OPINION

# Guest Editorial

**Six Ways to Help Students Raise Their Grades**
**Annie Burnquist**

With the school year ending, millions of high-school students are preparing for that last minute push to raise their grades -- and parents are looking for ways to help. Here are six tips to boost your child's final-exam scores.

1) Exercise the body to give the brain a boost.

Physical activity increases blood flow to the brain, feeding it with oxygen and learning-boosting nutrients like glucose. "Exercise in many ways optimizes your brain to learn," says Dr. John Ratey, a Harvard Medical School professor.

Getting students to workout greatly improves their classroom performance. One study found that 15 to 45 minutes of exercise before class reduced fidgeting among children by half. In a study that looked at three groups of students with different physical education routines, the group that exercised the most did the best on tests, even though they spent the least amount of time in class.

2) Create a healthy study space.

Where kids study is almost as important as what they study. So designate a specific spot for studying. Doing so sends the message that your household takes academics seriously. And although the area should be free of distractions like TV, video games, and phones, it should also reflect what the student needs – not what mom wants. Developing this habit early in life will pay off immensely during college.

Aesthetics matter. One study found that grades were 25 percent better for students who study near a window; natural lighting promotes concentration.

3) Encourage interactive learning.

An ancient Chinese proverb goes: "Tell me,I forget. Show me, I remember. Involve me, I understand." Students perform better when actively engaged with the material. A great way to ensure that engagement is to hire a personal tutor.

Tutors were once too expensive for most Americans. Calculus tutors cost about $100 per hour – and an instructor's quality varied with location. That's all changed thanks to online tutoring services They provide all the benefits of old-fashioned tutoring -- like one-on-one attention, a customized educational experience, and instant feedback -- at a considerably lower price. Kids who use our tutoring service typically raise their grade by at least half a letter.

4) Get plenty of sleep.

Sleep is essential to the brain's ability to learn. Teenagers should get at least eight hours each night. Grade schoolers need at least 10. Late-night cram sessions don't produce much long-lasting knowledge, and they compromise the ability to analyze and recall information during tests.

One study by Harvard psychiatry professor Robert Stickgold found that after learning a new skill, student performance didn't improve until after at least six hours of sleep. "It's as if you have to wait for the dough to rise," he explained.

Psychology professor Pamela Thacher cross-referenced college student grade point averages with sleeping habits and found that "you can't do your best work when you're sleep-deprived... If you use all-nighters, your GPA is slightly lower on average."

5) Encourage communal learning.

Group learning is more exciting than thumbing through a textbook. As social psychologists David Brandon and Andrea Hollingshead have concluded, "interaction with others

See GUEST Page 5


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# Veloz Viewpoints

Veloz Viewpoints
By Amy Bond Veloz

Greetings from Nevada! I hope you are all having a great week.

Today, June 11, 2008, marks my third wedding anniversary. For some that may not be so important as it is just three years, but for me, I'm impressed.

As I'm sure I have mentioned before, Ben and I are high school sweethearts. We started dating our Junior year of high school and he just wasn't able to get rid of me. We finished high school together, went to college together. Made it through years of absolutely no money, a pile of debt and full course loads together. Then, we got married.

I know I thought things would be easier once we were in our careers and were making enough money to start paying down some of the debt that almost every college student in America has. But it hasn't been quite so simple. Because then you have to grow up and make house payments and car payments and then have babies.

And yes, I mean babies. Two at once! If someone had told me, really at any time before I got pregnant, that I would have more than one at a time I wouldn't have believed them. And I know Ben wouldn't have either!

Back to my point, we have been through a lot together, so while we have only been married for three years, it feels like a lifetime. And some days it is really hard. It is really hard for him to work all day and for me to watch the babies all day and then come together and not argue about silly things. Marriage is hard. And anyone who thinks otherwise is mistaken, I'm sorry.

I love my husband and my kids more than anything but dang it, it is hard! It is hard to be a Mommy 24/7 and a Wife 24/7 and not lose a part of me that hides underneath it all.

I'm not sure where I'm going with this, I guess I just want to point out that life is hard. But I'm doing it. I'm making it.

I'm sure you older and wiser readers are thinking to yourselves, yes; and it gets harder! And I know that too, but I'm trying to be optimistic. Maybe it won't get too much harder.

So, enough rambling, back to my anniversary. Ben and I celebrated our anniversary last week so we would have a babysitter available. Our friend Katie watched the kids while we went into Vegas and had a day to ourselves. It was nice.

We did a little shopping and then went and ate sushi for lunch. Sushi is my favorite! Ben really likes it too, but for the price it is one thing we both love that we don't get to have very often.

After lunch we went and saw Iron Man. If you like those superhero type movies then you will enjoy it. I, personally love those kind of movies, so we both had a great time.

We were able to sit and watch a movie without pausing it because we weren't able to hear it over whatever the kids were doing. Sometimes, Analise loves to "talk" as loud as she can when we are watching a movie. It is really cute!

After the movie we headed back home. We had some more shopping that we could have done but we were both missing the kids after being away from them all day.

I'm not used to that, so I'm sure it was bothering me a little more than Ben, but he was ready to go home and see them too.

We had a good day. On our actual anniversary I think we might just stay home and relax. Or, we might take our kids to the park for a little while. It will be something with just our family and we will all be happy. And hopefully, the day won't be too hard.

**Until next week, make it a great one!**

**Amy**

# Talkin' From The Mountains

**How to take a cheap vacation**

Talkin' From The Mountains
By Dale Greer

Are gasoline prices making a vacation unaffordable? How about a 4-day vacation to Louisville for two for about $600.00 including your hotel bill, gas and food?

First get a reservation for 3 nights at the Holiday Inn Downtown on Broadway. (Cost: about $72.00 a night).

FIRST DAY

Plan to get to Louisville around noon. Check in the hotel, then drive east on Broadway. Stop at one of the lovely little restaurants in the Highlands and get a sandwich and a drink to go. (Cost: About 12 bucks)

Head back toward downtown. Turn right on Cherokee Road and you will be in one of the most beautiful city parks in America, designed by Frederick Law Olmstead who created New York's Central Park. There are hundreds of scenic sites where you can enjoy your lunch.

Take Broadway back to the hotel and take the free shuttle to the Science Center ($24.00 for a couple) or Churchill Downs Museum ($20.00 for two).

Go back to the hotel in time for happy hour, drinks and free snacks in the bar. Cost; 18 bucks with tip

Go back to your room and curl up to view television, read a book, or whatever.

First Day is over.

COST FOR FIRST DAY, INCLUDING HOTEL: About $125.00

SECOND DAY

Stop by the hotel restaurant and get a couple of sweet rolls and drink the free coffee provided in the room (COST: about $6.00).

Take the free hotel shuttle to Speed Museum ($10.00 for 2 tickets, Louisville Slugger Museum ($18.00 for 2 tickets) or the Antique Mall (free).

Have a light lunch in a classy little downtown restaurant (lots on Main Street) or eat in the Speed Museum snack bar. (Cost: about $18.00 including tip).

Back to the hotel on the free shuttle by late afternoon.

Freshen up and take the Hotel Shuttle to the Seelbach Hotel. Dine in the Oak Room. You are going to splurge a little here. (COST: Dinner, drinks and live music—about $80 including tip).

After dinner, tour the historic old hotel, location for many scenes in the movie, "The Insider" with Al Pacino and Russell Crowe, and the location of Daisy Buchanan's wedding in F. Scott Fitzgerald's classic novel, The Great Gatsby.

After dinner, walk across the street to the perpetual party at "Fourth Street Live!", You don't have to spend any money. People-watching and listening to the music are the main sports here.

Then stroll a couple of blocks down to Fourth and Broadway to the Brown and have a drink in one of America's most famous hotels. If you saw the movie "Elizabethtown," you'll recognize the lobby and ballroom. (COST: about $18.00 including tip).

Back to the hotel by the free shuttle for a good night's sleep or whatever. (tip the driver $5.00)

COST FOR THE SECOND DAY: including hotel. $200.00 to $220.00

Third Day:

Coffee and rolls again in room

Cost: about $6.00

Around 9 a.m. Drive to the Louisville Zoo and spend the day. You will see one of America's best gorilla exhibits and a new outstanding polar bear exhibit.

COST: $24.00 for 2 tickets and about 10 or 12 bucks for lunch and what a bargain!

Go back to the hotel later in the afternoon, freshen up and take the shuttle to Louisville Slugger Field. Buy a cheap infield ticket, spread out your blanket (hope you brought one) on the grassy area in center field, buy a hot-dog and a beer or soft drink and have a picnic while you watch the ballgame. (COST: about $30.00).

Take the free shuttle back to the hotel around 10 o'clock that night for a good night's sleep or whatever: (tip the driver $5.00)

COST FOR THE THIRD DAY including hotel: About $140.00 to $150.00.

FOURTH And Last DAY

Check out of hotel around 10 or so. Go up Bardstown Road to Lynn's Paradise Café for brunch. The New York Times raved about this kitchy restaurant. (COST: about 25.00 including tip).

Spend the next couple of hours visiting the lovely shops up and down Bardstown Road in the area known as "The Highlands."

Then drive down river road until you see all kinds of yachts and a sign that says Captain's Quarters. (only about 15 minutes from downtown)

Get a table on the lawn and just order a dessert or a snack because this place is expensive!

Sit outside near the dock and watch the boats and barges on the Ohio River and ogle the people who park their Yachts to come up on the lawn to dine. (Cost for the dessert or snack: about $23.00 with tip--I told you it was expensive).

Hit the interstate and have a leisurely drive home. You'll be home before dark.

Cost for Fourth Day: $50.00 or $60.00

Your total cost for 4 days of fun including hotel, food, gas and a few incidentals around $650.00. If you're single, you can do the four days for about $350.00, but you'll have to forget about the whatever.

**Dale Greer is a member of the faculty at Morehead State University. He has an expansive background in media including award winning reporting and stints as a major television anchor and talk show host. He can be reached via email at, ddgreer@roadrunner.com**

# 4th District Report

4th District Report
By Geoff Davis 4th District Congressman

House Democrats Pass the Largest Tax Increase in History

To Fund the Largest Federal Budget Ever

As Americans struggle to cope with the searing pain at the gas pump and increasing costs of living, Democrats in Washington have done no favors for any of us by passing a budget blueprint that calls for the largest tax increase in our nation's history. The $683 billion tax increase will affect just about every worker, parent, married couple and small business entrepreneur in Kentucky. The Democrats' fiscally irresponsible budget will result in families across the Commonwealth facing an average tax increase of $2,500.

The Democrats' whopping $3 trillion budget will increase taxes for seniors, working Americans and small businesses. In addition, it will cut the child tax credit in half and reinstate the marriage penalty, which forces some married couples to pay more taxes than they would if they were single. Even the outdated and unconstitutional death tax will be restored under the Democrats' new budget.

The average working family of four that earns $50,000 annually will see a 191% increase in their tax bill. According to the budget passed by the Democratic Majority, a single parent with two children who makes $30,000 a year will be slapped with an average of $1,600 in new taxes. Even the elderly will face an enormous tax hike of $2,181 on average.

The Democrats' giant tax increase will siphon off a significant chunk of Americans' hard-earned money to finance a massive spending plan that increases wasteful Washington spending by billions of dollars. This year, as a result of Democratic refusals to use our own energy resources, the average family with two cars will spend an additional $2,500 on gasoline. Now the Democratic Majority in Congress wants the same Kentucky family to give the federal government $2,500 more in taxes. This represents misguided priorities for the nation that Kentuckians cannot afford.

This budget will cause more pain for families with tight budgets, force small businesses to cut employees and slow economic growth throughout the nation. Democratic Representative Bill Foster [IL-14] defended his vote against his own party's budget by saying, "I can't support a budget, from either party, that raises taxes on the middle class. This bill hurts families…by eliminating the 10-percent bracket for lower-income taxpayers, reinstating the marriage penalty and increasing taxes on small businesses and investments."

The budget is much more than a list of numbers on a page – it is a reflection of our ability as elected representatives to come together and make the same tough decisions that families must make every month. One of Congress' most important tasks is to be responsible stewards of the taxpayers' money. The Democratic Majority is failing at this task.

The federal government's problem is not that it taxes too little, but rather that it spends too much. I am committed to fixing this broken status quo and bringing more fiscal responsibility to Washington, D.C. I will continue fighting to get our economy back on track and opposing unnecessary tax increases on middle-class families and small businesses.



OPINION

# Steve's Report

Steve's Report
By Steve Scalf

For Mother's Day, we got to hear the voices of our two oldest children. One of the rules they have to follow as missionaries is that they only get to phone home on Christmas and Mother's Day. I suppose that means we ought to change the name of the third Sunday in June from Father's Day to Chopped-Liver Day or something, since we don't even rank a phone call.

Really, though, things are probably the way they should be. The phone calls aren't for the sake of the children. Having been away from home for an extended period of time myself, I learned that phone calls tend to make things harder. Letters and e-mails give you a boost, but hearing family's voices can leave you feeling homesick and depressed. No, the phone calls are for the sakes of the mother hens who need to hear how their little chickies are doing.

Hearing their voices gave me a sense of nostalgia, taking me back to a time when my grown-up children were still little ones. Most days, I would come home from work feeling tired and stressed out. I'd come in the door and everybody wanted my attention. After spending all day with kids, Cindy needed to talk to another grown-up and tell me about her day. And the kids who hadn't seen their father all day long needed to have some Daddy-time, too.

All those demands all at once, when all I wanted to do was come home and relax, almost got me to the point that I wasn't looking forward to coming home. Remembering how excited I got as a little kid every evening when my daddy came home from work, I started feeling guilty, realizing that my attitude could drive a wedge between me and my family.

So when I pulled in the driveway, I would shut off the car and sit there quietly, just relaxing and thinking about all the things I love about my family. Before long – it only took a few seconds – I couldn't wait to get inside. The change in attitude made all the difference.

But even having a good attitude didn't stop me from feeling physically tired. I still wanted to kick my boots off, lie down, stretch out, and close my eyes for a while. How could I do this and still give my little children the attention and special time with their daddy that they had been looking forward to all day?

That's when I came up with the idea for a game the kids eventually called "sleeping wrestle." I would stretch out on the floor and pretend to be asleep and the kids would try to sneak up on me. When I heard them coming close, I would make a loud "snore" or roll over onto my side and they would squeal and run away.

If they got too close, I would "stretch," get a hold of them, pull them in, and use them like a pillow, the whole time pretending I was asleep. The kids would be squealing and laughing the whole time, wiggling and squirming to get away. But just as soon as they worked themselves free, they'd start sneaking back so I could catch them again.

This game was perfect. I actually did get to stretch out, close my eyes and relax while the kids were working their way in closer. And sometimes I'd lie there a little longer than normal until they started getting bold and checking to see if I was really asleep by lifting up one of my eyelids. Then I'd snort, and roll over on top of them. It turned into just another part of the game.

The game would always end the same way. I would stretch, open my eyes and sit up. The kids would come running and jump in my arms and cover me with hugs and kisses. Nothing quite compares to moments like that. I felt so much peace and happiness that nothing else in the world seemed to matter. I'd look over at Cindy and say, "Thanks for making me a daddy."

When bedtime rolled around, the kids would change into their jammies, brush their teeth, and head off to bed. Then Cindy and I would make the rounds, listening to their prayers, tucking them in and giving each one a good-night kiss. I'm not exactly sure when the tradition started – maybe when I took my turn rocking them to sleep when they were little babies – but I had a special good-night song for each child.

For Katie, it was the old Mitch Miller song: "Ka-Ka-Katie, beautiful Katie; you're the only G-G-G-Girl that I adore..." When she was about 3-years-old, she would sometimes sing it back to me: Ka-Ka-Ka-Daddy; beautiful Daddy; you're the only G-G-G-Daddy I adore..."

Sam's song was a variation of "Bicycle Built for Two." I may not have the greatest singing voice, but they loved it anyway. Every time I would sit on the edge of their beds, singing their special song, their angelic faces would take on such a happy and peaceful appearance.

By the time the kids turned 8, they had pretty much outgrown "sleeping wrestle." But no matter how much older and independent they became, they never seemed to get too old to hear their special song. Even when they were teenagers I would occasionally slip into their rooms at night and sing those songs to them. Not once did they complain and tell me to stop treating them like little babies. Instead, they would snuggle back into their pillows, their faces taking on that same peaceful countenance I had seen so many years before.

After that wonderful journey down memory lane, I think I'll be fine without a phone call on Father's Day.

All I need is for someone to sing "Ka-Ka-Ka-Daddy" to me.

**Signing out from Honolulu**

**Steve Scalf**

**** Steve Scalf is a member of the U.S. Military. Reach him at slscalf@msn.com**

**GUEST**
Continued from Page 4

leads to active processing of information by the individual."

Thanks to the internet, kids don't need to confine their study partners to people in their immediate area. There are plenty of high-quality online forums for kids to talk to each other or adult experts. As psychology professor Rena Palloff and international studies professor Keith Pratt noted in a paper on online learning communities, the "keys to the learning process are . . the collaboration in learning that results from these interactions."

6) Have a study plan.

Creating a study plan is an effective way to manage stress and use time efficiently. A recent study by the American College Health Association rated stress as the #1 impediment to academic performance among college students in the United States. And during finals season, academic anxiety can be especially bad.

Luckily stress can be substantially reduced with just a little bit of planning. By creating a realistic study schedule and breaking down assignments into small, manageable pieces, students can avoid stress leading up to an exam.

**Annie Burnquist is the founder and president of ThinkingStorm.com, an online tutoring service.**


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