



Use Strategies to Prepare Your Child for Standardized Tests

Children from third grade on up will be taking standardized tests this spring.

These tests help the school measure your child's performance against state standards. They also let you see where your child needs more work.

There are many things you can do at home before the test to ensure your child's scores correctly reflect his academic capabilities.

For instance, give him lots of fruits and fruit drinks. Research shows children do better if they get plenty of sugar the week preceding the test. But the sugar does not have to come from junk food.

Making sure your child is hydrated is another documented test advantage. Give him a large bottle of water to take with him on test day.



TESTING TIPS

Here are some other strategies:

- Build your child's reading stamina. Gradually increase the amount and time he reads in one session. He can take a break by closing his eyes for a minute or so.
- Send your child to bed early the night before.
- Review common words in test questions, like evaluate and predict. Practice by asking him to evaluate what he's read or predict what might happen next in a story.

- Make sure he wears comfortable clothes and has extra pencils and erasers.

Also on test day, tell your child to:

- Read each question carefully. Underline key words.
- Read questions first before reading the passage. Then look for the answers as he reads. Most elementary students can remember two questions at a time.
- Answer questions he's sure about first. Then go back to the more difficult ones.
- Cross out answers on multiple choice questions he knows are wrong.
- Pace himself. He shouldn't spend too much time on one question.

- "Just do your best!" Assure your child of your unconditional love with a hug.

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Coach your child on specific ways to respect elders

"No respect" is a big complaint adults have about children today. Teachers and parents share it, too. A recent survey by the research group Public Agenda found that disrespect was the second-biggest discipline problem in schools today.

Insist on respect. But avoid general statements. Children learn little from "Show respect," or "Respect your elders." They learn much more from clear expectations and specific instructions. Teach your child specific things like:

BUILDING RESPECT

- Greeting. Your child need not spend 20 minutes talking to every adult he meets. But he should smile, say hello and make eye contact. Is the adult a guest in your home? Have your child offer a drink or snack, or take the visitor's coat.
- Waiting. No one likes to be interrupted. And most adults, including teachers, hate being interrupted by middle schoolers! Keep reminding your child to wait until an adult is finished talking before he pipes up.
- Sharing. Your child will impress his teachers and other adults if he can let others go through a door in front of him. And he'll really stand out for respectful acts such as giving up his seat to an adult or even a peer who has been standing for a while.

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BUILDING RESPONSIBILITY

ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD TO FOLLOW A THREE-STEP RESPONSIBILITY PLAN

At this age, your child should be encouraged to make as many decisions as you, her parent, feel it is safe for her to make.

The more decisions your child is responsible for making, the more she will learn and grow.

Offer these three guidelines for your middle schooler:

1. Think. Before acting, ask yourself, "What will happen if ...?"
2. Get the facts. What does each choice involve? Does it fit into your schedule? Is it a realistic choice?
3. Make the right choice. The right choice is one that works for you and is also the best thing to do. Remember that many times the right choice and the easiest choice are not the same things.

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DISCIPLINE

ADMIT YOUR MISTAKES WHEN IT COMES TO UNFAIR DISCIPLINE

You're the parent, but that doesn't mean you're perfect—or that you won't make mistakes when disciplining your preteen. The trick is to own up to these mistakes and fix them. Doing so shows your child that you respect him and want to do what's right.

If you've messed up when disciplining your preteen (such as by falsely accusing him of—and then punishing him for—something), take these steps to make amends:

1. Apologize. Don't hide your mistake, acknowledge it. "I shouldn't have accused you of cheating on your math test without knowing all the facts first. I'm sorry."
2. Let go of the guilt. Every parent makes mistakes, so don't dwell on the fact that you treated your preteen unfairly. Instead, accept it, repair it and move on.
3. Review what happened. What made

you accuse and punish your preteen in the first place? Why did you act before knowing all the facts? Analyze what you did to prevent doing it again in the future.

4. Create a plan. Once you figure out why you did what you did, think of ways not to do the same thing again. Ask your preteen for input.
5. Implement your plan. Before you accuse your preteen of something, follow the plan you've laid out. It may prevent another episode of unfair discipline.

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SPENDING TIME TOGETHER

VISITING COLLEGES TOGETHER ALLOWS YOU TO BOND WITH YOUR TEENAGER

Between your teen's sports, clubs, part-time job and study time, how are you two supposed to spend time together? If your child is interested in going to college, visit them together.

Here are just a few of the things you can do together on your visit:

- Tour the campus.
- Meet faculty members.
- Eat in the dining hall together.
- Find out about various clubs, sports and other activities.
- Visit the library.

The admissions staff or faculty members may want to meet with just your teen. Be sup-

portive and listen to what your child has to say when she's finished her meetings. You may be able to talk with other staff members to ask your own questions at this time.

If your teen is interested in working right after college, spend time researching career choices together. Take her to work with you so she can experience a typical work day. If she's interested in going to a trade school, schedule a time for you two to visit together.

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Reinforcing Learning

Boost your child's spelling skills with games in the car

Most families spend lots of time in the car. Here are four fun games you can play that will also boost your child's spelling skills:

1. Plurals race. As you are driving, challenge your child to a contest. You'll look for words that form their plural by adding an s. He'll look for words that form the plural by adding es. Who can find the most words in a given period of time? (You'll have a big advantage here, so switch often—it's more fun if you both win.)
2. I spy. Take turns looking for things you can see. Then say the plural of that word. ("I spy a seatbelt. The plural is seatbelts.") Then spell the word and give the other player a chance. As time goes on, you'll find the challenge increases.
3. "Y not?" Look for instances on billboards or ads where a word keeps the final y before adding a suffix (words like crying, saying, playing). Then look for instances where a word changes the final y to an i before adding a suffix (cried, said, cherries).
4. Stump the parent. We all have words that are hard for us to spell. The next time you're in the car, challenge yourself. Tell your child five words you have difficulty spelling correctly. Spell them aloud while your child writes down what you said. When you get home, check yourself.

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Science

HELP YOUR TEEN GET THE MOST OUT OF READING SCIENCE TEXTBOOKS

Reading a science textbook is not the same as reading the sports pages, a novel or even a math textbook. Here are tips that will help your teen read and remember what's in the science book:

- Explore. Before starting to read the textbook, have your teen read the introduction to the chapter. Then have her look through the chapter headings, subheadings, summary and review questions. How does this subject connect to things she has already studied?
- Examine. Have her look over pictures, tables and diagrams. They are often easier to understand than the words. What new information can be learned?
- Read. Have your teen read the chapter. At the end of each section, she should



stop to see if she can explain what she's just read in her own words. Have her take notes about important information, concepts and vocabulary.

- Analyze. Have your teen look carefully at the problems in the textbook. Have her write an explanation and draw a diagram to explain the various steps used to solve the problem. After class, have your teen combine the notes from class with the notes from the textbook. That way, she'll have everything she needs in one place. That will make it easier when it's time to review.

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HOMework/STUDY SKILLS

KEEP YOUR TEEN ON TRACK AS THE CALENDAR TURNS TOWARD SPRING

Motivation has a way of going down as the temperature starts going up, especially for seniors. Teens may need more encouragement and structure to fulfill their responsibilities.

It's not a bad idea to check in with your teen about homework even if he's as motivated as ever. He may need help coping with the increased number of projects, papers and tests during the last quarter of the school.

Some ideas:

- Make sure your teen has a place to do homework. You and your teen probably did this at the beginning of the year. Still, many families find their teen starts to "spread out" his work all over the house as the year goes on.
- Have your teen write out a homework schedule and post it where he can easily see it.
- Make lists. These include assignments to be

done, materials needed and test dates.

- Ask if you can help. You should never do homework for a child of any age, but you can help in other ways. For example: Stop by the library on your lunch hour and pick up a book your teen needs.
- Remind your teen to "work first." Teens like to choose for themselves when they will do homework. But what if homework falls victim to screen time? It's time to step in.

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SOLVING SCHOOL PROBLEMS

BE PROACTIVE IF YOU SUSPECT YOUR CHILD IS HAVING SCHOOL PROBLEMS

Now that your child is well into the second half of the school year, he may be having some difficulty. The workload is greater. Teachers have more material to teach and the pace at school is much faster.

If your child had any problems with schoolwork in the first part of the year, they may increase now.

A veteran child psychologist advises parents to be proactive. Don't wait for the problem to get worse or for the school to call you. If you suspect your child is having trouble, follow your intuition.

Take these steps to intervene:

- Be your child's advocate. No one can do this but you. Contact the teacher to get information about where your child is having problems.
- Help build communication and a good relationship between your child and his teacher. Discuss learning styles to see if there are options for how your child tackles the material.
- Let your child know you support his efforts. But don't do your child's work for him.
- Find a tutor for an older elementary child. Don't try to tutor him yourself. You could add to his stress. Check with the school to find out about tutoring services.
- Don't give up. It may take more than a week or two to turn things around. But remember, solving the problem now may prevent it from returning next year.

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WELLNESS

HOLD THE CAFFEINE TO MAKE SURE YOUR CHILD SUCCEEDS IN SCHOOL

If your child is having a hard time at school, caffeine could be the culprit. Children ages six to 11 drink an average of eight ounces of caffeinated cola drinks a day. According to recent research, that much caffeine causes hyperactivity and inattention. These lead to behavior and learning problems in school.



The first step in changing your child's caffeine habit is to be a good role model. Children whose parents drink caffeinated drinks are three times more likely to drink five or more cans of soda a week.

To can your child's soda habit:

- Help your child make good choices when you go out to eat. Suggest your child choose milk, juice or water instead of soda.
- Talk with your child about why you no longer want him to drink soda. Discuss how soda affects learning and behavior. Explain health problems re-

lated to high consumption, too—like weight gain and tooth decay.

- Toss out any soda you have in the pantry or fridge. Tell your child he can have a soda on special occasions.
- Offer your child healthier options. Keep a chilled pitcher of water in the fridge. Get 100 percent fruit juice from the store in several flavors that he likes. Make lemonade or decaf iced tea.
- Pack healthy drinks your child can enjoy while at school. A bottle of ice water or frozen 100 percent juice boxes will thaw out by lunchtime.

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PARENTS: The Key Ingredient

Parent Involvement Newsletter

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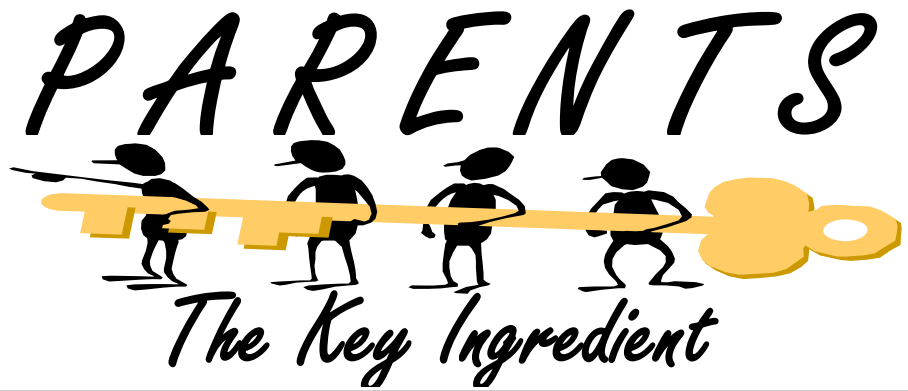
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March
2007

Special Education Information

What is Reading?

Courtesy of Pro-Parents, Columbia, South Carolina

Reading is a very complex skill. Learning to read is a process that begins when a child is born and continues through the third grade. It is a process that takes lots and lots of practice. Just as you wouldn't expect your child to be able to pick up a basketball the first time and be an all star, you can't expect him to just pick up a book and read. When children become healthy readers in the early grades, they are more likely to be successful throughout their school careers and beyond. We know what healthy readers look like. Healthy readers:


- Listen and respond to language used in conversations.
- Recognize and name the letters of the alphabet.
- Listen to and recognize the sounds in spoken language and understand that language is made up of individual words that are grouped together for meaning.
- Recognize that sounds and letters go together and understand the "code" of reading.
- Recognize the link between speaking and writing.
- Learn and use new words (build their vocabulary).
- Understand what is read (comprehend).
- Practice reading by reading often so that recognizing words is automatic and easy (read fluently).

In 2000, The National Reading Panel was asked by Congress to look at the effectiveness of approaches used to teach children to read. The Panel found that a good reading approach must include the following five parts:

1. Phonemic awareness-the ability to hear and work with the sounds in spoken language or the ability to recognize and use individual sounds to create words.
2. Phonics-the ability to understand the relationships between the sounds of spoken language and the letters of written language.



PARENTS



The Key Ingredient

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Special Education Information

3. **Fluency**-the ability to read accurately and quickly. Children must be able to read words automatically in order to understand what they read. When a student has to spend time decoding many of the words in a story, he is not able to focus on figuring out the meaning of the words. Children should be able to read fluently and with expression to comprehend. When children read slowly, they often have trouble understanding what they have read.
4. **Vocabulary**-the ability to understand what words mean and how they are used. If a child can pronounce a word, but does not know what it means, he may not be able to understand what he has read. Vocabulary is built when parents and teachers directly teach the meaning and uses of new words that children have heard or seen.
5. **Comprehension**-the ability to understand what is read. The purpose of reading is to get meaning from what is read. Research has shown that children must be able to read fluently (quickly and accurately) in order to comprehend. Children must be taught comprehension strategies beginning in kindergarten. These strategies help the child know how to make words make sense and “talk” to him.

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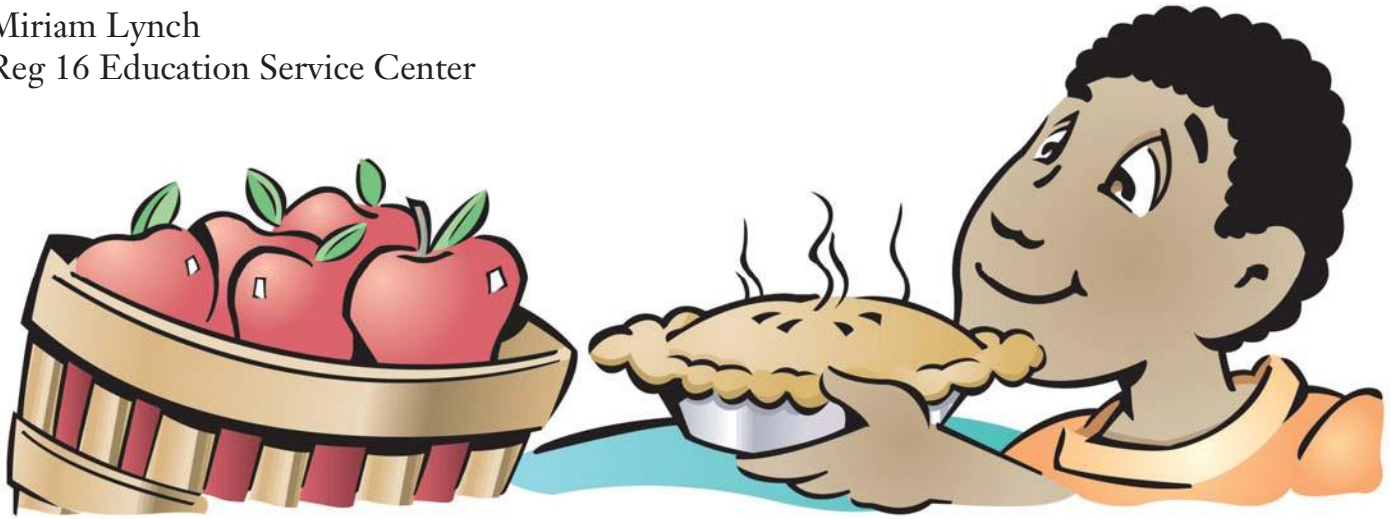
Be who you are and say what you
feel, because those who mind don't matter
and those who matter don't mind.

- Dr. Suess 1904-1991

Parent & Child Activity Calendar

Elementary School

Miriam Lynch
Reg 16 Education Service Center



THE PARENT INSTITUTE

Parent & Child Activity Calendar

Elementary School Parents make the difference!

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Celebrate April Fool's Day. Do something silly with your child.	2 Write a poem or story from the point of view of a family pet.	3 Have your child look through the Yellow Pages, choose a business or service, and write a funny ad for it.	4 Help your child write to a friend today.	5 Collect empty boxes and milk cartons. Create a three-dimensional map of your town.	6 Find an alcohol or tobacco ad. Redesign it to show what happens when these products are used.	7 Visit the library and check out a book about birds.
8 Help your child create her very own reading corner. Furnish it with books, a chair and a good reading lamp.	9 Is your child fighting with a friend? Have them switch roles - it helps them see the other person's point of view.	10 Take a walk with your child. See how many different birds you can identify. Start a list.	11 Have your child use yarn to create two different shapes, each with five sides. Repeat with six or seven sides.	12 Clip an interesting news story. Cut the paragraphs apart. Ask your child to read them and put them in order.	13 Can you and your child communicate without using words? Try it and see.	14 Take your child out to a park and help him learn to fly a kite.
15 Take your child out for breakfast or make her favorite food at home.	16 Does your child have a large assignment? Help him break it down into smaller parts.	17 Learn a tongue twister. At dinner, challenge everyone to repeat it three times fast.	18 Talk about the best and worst of your day. Give everyone a chance to share.	19 Water pollution is a growing problem. Discuss with your child what you can do to prevent it.	20 Challenge your child to draw a picture of an imaginary garden. How many different colors can she use?	21 At the grocery store, have your child compare two sizes of the same product. Which is the best buy?
22 It's Humor Month. Visit the library and check out a book of jokes.	23 Today is William Shakespeare's birthday. Challenge everyone to memorize a little Shakespeare.	24 Have everyone bring a joke to the dinner table. Remember laughter is the best dinner music!	25 Have your child design a new cover for a much-loved book.	26 Write an encouraging note and tuck it in your child's lunch box or in a school book.	27 It's the birthday of Samuel Morse (b. 1791). Practice sending and receiving messages in Morse Code.	28 Make today Game Day. Everyone pick a favorite game for the family to play together.
29 Help your child figure the perimeter and area of his bedroom.	30 Start a story. Tell it to your child and have her write an ending for it.	<h1>April 2007</h1>				

Parent Pointers

Calendar

Miriam Lynch
Reg 16 Education Service Center



THE PARENT INSTITUTE

Parent Pointers Calendar

Middle School Parents
still make the difference!

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Play a game that teaches strategy skills, such as tic-tac-toe, checkers or chess.	2 Review your child's goals for the school year. Compliment her progress.	3 Talk with your child about how each of you could improve your listening skills.	4 It's Mathematics Education Month. Count how many times you use math today.	5 Talk about peaceful ways your child can handle conflicts with peers.	6 Make plans for a family night. Let your child choose the day and the activity.	7 Take turns choosing videos to rent. You'll learn about your child's interests.
8 Let your child make a decision, such as what the family should have for dinner tonight.	9 Note your child's artistic or athletic performances on the calendar. Make every effort to attend.	10 Plan a family activity and put it on the calendar. Treat it as the important event that it is.	11 Nurture creativity. Ask questions that start with "What if ..." and "Why do you think ..."	12 Ask your child if he knows any bullies. Some kids are embarrassed to admit they're being bullied.	13 Let your child stay up late to read. Let her sleep in tomorrow morning.	14 Check out an astronomy book at the library. Can your child find a constellation in the sky?
15 Participate in an event that helps others, such as a walk for charity.	16 Give your child the facts about sex and discuss how values relate to the facts.	17 Play a rhyming game. Have family members say words that rhyme until you run out.	18 Explain a family rule to your child instead of just saying, "Do it because I said so."	19 Check out a book on simple science experiments to do at home. Try one with your child.	20 Suggest a book to your child in which the main character is a good role model.	21 Look at old pictures of your child. Reminiscence about how many things he has learned.
22 Teach your child a helpful saying, such as "If you fail to plan, you plan to fail."	23 Today is the beginning of TV-Turnoff Week. List fun alternatives to watching TV.	24 Help your child make a planning sheet to use with big assignments.	25 Give your child a history lesson. What was life like 30 years ago?	26 Apologize to your child for something when it's appropriate. This shows that everyone makes mistakes.	27 Post a funny saying or comic strip where your child will see it.	28 Help your child make a checklist of things to remember before leaving for school.
29 Think of a meaningful quotation you love. Post it where your child will see it.	30 Ask your child to name her favorite class. What makes it so interesting?	April 2007				

Parent Pointers

Calendar

Miriam Lynch
Reg 16 Education Service Center



THE PARENT INSTITUTE[®]

Parent Pointers

Calendar

High School
Parents
still make the difference!

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 This month, set aside time to work on a project or hobby together. Write it on the calendar.	2 It isn't too early to make summer plans. Have your teen think about what he wants to do.	3 Many colleges offer summer programs for high schoolers. Help your teen start gathering information now.	4 If your teen is facing a painful situation, try to offer support without giving advice.	5 Help your teen set up a filing system for colleges that interest her. Start as early as ninth grade.	6 Has it been a hard week? Take your teen out for a snack after school.	7 Buy or make a simple kite and find a place to fly it. You'll get exercise and have fun.
8 Teens know their shortcomings. They need you to remind them of their strengths.	9 Nervous before tests? A pep talk can help: You know it. You studied hard. You can do it.	10 Dig out a favorite children's book and read it together. There are still lessons to be learned.	11 Ask your teen to talk about which class he feels he does best in and why.	12 Does your newspaper have an online edition? Check it out. Teens may prefer this version.	13 Plan a Family Night In. Turn off the phone. Read, play games or watch a video.	14 Visit the library with your teen. Look for a new book by a favorite author.
15 Keep talking about school. Every day, ask your teen what she's doing and thinking about.	16 Little bits of time add up. Help your teen think about things he can study in 10 minutes.	17 Make a list of activities your teen loves to do. Choose two or three and do them together this month.	18 When your teen is making a big decision, talk about it in the context of your faith or values.	19 One of the toughest jobs of a parent is to put your teen's growth ahead of her happiness.	20 Read a book as a family.	21 What if questions can help teens think ahead: What if the person who drove you to the party gets drunk?
22 Celebrate Earth Day by planting a tree or a flower with your teenager.	23 Help your teen find a pen pal in another state, province or country. This is a fun way to practice writing.	24 Use natural consequences when you can. If your teen doesn't set his alarm, he'll miss the bus. But not next time.	25 Visit the library with your teen. Check out a book about nutrition.	26 Does your teen know how to swim? If not, sign her up for lessons this summer.	27 Before your teen applies for a job, help him practice filling out an application.	28 Take your teen out for breakfast or prepare a special breakfast at home.
29 Teach your teen how to cook a new meal today. Have a special dinner.	30 Encourage your teen to consider taking a challenging course in summer school when there's time to focus.	<h1>April 2007</h1>				