

The Parent Educator

A Newsletter for Parent Educators Throughout the State of Arkansas

**THIS ISSUE
"TEST
TIME"**

The Parent Educator's Role in Test Taking by Marti Genge

With the many hats Parent Educators and Parent Involvement Facilitators have to wear nowadays, one that is becoming a standard among schools is assisting in regular classroom and standardized testing. As a Parent Educator, your dual role has been defined as encouraging both parent and child on the importance of **TESTS** among other important tasks. Yes, teachers are busy doing the same; yet, their focus is mostly on preparing students on the subjects at hand.

This is your time to step up and support, share, and enlighten Parents, Students, Teachers and the School on how you can assist them through the multiple

choices to come.

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Now to do this you must load yourself up with valid information to share with the teachers and staff at your

school. This newsletter can be of help in that area. Below is an outline of 10 resources you can put together that will come in handy in preparing you to make a difference in your school during test taking time.

☞ Provide an overview explanation of test taking, either as a handout or a poster for your center.

☞ Gather information for parents on their role and assistance in preparing their child for test taking days.

☞ Have teacher's goals and tasks for test taking in their classroom typed up. This can come in handy as a reference and as a handout to parents.

☞ Have ready suggestions on how your Parent Center can help the school:

- During Parent/Teacher night offer handouts on test taking.
- Send a weekly note home on preparing for tests.
- Talk to students in classrooms during free time on test Anxiety.
- Send home a week of meal suggestions for breakfast for



the students as an encouragement for "brain food" at test taking time.

- Begin the school year with handouts on study habits you can pass out. Then have each handout leading up to test taking month with additional information.
- Make up games to share with teachers and students on skills for test taking.
- Make a bookmark on test

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The Parent Educator is published by the Center for Effective Parenting (CEP) which is a collaborative program of the Jones Center for Families, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, and Arkansas Children's Hospital. This newsletter is supported by funds from a PIRC grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Education (#U310A060026). CEP serves as the Arkansas PIRC (Parent Information & Resource Center). The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the individual writers and do not necessarily reflect those of the sponsoring organizations. All editorial inquiries should be addressed to Marti Genge at (479)751-6166. All rights reserved. No part of this newsletter may be used or reproduced (except "Just For You") in any manner whatsoever without written permission.

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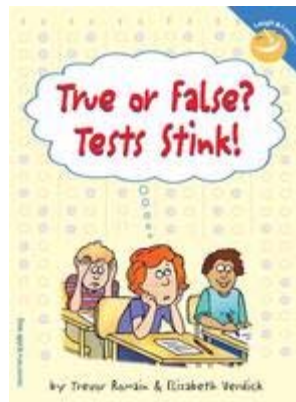
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Book Spotlight

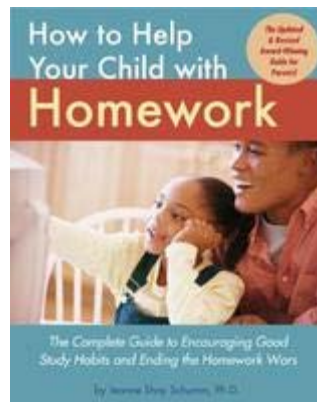


by *Trevor Romain and Elizabeth Verdick* Tests are hard. Tests are scary. In fact, tests stink! But no matter how kids (and parents, and teachers) feel about tests, they're part of life. To succeed in school, kids need to ask, "How can I be a better test-taker?"

This book has the answers. As kids smile and laugh their way through the pages, they'll discover tips and information that will help them survive and thrive in all kinds of test situations.

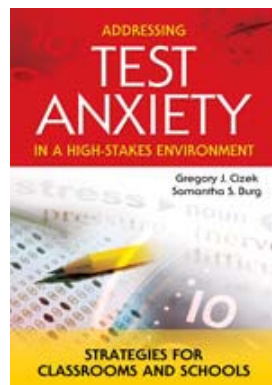
Sample topics include: how to overcome test anxiety, procrastination, and perfectionism; how to prepare for specific types of tests and much more.

ISBN#9781575420738 paperback **\$8.95**



by *Jeanne Shay Schumm, Ph.D.* Written by a teacher, this *free spirit* classic has helped countless parents avoid homework battles and promote school success. The revised edition still covers the basics: building solid study skills in reading, spelling, writing, math, science, social studies, and foreign languages. It also includes the latest information on phonics, "No Child Left Behind," standards, multiple intelligences, and more. Popular sections on tests and technology have been updated to bring parents up to speed. Tips on getting organized, current resources, and proven learning tools round out this essential title. Includes 31 reproducible handout masters.

ISBN#1575420066 paperback **\$15.95**



Addressing Test Anxiety in a High-Stakes Environment by Gregory Cizek provides straightforward explanations, practical suggestions, and reasonable recommendations for addressing test anxiety. This practical resource offers: An overview of the concept of test anxiety

- A glossary of assessment and measurement terms
- Current research findings on test anxiety and which students it is most likely to affect
- Information on the prevalence, correlations, and effects of test anxiety
- Situations in which test anxiety can be helpful
- Suggestions for preventing and reducing the effects of test anxiety

ISBN#9781412908900 paperback **\$30.95**

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taking skills to pass out to Parents who visit your center.

H. Type up a testing schedule from your school to hand out in advance.

I. Connect with local libraries on study time for kids. Have information as a resource.

☞ Know your schools philosophy on test taking and where they stand on scores. This can help you in seeing where improvement might be needed and how you can help.

☞ Print out your schools standardized testing schedule and have it posted in your Parent Center and on your schools website.

☞ Offer a list of local tutors to provide to teachers, parents and counselors. Look into high school students as possible tutors.

☞ Organize a list of community supporters whom you know that will sponsor paper, pencils or bottled water to students during test taking month.

☞ Don't forget the importance of the knowledge you bring to the table, as a Parent Educator. Connect with other Parent Educators and share ideas.

So when that time of year rolls around and you are faced with the hard task of having to

do something with testing, stock your folders full of great ideas and incentives to impress your principal, teachers, and students.

Want to know the best thing about tests? Once they are over, everyone feels terrific and relieved. When you have helped a family, teacher, and school reach their goals isn't that what it's all about.



Healthy Brain Foods for Kids

Just like with other meals, try to eat a variety of foods, including:

- grains (breads and cereals)
- protein (meats, beans, and nuts)
- fruits and vegetables
- milk, cheese, and yogurt

Here are some breakfast ideas. First, the traditional ones:

- eggs
- french toast, waffles, or pancakes (try wheat or whole-grain varieties)
- cold cereal and milk
- hot cereal, such as oatmeal or cream of wheat (try some dried fruit or nuts on top)
- whole-grain toast, bagel, or English muffin with cheese
- yogurt with fruit or nuts
- fruit smoothie, such as a strawberry smoothie.

And now here's some weird (yet yummy) ones:

- banana dog (peanut butter, a banana, and raisins in a long whole-grain bun)
- breakfast taco (shredded cheese on a tortilla, folded in half and micro-waved; top with salsa)
- country cottage cheese (apple butter mixed with cottage cheese)
- fruit and cream cheese sandwich (use strawberries or other fresh fruit)
- sandwich - grilled cheese, peanut butter and jelly, or other favorite leftovers (they're not just for dinner anymore!)

STUDENTS' TEST-TAKING STRATEGIES

Preparing for Tests

- 📖 Maintain good study habits
- 📖 Do your class work.
- 📖 Have a clear understanding of homework assignments before leaving class.
- 📖 Keep a record of assignments received and completed.
- 📖 Make a study schedule and follow it.
- 📖 Tell your parents about schoolwork and homework.
- 📖 Turn in homework on time.
- 📖 Get make-up assignments when returning from an absence.
- 📖 See teachers for additional help.
- 📖 Seek and use past homework assignments, class notes, and available review materials.
- 📖 Follow directions.
- 📖 Find out when tests will be given out.
- 📖 Get a good night's rest and eat a normal breakfast before testing.

During Tests

- 📖 Read and pay careful attention to all directions.
- 📖 Read each passage and accom-

- panying questions.
- 📖 Read every possible answer--the best one could be last.
- 📖 Read and respond to items one at a time rather than thinking about the whole test.
- 📖 Reread, when necessary, the



- parts of a passage needed for selecting the correct answer.
- 📖 Don't expect to find a pattern in the positions of the correct answers.
- 📖 Don't make uneducated guesses. Try to get the correct answer by reasoning and eliminating wrong answers.
- 📖 Decide exactly what the question is asking; one response is clearly best.
- 📖 Don't spend too much time on any one question.

- 📖 Skip difficult questions until all other questions have been answered. On scrap paper, keep a record of the unanswered items to return to, if time permits.
- 📖 Make sure to record the answer in the correct place on the answer sheet.
- 📖 Only change an answer if you are sure the first one you picked was wrong. Be sure to completely erase changed answers.
- 📖 Work as rapidly as possible with accuracy.
- 📖 After completion of the test, use any remaining time to check your answers.
- 📖 Keep a good attitude. Think positively!

After Tests

- 📖 Examine your test scores; ask the teacher to explain your test scores if needed.
- 📖 Congratulate yourself on identified areas of strength.
- 📖 Identify areas of weakness which you will want to improve for a better performance next time.
- 📖 Ask your teacher to suggest areas of study that will help you perform better on the next test.

Students, Parents, and Teachers

TEST ANXIETY

Students may experience anxiety about tests and may experience heightened anxiety before a testing situation. A certain degree of test anxiety is normal and may help students prepare more effectively, work more efficiently, and remain focused during testing. Too much anxiety, however, can negatively affect performance. The following strategies may assist students, parents, and teachers in reducing test anxiety.

Student Strategies for Reducing Test Anxiety

- 📖 Share your feelings of anxiety with parents and teachers.
- 📖 Think of the test as an opportunity to show what you know.
- 📖 Review homework and materials which pertain to the test topics.
- 📖 Relax, breathe deeply and stay focused on the test.
- 📖 Remember the test is only one way your academic performance is measured.

Parent Strategies for Reducing Test Anxiety

- 📖 Discuss the test openly and in a positive way.
- 📖 Have realistic expectations of your child's performance while encouraging his/her best efforts.
- 📖 Emphasize that the test is only one measure of academic performance.
- 📖 Emphasize that test scores do not determine a person's worth.



Teacher Strategies for Reducing Test Anxiety

- 📖 Discuss the purpose of the test and how it can help students progress academically.
- 📖 Have realistic expectations of students' performance while encouraging students to do their best.
- 📖 Allow students to express their anxiety verbally or in writing.
- 📖 Be careful not to over-emphasize the importance of the test.

PARENT TEST-SUPPORT STRATEGIES

Preparing for Testing

- 📖 Note test dates on your home calendar; schedule appointments on non-testing days.
- 📖 Encourage your child to take responsibility for homework and class study.
- 📖 Help your child learn how to find information independently.
- 📖 Praise your child for work

done well.

- 📖 Encourage your child to ask questions at home and in class.
- 📖 Get to know your child's teachers.
- 📖 Attend parent-teacher conferences.
- 📖 Confer with teachers on a regular basis for progress reports.
- 📖 Gather available test preparation materials.
- 📖 Assure your child knows that you value a good education.

Testing Day

- 📖 See that your child is rested and eats breakfast.
- 📖 See that your child arrives at school on time and is relaxed.
- 📖 Encourage your child to do the best work possible.



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- 📖 Do not send your child to school if illness is apparent.
- 📖 Do not remove your child from school on test days for appointments.

After Testing

- 📖 Examine all test reports sent home.
- 📖 Determine areas of strengths and weaknesses.
- 📖 Praise your child's testing strengths and make a plan to address identified weaknesses.
- 📖 See your child's principal, counselor or teacher if additional information is required.



TEACHER ADMINISTRATION STRATEGIES

Before Test Administration

- 📖 Notify students of the test dates in advance.
- 📖 Explain the purposes for testing.
- 📖 Create an uncluttered testing environment.
- 📖 Use a variety of test formats during the school year.
- 📖 Become familiar with the

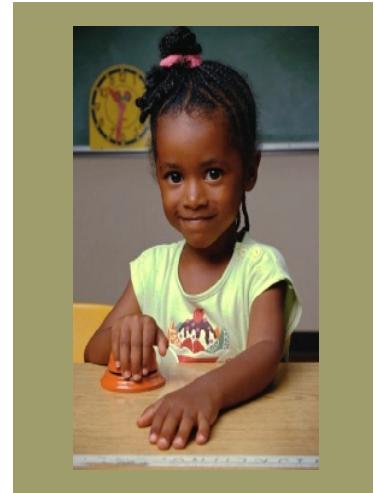
- materials and procedures to be used with the tests.
- 📖 Identify which students may need and/or be eligible for test accommodations.
- 📖 Read the Test Administration Manual carefully for instructions and information.
- 📖 When pre-coding student-specific data on the answer documents, be sure to read and follow coding instructions completely and carefully.
- 📖 Encourage all students to be present on test dates.

During Test Administration

- 📖 Adhere to time limits specified for tests.
- 📖 Read carefully the directions to the students.
- 📖 Expect every student to read all test content material without assistance unless otherwise noted in the Test Administration Manual.
- 📖 Do not read the test, unless specially instructed to do so in State manuals or for student test accommodations.
- 📖 Monitor to ensure that students begin marking answers in the proper area of the answer sheet.
- 📖 Anticipate and eliminate test disruptions.
- 📖 Make sure students work independently.

After Test Administration

- 📖 Collect and account for all test materials.



- 📖 Assure student demographic information on the answer documents is marked accurately.
- 📖 Document any absent students and arrange for them to make-up tests, if possible.
- 📖 Adhere to all test return instructions.
- 📖 Analyze test reports for instructional strengths and weaknesses.
- 📖 Develop a plan to modify instructional strategies to address any identified test weaknesses.

How much sleep do we need?

Preschool: 11-13 hours
 Children: 9-11 hours
 Teens: 9 hours
 Adults: 7-8 hours

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No Child Left Behind Update-Arkansas 2006

NCLB Making a Difference in Arkansas

Between 2002 and 2004 (latest data available): –Fourth-grade reading proficiency increased by 12 percentage points–Fourth-grade mathematics proficiency increased by 16 percentage points–The Hispanic-white achievement gap in fourth-grade reading narrowed by three percentage points–The Hispanic-white achievement gap in fourth-grade mathematics narrowed by three percentage points (SchoolMatters.com) “Little Rock’s Brady Elementary School showed the most improvement on combined [Iowa Test of Basic Skills, or ITBS] results in reading comprehension, math concepts, and math problems. Fifth-graders in the year just ended scored at the 44th percentile, up 23 points over the average scores earned by fifth-graders the previous year. Fulbright Elementary School improved 20 points, putting the average at the 74th percentile –which was the highest in the district. Terry Elementary School also improved 20 points over the 2003-04 school year, scoring at the 68th percentile . . . Twenty-nine of Little Rock’s 34 elementary schools demonstrated gains on the ITBS, as did four of five high schools in literacy.” (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, 6/27/05) “About 70 percent of the

children attending Oakland Heights [Elementary School] are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Most of the school’s 380 or so K-4 students are white, but about 15 percent are African-American and another 15 percent Latino, part of a rapidly growing population of Mexican and Central American families who began arriving in Russellville only a few years ago. Parents at Oakland Heights –except for the few who are self-employed in fields such as car repair and carpentry –generally process chickens at the nearby Tyson plant or make frozen dinners at the ConAgra plant. . . . To give a sense of what those demographics usually mean in Arkansas, [there’s] a 27-point gap between white and African-American students. But, at Oakland Heights, gaps have narrowed significantly. For example, 80 percent of all students met or exceeded state reading standards in 2004 –81 percent of the white students, 74 percent of the African-American students, 82 percent of the Latino students and 78 percent of the poor students. . . . Oakland Heights has a higher percentage of students in some subgroups meeting or exceeding standards than the rest of the state.” (Achievement Alliance’s Alliance Alert, 5/23/05) “A dozen teachers from nine area high schools participated Wednesday in a roundtable discussion at the Spring-

dale school district office, as part of the federal Teacher-to-Teacher Initiative. They shared concerns about professional development, preparing students for the next grade and for after high school and having enough time to meet with other teachers or attend workshops. . . . The initiative, formed under the federal No Child Left Behind Act, is focusing on high school issues during its second year. . . . ‘Just like everyone else, we want to increase our test scores,’ said Sherry Bell, a Lincoln High School English teacher. ‘Improving our reading skills—that’s what everybody’s concerned about.’ Michael Shepherd, a Springdale High School social studies teacher, said the teachers wanted to focus on ‘relevant’ professional development that keeps students’ needs in mind. . . . ‘It’s a great thing the federal government is doing to talk to the masses and talk to the people in the trenches,’ he said. The major goals of the Teacher-to-Teacher Initiative are to increase graduation rates and better prepare students for college and the workforce.” (Springdale Morning News, 3/31/05)

This update was taken from the US Department of Education’s website, <http://www.ed.gov/nclb/overview/importance/difference/arkansas.pdf>

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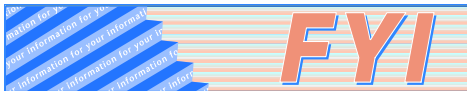
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Important Web Sites

Websites for Parent Educators

Center for Effective Parenting
www.parenting-ed.org

Arkansas Department of Education
<http://arkedu.state.ar.us/>

U.S. Department of Education Publications
www.ed.gov

National PTA
www.pta.org

CNN's Interactive Learning Resources for Teaching
www.literacynet.org

National Institute for Literacy
www.nifl.gov

New York University Child Study Center
www.AboutOurKids.org

National Network of Partnership Schools
www.partnershipschools.org

Education World
www.education-world.com

National Mental Health and Education Center
www.naspcenter.org

National Education Association
www.new.org

National Educational Service
www.nesonline.com

National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education
www.ncpie.org

School Matters (school reports)
www.schoolmatters.com

What's Coming In The Next Issue

Parent Involvement In The Schools Continued...



Arkansas PIRC