

### **Tips for PARENTS/STUDENTS Regarding Standardized Testing:**

The most important way to help improve your child's academic performance is to be supportive and reflect a positive outlook about test-taking and school in general. Negative outlooks can sometimes be transferred to children and could inadvertently affect academic performance.

Here are many ways you can help your child perform better on standardized tests – remember, test preparation is a long-term, ongoing activity that can easily be part of everyday life.

- Discuss your child's academic performance with him or her – ask how they believe they are doing in school.
- Encourage your child to ask questions about the things they do not understand – remember, there is no such thing as a stupid question!
- Show interest in your child's school and homework, checking to make sure it is complete. Homework can be an indicator of weak skills and a time to improve them.
- Provide a quiet and comfortable study place for your child.
- Communicate with your child's teacher.
- Encourage your child to make a commitment to do well in school and set goals. Support the commitment.

### **Reading Tips:**

Research supports the fact that those who read at home perform better in school. Reading is a learned behavior – not just a basic skill.

- Build your own library. People love to collect coins, comic books, autographs and baseball cards, so why not start collecting books!
- Subscribe to magazines that reflect your personal interests. It's a great way to read about current events in your favorite subject matter. Later, talk to an expert or adult that's also interested in that area to get their perspective.
- Visit your local library. The best part about a library – you can borrow books for free!

### **General Test-Taking Strategies:**

- Read all directions carefully
- Skim the selection, attempt to identify the main idea
- Skim the questions so you know what to look for when reading the passage.

### **Multiple Choice Questions:**

- Use the process of elimination on multiple choice questions
- Use your confident answers to previous questions to assist you on difficult questions
- If you are stuck on a question, move on and return to it later
- Take your time and answer all questions. A blank response is the same as an incorrect one

### **Constructed Response Questions:**

- Read the question carefully, pay special attention to bulleted reminders.
- Answer all parts of the question
- Include details from the passage
- Make a personal connection by including your own ideas
- Write neatly and clearly. Only use the space provided
- Convince your audience that you comprehend the passage

### **Read Independently:**

- Initial focus should be on identifying the main idea of the passage (what it is about as a whole)
- Look for details that support the main idea
- Pay special attention to the title, introduction, sub-headings and bold print.
- Figure out the meaning of unknown words by breaking them down into the prefix, root, and suffix
- Read the sentences before and after unknown words to find context clues as to their meaning.

### **Read Critically:**

- You may need to apply facts from different sections of the passage to figure an answer.
- Separate FACT from OPINION. Facts can be proven.
- When making a prediction, be sure to apply facts from the passage.
- Read to identify the author's purpose (to inform, persuade or tell a story).

### **Analyzing and Interpreting Literature:**

- Get to know the main character(s)
- Identify the plot. This is usually directly related to the main character's conflict and the resolution.
- Identify the theme of a narrative passage – the message or lesson behind the story.
- Remember that conflict doesn't always mean "fight". It can refer to decisions that need to be made.
- Identify the setting. Compare it to your prior knowledge (experience, literature, movies, etc.).
- Look for transition words to identify the sequence of events (first, next, then, last).
- Beware of flashbacks where an author jumps back to earlier events of a story.
- Look for the following techniques that authors use to make their story more interesting.
- Figurative language (such as a simile – "like or as", or metaphor – "is")
- Symbolism (one thing represents another) and Personification (objects have human characteristics)
- Foreshadowing (prepares you for something that will happen in the future)
- Irony (author says one thing but means another)

### **Math Tips:**

- Practice mental math. Get in the habit of asking yourself questions that allow you to compute the approximate answer in your head by using rounded numbers.
- Review basic math formulas and geometric shapes. Understand when and how to apply formulas. Find and identify geometric shapes in objects around you.
- Keep in mind that there is often more than one approach to solving a math problem.
- Pay attention to words in the questions that appear in boldface type or all capitals, such as **Explain** or **Write**.
- Practice using a calculator for your math work and for everyday problems.
- Get in the habit of working through problems one step at a time and making sure you can explain each step.
- After completing each question, reread your answer to be sure it makes sense. Estimate to make sure your answer is in the right ballpark. Check your work by rereading the problem and putting in the answer you found.

### **Test Preparation:**

- Cramming the night before the test is not an effective way to study – studying for tests should be done days, or even weeks, in advance. You should simply review test materials the evening before the test. Do all you can to relax and eat a healthy dinner the night before the test as well. Start the test day off with a nutritious breakfast. Those who are tired are less able to cope with the strain of a test and may perform poorly.

- Relieve your test-taking anxiety by presenting a positive outlook. You will sense your optimism and have increased confidence in yourself. Do not put added pressure on your yourself by placing too much emphasis on test scores because you might become anxious when taking the test – increasing the chances for mistakes