VICC Counselors Advise Parents on Significance of Test Scores

As local school districts work to narrow the African-American achievement gap, VICC counselors are stressing to African-American parents and students the need to take testing seriously.

The counselors feel so strongly about testing that they developed a workshop titled “Tests Matter” which they present to parent groups as well as to students. In October, they hosted the first such workshop for parents at the VICC offices, and now the counselors are available to present the workshop at schools or city libraries at the request of a principal or district official. The counselors work with the schools in conducting a similar workshop for student audiences.

“They are the same for both parents and students — that success on tests is a major factor for the future,” Williams notes in the workshop. “So it’s best to stress the message to their children at home.”

“Tests Matter” is the subject of a workshop developed by the VICC counselors. Here, Vickie Williams, at left, and Jennifer Christy lead the workshop for a group of parents. Covered in the workshop are the importance of students scoring well on tests, details about the MAP test and suggestions on how parents can help their children do their best. The workshop is available at the request of school principals or district officials.

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Brittney Patton chose her path in life after discovering her strengths at Rockwood’s Lafayette High School. And by taking on a leadership role there, she became more confident and outgoing.

The 2007 graduate, from north St. Louis, currently attends Sullivan University’s National Center for Hospitality Studies in Louisville, Ky., where she studies culinary arts, with a specialty in baking and pastry. She gravitated toward the culinary arts field after taking classes in the Family and Consumer Science department at Lafayette. “My eyes were opened to a different career,” notes the soft spoken, polite teen who admits to having a language impairment that makes it difficult for her to process and articulate her thoughts.

Brittney originally believed fashion design would be her calling. But when she struggled with moving beyond her sketches to the execution stage, she turned her attention to cooking something she had enjoyed “ever since I was little,” she says. She took Basic Foods, Intermediate Foods and International Speciality Cuisine. In her Personal and Career Development class, she learned about resume writing, cover letters and job interview techniques.

During a one-week cake decorating unit, teacher Rebecca Lawrence was impressed with Brittney’s “attention to detail, her expertise and precision and the way she stayed calm and collected under pressure.”

When it came to cake decorating, Brittney demonstrated both “an artistic eye and the know-how,” her teacher noted.

In addition to learning and practicing her cooking skills, Brittney gained valuable information from the guest speakers her teachers arranged. Some of those speakers, representing colleges that offer culinary training, shared information about job opportunities in culinary arts and admission information about their various programs.

Also shedding light on what it takes to achieve success as a culinary student was Brittney’s teacher, Ms. Lawrence, who had begun a summer study program toward her chef’s hat at a Florida culinary school. Brittney remembers hearing her teacher talk about that experience and thinking to herself, “That is the direction I’d like to go in.”

Another personal goal of hers was to “come out of my shell” — to put an end to the anxiety she felt when she had to approach people she didn’t know or speak in front of an audience. So when an opportunity arose for Brittney to take the helm of Lafayette’s Black Student Union, a club she had been active in, she accepted the position of president. While she did worry about not measuring up because of her disability, she knew it was in her best interest to try.

“What impressed me the most about Brittney is that despite her language impairment, she led meeting after meeting,” notes teacher Cheryl Hermach, the group’s sponsor. “She had an agenda and she got the job done. I admire her for doing something she knew would be difficult for her and doing it well.”

For Brittney, overcoming her shyness was just one of the things she accomplished. Under her leadership, the student body became more enlightened about the Black Student Union, she says, “that it’s a multicultural club and not restricted to any one race.” And for that she is just as proud.

Lafayette High School stressed Brittney in a direction that she is happy with and one which will bring her closer to her dream job of becoming a wedding cake designer at Walt Disney World.