Well you get the point... it's a good song! Its catchy tune invites anyone to the dance floor and makes the gloomy skies light up with the cheery mood of Christmas.

Winter By Antonio Vivaldi's 4 seasons, have you listened to it? I'm just kidding, what I meant was **Winter Wonderland** sung by **Michael Bublé** (though it wasn't a bad choice for all you classical folks out there, just saying...).



His singing has a more modern approach but still brings a smile to the face with his hints of jazz. He brings the 1930s to the 21st century. His music is for everyone no matter what genre they listen to the most.

Coming in at number one.....

Mariah Carey's All I Want For Christmas is You, it was awarded the Billboard Hot top 100 songs first place. To be honest after we finish our Thanksgiving dinners we can all hear her song softly in our ears... Careful, she's defrosts fast!

Festivities around the world

Navaratri by Krishna Chengankal

Navaratri is an annual Hindu festival that occurs in honor of the goddess Durga. The meaning of "Navaratri" is nine nights. "Nava" means nine and "Ratri" means night. Accordingly so, the festival spans nine nights (and ten days). The festival takes place in October/November month. The date will vary from year to year as the festival follows the Hindu Lunar Calendar.

The festival is celebrated differently in India's numerous states. Some people consider it a time of religious reflection and fasting and others will dance and feast during this time. A few examples of fasting customs are maintaining a strict vegetarian diet and refraining from drinking alcohol. One of the dances conducted in Navaratri is called Garba. Garba celebrates womanhood, and honor, and pays respect to a number of goddesses.

Navaratri has three-thirds, the first pay respect to the goddess Durga, the second pays respect to the goddess Lakshmi, and the third pays respect to the goddess Saraswati. Rituals are also performed in the goddess's honor. The 10th day of the festival is known as Dussehra or Vijayadashami. Dussehra is the time when people celebrate the triumph of good over evil. It is considered an auspicious time to begin educational and artistic pursuits, even more so for children. In some states of India, Dussehra is associated with the victory of Lord Rama over the demon-king Ravana.



冬至 Dōngzhì Festival by Latte

Dōngzhì Festival, or the direct English translation being Winter's Extreme Festival is one of the most important Chinese festivals celebrated by the Mainland Chinese, Hong Kong Chinese, Taiwanese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Koreans, and other East Asian-related people during the Winter solstice. It is celebrated between the days of December 21 to December 23.

The festival was created by the philosophy of balance in the cosmos. It is believed that the days will have longer daylight hours and increase positive energy because of this.

The Dōngzhì Festival is mostly celebrated by families getting together to make 湯圓 tangyuan, or ball of glutinous rice (kind of like mochi!) which symbolize reunion. The tangyuan are at times colored pink and green. In northern China, people also eat dumplings. In southern China people eat rice cakes, mutton soup, and red bean sticky rice. In Taiwan, people use the food as an offering dish to worship their ancestors.



Hanukkah by Joseph Martinez

After Halloween most people decide to hastily move on to Christmas however in between both of these holidays lie a hidden gem of a holiday called Hanukkah. Hanukkah is a Jewish holiday which is celebrated from December 18th through the 26th. Hanukkah typically consists of lighting a nine branched menorah (candelabrum), one candle at a time during the eight days of the holiday with the ninth candle being the Shamash or a helper which lights the other eight candles. During the lighting of each candle many Jews usually state blessings that have happened to them. After the lighting of each candle many Jews will put the menorah next to a window to allow others to remember the miracles that inspired the holiday. Apart from this some traditional Hanukkah foods include jam filled donuts also known as sufganiyot or latkes which are potato pancakes.



Family Traditions around Virtual Academy

Students of Virtual Academy share how they spend the holidays

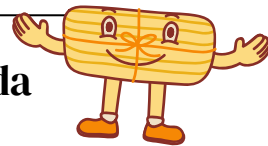
Diwali By Arjun Chengankal

I celebrate a festival called Diwali. "Diwali is a 5-day celebration where you can be with your friends and family and burst firecrackers together, eat scrumptious foods. Also, you exchange gifts during this time. It is a festival celebrating the spiritual triumph of good over evil. Diwali celebrates the return of a god named Rama to his hometown after living in exile for 14 years.

Diwali is known as the Festival of Lights". This is because everywhere you can see tons of clay lamps that are lit outside their homes. This symbolizes the inner light that protects them from the darkness." This is one of my favorite festivals in my culture".



Famlila Martinez's Tamalada By: Joy Martinez



As part of family traditions around the virtual academy page I will be writing about one of my family's traditions that takes place every November. Every year during the thanksgiving week my family and I gather together in the kitchen and dining room to make tamales, a turkey, pozole, menudo, and tshirts.

During the preparation of the food we usually talk, laugh, and make memories together. However we don't celebrate the tamalada because of thanksgiving but instead it is to celebrate the passing of my abuelita or grandmother in English. After the creation and devouring of the food we usually visit her grave to water it and place flowers around the grave. Typically we bring my abuelito who is 90 years old, with us to enjoy the food and see his wife's grave.



Christmas by Isabella K. Rodriguez



Every 24th of December my family and I visit the church at midnight, sometimes we attend virtually. The following day, my dad wakes up early to make us breakfast or order some food. After my dad finishes making breakfast, he will begin to wake all of us up by putting on some loud Christmas music. Once we wake up, we all watch the Christmas festival, and since we're a big family, I enjoy opening presents because we are all united as a family together. Plus, we get to take pictures of all of us opening gifts, and even though it may not seem like a lot it is a meaningful memory that I will always treasure.

Latte's Cafe

Jump into the world of culinary fantasy where Latte recreates recipes from books, tv, movies, and more

November has just passed and everyone is throwing those pumpkins off to the streets, but the leaves haven't grown gray yet and the weather is still cold. It's time to warm up with roaring fires, malt root beer, and ripe meat off the bone! - Gimli (more or less..). Today we'll visit the Mines of Moria (run by king Balin) in their prime age and create a hearty beef stew.

Time: 2hr 40 mn

Yield: 4 servings

Difficulty 5/5 (but the results are very worth it)

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 2 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 2 pounds trimmed beef flatiron steak or chuck, cut into 8 pieces
- Kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 1 cup finely chopped onion
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped garlic
- 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
- 1 (750-milliliter) bottle dry red wine
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 thyme sprig
- 1 (5-ounce) piece of pancetta
- 2 1/4 cups water, divided
- 15 pearl or small cipollini onions, peeled
- 15 cremini mushrooms
- 15 baby carrots, peeled
- Sugar
- Chopped fresh parsley, for garnish

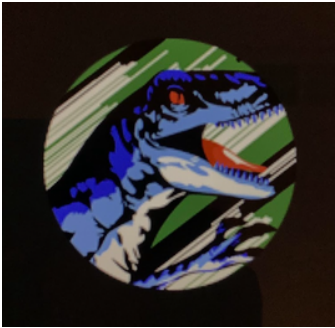
Steps:

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. In a large enameled cast-iron casserole, melt the butter in 1 tablespoon of the olive oil. Arrange the meat in the casserole in a single layer and season with salt and pepper. Cook over moderately high heat, turning occasionally, until browned on all sides, 8 minutes. Add the chopped onion and garlic and cook over moderate heat, stirring occasionally, until the onion is softened, 5 minutes. Add the flour and stir to coat the meat with it. Add the wine, bay leaves, and thyme, season with salt and pepper, and bring to a boil, stirring to dissolve any brown bits stuck to the bottom of the pot.
2. Cover the casserole and transfer it to the oven. Cook the stew for 1 1/2 hours, until the meat is very tender and the sauce is flavorful.
3. Meanwhile, in a saucepan, cover the pancetta with 2 cups of water and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer for 30 minutes. Drain the pancetta and slice it 1/2-inch thick, then cut the slices into 1-inch-wide lardons.
4. In a large skillet, combine the pancetta, pearl onions, mushrooms, and carrots. Add the remaining 1 tablespoon of olive oil, 1/4 cup of water, and a large pinch each of sugar, salt, and pepper. Bring to a boil, cover, and simmer until almost all of the water has evaporated, 15 minutes. Uncover and cook over high heat, tossing, until the vegetables are tender and nicely browned, about 4 minutes.
5. To serve, stir some of the vegetables and lardons into the stew and scatter the rest on top as a garnish. Top with a little chopped parsley.



Meet the Phoenix Journalism Team!

Meet Joseph Martinez



Joseph is a 10th grader with the Virtual Academy. He likes to play video games to pass the time. Joseph's favorite game is called Hearts of Iron 4 also known as HIO4.

Another pass time of his is watching movies. His favorite movie is Wall-E.

Meet Bianca Olivares

Bianca is a sophomore at the Virtual Academy. She likes to listen to music and watch anime. Bianca also enjoys going on walks and watching Netflix with her sibling.

In her free time, she likes to dye her hair any color from the rainbow.



Meet Krishna Chengankal



Krishna is in his freshmen year with the Virtual Academy. He enjoys reading, gaming, watching anime, and riding his bike. Although he watches a lot of anime his favorite is One Piece.

Meet Raziel Garcia

Raziel is a sophomore at Virtual Academy. He enjoys video games and walking/playing with his dogs. His favorite food is lasagna and his favorite class is History. One of his favorite topics to study are the Egyptian Gods.



Meet Camila Rojas



Camila Rojas who prefers to go by the name "Latte", is a freshman from Virtual Academy. She enjoys everything fantasy and has a passion for creating art. As a Multi-Hobbyist she enjoys many activities, some include cooking, writing, video games, board games, collecting art books, sword fighting, watching shows, and learning about chemistry.

If you are interested in contributing to the Phoenix Newspaper please contact roberta.zamilpa@stisd.net