



PRACTICAL PARENTING PARTNERSHIPS  
*Working Together for Our Children*

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## **PREPARING STUDENTS FOR STANDARDIZED TESTS**

by Shelly Lock, Program Development Coordinator

The No Child Left Behind Act federally mandates and regulates state testing for elementary and middle school students. Districts utilize these test scores in a variety of ways so proper preparation for the tests is important. These tests provide a yardstick for educators to evaluate student, program, and school-performance across state standards. Missouri has developed its own standardized test, Grade Level Assessment (MAP). This achievement tests measure subject-specific knowledge and skills. These tests can provide insight into student progress and identify areas for improvement. The tests can help schools and districts decide where they need to focus more attention. Standardized test results guide decision related to Title I services offered, student selection into special services and gifted programs, class placement, grade promotion, Missouri Reading and Retention qualifying students, and classroom instruction.

Teachers should remember that the standardized test results are only one reflection of student performance. Alternate assessment strategies should be used in conjunction with the standardized test results when planning and reporting. Teacher observation, anecdotal records, portfolios of student work, classroom tests, homework, participation and more can all be valuable assessment tools. Multiple criteria should be used for most assessment purposes.

Students are best prepared for the standardized tests through good instruction throughout the school year and strong parent involvement in the child's education. When teachers deliver meaningful lessons tied to state standards and share with parents how they can support the learning of those lessons at home, students are being prepared for the spring test. We know that the most successful test-takers tend to be students with good attendance, good homework habits, and study habits. Remind parents that their daily assistance with homework and attitude toward school have a big impact on their child's performance.

Teachers can also share tips with families to ensure that students come to school test week with optimized brain power. The students who struggle the most on testing days are the ones who didn't have [enough sleep](#) or a [good breakfast](#) the day of the test. Being prepared also leads to greater success. Teachers and parents can work together to make sure that students have every tool they need, such as pencils, eraser, paper, and a calculator. Teachers should send home information about the test schedule, preparation for the test and supplies needed. Good communication between school and home can ease anxiety about test week. Teachers might share the following with parents prior to testing:

- What is the name of the test and what will it measure?
- What's the format of the test (multiple choice, essay, short answer, etc.)?
- How will the class prepare for the test in school?
- How is it scored? Will students be penalized for incorrect answers or should they guess randomly when they don't know a question?
- When will parents receive the results?
- What are the test's implications? Will it affect your child, school, or both?

Schools might also consider hosting a MAP/Standardized Test Family Night. This night could include information about the upcoming test as well as stations with activities that tie to state standards and test objectives. These activities can model for parents ways they can incorporate learning opportunities into the home that support the standards being taught in school. PPP offers an on-site MAP Family Night. Contact us if you are interested in this interactive and informative family night.

## PPP CENTER UPDATE

by Janet Shepard, Director

At long last PPP is back in office space! We moved with Missouri Kids First into a suite of offices in Jefferson City. The new address is 520 Dix Rd, Suite C, Jefferson City Mo 65109. We now have just one telephone number and it is 573-761-7770. This has been our main number for some time. If you still have direct line numbers for Shelly or Janet in your records, please delete them. The fax number is 573-632-4601. Anytime you are in Jefferson City, feel free to stop by and see us in our new location.

Many of you are getting ready for Grade Level Assessment. Our [Parent's Guide to Grade Level Assessment](#) is available for downloading in English or Spanish from our website. Many schools place a link on the front page of the district website to this booklet. If you haven't already done so, you may wish to ask your webmaster to do this. We also have just reprinted the English version and have them available at our printing cost of \$1.30 per copy plus shipping. [Orders](#) may be faxed with an accompanying purchase order or you may order by phone with a credit card. We can now accept Visa, Mastercard and Discover. Credit card orders must be placed by phone by providing the credit card number and expiration date. We will let you know just as soon as we can accept credit card purchases on-line once again.

Applications are currently being accepted for the [Second Annual Founder's Award](#) and for the [Pearl Awards](#). See last month's center update for details. We have extended the application deadline to March 31.

We are working with our partners, [Missouri Kids First](#) to promote Child Abuse Prevention month throughout the month of April and especially on Go Blue Day, April 16. T-shirts with this year's theme, *Inspire Change* are still available. Ellington and Maryville School districts have placed orders for t-shirts. Pinwheels are being sold for \$20 each to be displayed in a pinwheel garden on the capitol lawn April 15 and 16. Participating in one or both of these events is a great way to show kids you care about their safety.

Are you looking for university credit hours this summer? Remember, PPP has a credit offering attached to all of their trainings and to some staff development. We would be happy to coordinate with you to offer something in your district. Advantages include the opportunity to:

- study parent involvement with your colleagues
- receive credit without traveling or tying up the whole summer
- move up on the salary schedule
- earn credit at a greatly reduced price
- choose credit from either Northwest Missouri State University or Southeast Missouri State University
- help design the course to meet your needs

## GRANTS

by Janet Shepard, Director

Funding grant proposals based on the results of on-line voting through websites and social networking sites seems to be increasing in popularity. Pepsi is the latest company I have noticed to offer funding to worthwhile projects in this manner. You will find details at [www.refresheverything.com](http://www.refresheverything.com). We may be asking you to vote for PPP's idea. Let us know if you have a parent involvement idea approved and we will help you get votes!

In addition to grants, there are sometimes cash awards to outstanding individuals who make significant contributions in their field. McGraw Hill is currently accepting nominations for such an award. You are invited to nominate someone for the 2010 Harold W. McGraw, Jr. Prize in Education. The application process consists of a one-time entry submission that will be reviewed and judged by the [McGraw Prize Board of Judges](#). Three winners will be selected. The deadline is March 19, 2010.

There are several good resources that we check for grant writing information. One of those comes from Connect for Kids. You may wish to take a look at their grant toolkit <http://www.connectforkids.org/fundingkit10>

## SITE NEWS

By Shelly Lock, Program Development Coordinator

Ritenour School District hosted a very successful ELL Family Night in February, 2010. The night entailed two hours of fun and information for adults and children. An information fair including school and community resources to assist limited English speaking families was set up in the cafeteria of the middle school. Simultaneously, the school gym held fun for all with a PPP Reading Carnival and Writing Station. Involvement of teachers, community members and other volunteers led to a wonderful event attended by about 300 participants.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- **March** [National Nutrition Month](#) sponsored by the American Dietetic Association
- March 8-12 [School Breakfast Week](#)
- **April** Child Abuse Prevention Month sponsored by [Prevent Child Abuse America](#) and [Missouri KidsFirst](#)
- Friday, April 16 [Go Blue Day](#)

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## UNDERSTANDING STANDARDIZED TESTS

by Shelly Lock, Program Development Coordinator

Spring time brings standardized testing in schools. Understanding what these tests encompass and what they are used for can help parents guide their children for greater test success. These tests are typically created by commercial test publishing companies. They are designed to give a uniform measure of students' performance. Large numbers of students throughout the state or country take the same test, therefore, the tests give educators a common standard of measure. Missouri uses the MAP test across the state, but some school districts give additional national standardized tests.

Educators use these standardized tests to tell how well school programs are succeeding by building, grade level, subject area and specific student groups. The results also give feedback on individual student skills and abilities. Standardized tests can help teachers and administrators make decisions regarding the instructional program. They help schools measure how students in a given class, school, or school system perform in relation to other students who take the same test. Using the results from these tests, teachers and administrators can evaluate a school program or a particular student. Educators most commonly use achievement tests to:

- Evaluate school programs;
- Report on students' progress;
- Diagnose students' strengths and weaknesses;
- Select students for special programs;
- Place students in special groups; and
- Certify student achievement for high school diplomas or to promote students from grade to grade.

Standardized tests are only one type of assessment used in school and give teachers only part of the picture of your child's strengths and weaknesses. Teachers combine the results of many methods to gain insights into the skills, abilities, and knowledge of your child, including observing students in the classroom, evaluating their day-to-day classwork, grading their homework assignments, conferencing with their parents, and keeping portfolios to track how students change or improve throughout the year.

Parents can help their child do their best on standardized tests. Here are a few suggestions for parents to help their children do well on tests:

- Talk to your child's teacher on an ongoing basis to monitor your child's progress and find out what activities you can do at home to help your child.
- Make sure your child does his or her homework.
- Make sure your child is well-rested and eats a well rounded diet.
- Have a variety of books and magazines at home to encourage your child's curiosity.
- Don't be overly anxious about test scores, but encourage your child to take tests seriously.
- Don't judge your child on the basis of a simple test score.
- Make sure your child gets proper sleep and nutrition during test week (as should be done all school year).

When parents feel knowledgeable and comfortable with what standardized testing is about, students feel less anxious as well. Discuss at home the importance of your child doing his or best but that it is nothing to be nervous about.