

Practical Parenting Partnerships

A Parent's Guide To The



MAP Grade-Level Assessment (Grades 3-8)

www.pppctr.org

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A Parent's Guide to the MAP Grade-Level Assessment

What you and your children should know about Missouri assessments

Foreword

As parents, we want our children to be successful. In sports, the number of points scored, strikes thrown, or yards gained measures success. In school, student success is measured in other ways such as learning multiplication facts, completing homework or grades earned on report cards and tests.

Likewise, Missouri has programs in place to measure a child's performance or success in school. The Missouri Assessment Program, or MAP, was created in response to Missouri's Outstanding Schools Act of 1993. When the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) was passed into law, Missouri's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) began revisions of the MAP to comply. These two legislations are similar in that they were both designed to help raise student performance. No Child Left Behind requires that states use federal funds to improve education.

The MAP Grade-Level assessments are a series of tests that measure whether students in Missouri are meeting Grade Level Expectations developed using the Show-Me Standards. It's a way of finding out if kids are learning what they need to learn.

This booklet gives information about the Missouri Assessment Program's Grade-Level assessments, how to help reduce test anxiety and how you can help your child succeed on tests.

For additional help in understanding the booklet, you will find the Assessment Glossary at the following link: <http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/assess/Glossary%20of%20Terms.htm>.



Why do our Missouri students take the MAP Grade Level assessments?

Missouri isn't the only state setting standards and measuring them with achievement tests. Because of NCLB, all 50 states, as well as the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, were required to develop standards and assessments and begin implementing them by the 2005-06 school year.

Setting high standards for all students is intended to help our children to grow into responsible and confident individuals and community members who can function to the best of their abilities. Assessments like the MAP Grade-Level tests are needed to be sure our students are learning, and that schools are held accountable for providing our children with the best education possible. The assessments are similar to taking a driving test. We want competent and safe drivers on the road, so we give potential drivers a test to demonstrate their knowledge and driving ability before receiving a license.

What are Show-Me Standards?

In 1993, the Outstanding Schools Act was passed in Missouri. This law called for the development of a new assessment system for Missouri's public schools. The Show-Me Standards are part of that legislation. There are 40 "content" and 33 "process" standards. They are guides for what students should *know* and be able to *do*. In the medical field, doctors have standards for what they should know and be able to do. You expect an auto mechanic to meet certain standards for repairing or servicing your car. The Show-Me Standards are similar in that they are the educational standards in Missouri. The Show-Me Standards can be found at <http://dese.mo.gov/standards/index.html>.

What are Grade Level Expectations?

Grade-Level Expectations, or GLEs for short, were created using the Show-Me Standards for each subject area. The GLEs are more detailed than the Show-Me Standards and give specific expectations which will be assessed on the MAP Grade-Level assessments. This way, teachers know what needs to be taught, and students and their parents know what students are expected to learn. There are GLEs for Communication Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies, Fine Arts and Health/PE. If you'd like to see the GLEs, go to <http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/curriculum/GLE/>. To learn more about Grade Level Expectations, contact the PPP Center for a copy of *A Parent's Guide to the Grade Level Expectations* or you may download a copy from their website, www.pppctr.org. You might also ask your child's school for copies of the GLEs.

What kinds of questions can my child expect to see on the MAP Grade-Level assessments?

The MAP Grade-Level assessments were created not only to assess knowledge, but also to measure how well a student can apply that knowledge. The Grade-Level assessments use three different types of questions or items. In addition to selected-response (SR), or multiple-choice questions, the exams include short-answer, or constructed-response (CR) questions. With these items, students can construct or supply an answer rather than choosing from a list of choices. The third type of question is called a performance event (PE). Remember the driver's test? The "real" driving part of the test is very similar to performance events on the MAP Grade-Level assessments.

What is a Performance Event?

A performance event is just one more way that students can show what they know and apply it to real world situations--the *doing* part. A performance event is similar to the work of an auto mechanic. You trust that they know details about the engine, but you also expect them to apply their knowledge of the engine to *do* something about fixing it. The same concept applies to the performance events. For example, on a Communication Arts test, students demonstrate their knowledge by writing an essay. On the Mathematics and Science tests, students solve multiple-step items similar to situations they may encounter in everyday life. You can find examples of performance events, selected-response and constructed response questions at http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/assess/Released_Items/riarchiveindex.html. Click on Released Items for examples in Communication Arts, Math, Science and Social Studies. These are questions that were formerly a part of actual Missouri assessments or field test items, but are no longer used. For more sample practice items/test questions in Communication Arts and Mathematics, go to http://www.dese.mo.gov/divimprove/assess/Practice_Tests/index.html. These can give you and your child's teachers ideas on what questions to ask and how best to ask them.

What does Communication Arts involve?

Reading, Writing, Grammar, and Spelling are all part of Communication Arts. Many people still call this subject Language Arts or English.

Are there other subjects assessed besides Communication Arts, Math and Science?

Math, Communication Arts and Science are all currently required by the federal law, No Child Left Behind. A variety of courses have been included in MAP assessments over the years, including Social Studies, Health/Physical Education and Fine Arts. Because of legislative budget cuts those areas are no longer assessed in grades three through eight.

Why is funding important for the MAP Grade-Level assessments?

Creating and scoring a large-scale assessment is very costly. Many stages are involved in the development process and can take several months or even years. After questions are created, they are reviewed multiple times by both the testing company and staff at the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to ensure the quality and appropriateness for the test. Statistical experts also compile data about the performance of each item to ensure a fair and appropriate test is administered to the students.

How are the tests scored?

CTB/McGraw Hill works with Missouri educators in designing and grading the tests. Multiple-choice questions are scored by machine. Constructed response and performance event questions on the tests must be scored by hand. In 2008, hundreds of Missouri educators were trained, qualified and helped score the tests at 12 scoring sites across the state.

Who gives the tests?

Normally your child’s classroom teacher, the school counselor or the district/school test coordinator will administer the tests.

When are the tests given?

Grade-Level testing is scheduled in the spring, usually during the month of April. That way teachers and students get most of the school year to prepare. The chart below indicates the testing windows for the next several years.

MAP Grade-Level Assessment Testing Windows	
2009	March 30 – April 24
2010	March 29 – April 23
2011	March 28 – April 22
2012	April 2 – April 27
2013	April 1 – April 26

How long do these tests take?

The time needed depends on the student. The tests are given in two or three different sessions with an estimated time allowance. Parts of each test are strictly timed. Some students finish very quickly, while others use all of the time allotted. If a student is making progress when the suggested time is up, they should be allowed to finish, except on portions with a set time limit.

Will my children take these tests in every grade?

In Mathematics, Communication Arts and Science, all public and charter schools in Missouri are required to give the MAP Grade-Level assessment. The first “official” tests the students take are Communication Arts and Mathematics in third grade. These assess information that the students have been learning since entering kindergarten. As outlined in the NCLB legislation, every public school and charter school student in Missouri is tested in Math and Communication Arts in grades 3-8. Science is tested in grades five and eight.

Will these students be tested only on information learned in the grade they are in?

While the first state-required Communication Arts and Math tests are taken in third grade, the third grade teacher is not responsible for teaching the students everything they need to know for the tests. Information is learned gradually from parents and previous class work including kindergarten through second grade.

The chart below will help explain the testing schedule more clearly.

GRADE-LEVEL TEST SCHEDULE

Subject Area	Grades
Communication Arts	3-8 Performance Events are included in grades 3 and 7
Mathematics	3-8 Performance Events are included in grades 4 and 8
Science	5 and 8 Performance Events are included in both 5 and 8

*MA=Math, CA=Communication Arts, SC=Science

May I see my child’s results, and what will these results look like?

Yes, the results from the spring MAP Grade-Level assessment are available the following fall. Parents are encouraged to make a visit to the school counselor or your child’s teachers for more information, especially if you haven’t received information about your child’s results by mid-fall. Fall parent-teacher conferences would be a perfect time to ask questions about your child’s achievement test results.

An Individual Student Report will be sent to you by the school where your child tested. That information is private. Only you and your child's school receive individual student reports. On an individual student report, you'll see which achievement level your child's score falls in.

If you look at page 13 of the *Missouri Assessment Program Guide to Interpreting Results (GIR) Revised 2008*, <http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/assess/documents/girmanual.pdf>, you'll find a sample *Student Report*. The test results for your child will be listed in a colorful report similar to this. The results give the parent valuable information. Be sure to praise your child's efforts and recognize the child's positive accomplishments.

Will you explain the *Student Report*?

First, you'll notice that the student report (see link above) is divided into sections labeled A through E in the GIR 2008. Your student's report will look very similar to this example, although on the true report the sections are not lettered. Section A shows your child's personal information and verifies that the report you're looking at is only for that student. Section B gives your child's scale score. The scale score combines the results from all sessions of the assessment. Section C (in the center of the page) shows the different achievement levels, with a range of scores for each level and displays an arrow identifying your child's level. The results are reported according to four achievement levels:

Advanced (highest level): Students demonstrate in-depth understanding of all concepts and apply that knowledge in complex ways.

Proficient: Students demonstrate the knowledge and skills called for by the Show-Me Standards. Missouri has set the Proficient or Advanced as the desired achievement goal for all students.

Basic: Students understand many key concepts, although their application of that knowledge is limited. Students are beginning to use their knowledge of simple concepts to solve basic problems, but they still make many errors.

Below Basic (lowest level): Students are substantially behind in terms of meeting the Show-Me Standards. They demonstrate a minimal understanding of fundamental concepts and little ability to apply that knowledge.

Understanding and being able to find the scale score and score range will tell you where the student scored in that category. If your child's Communication Arts scale score was 639, as on the sample, he would fall into the Basic Level, which has a score range is 639-695. It's important to note here that the score ranges change from grade to grade and subject to subject. Pay close attention to these score ranges, as the same score in a different subject may fall into a different achievement level.

For students to receive an achievement level score, they must take all sessions of the test.

What about the overview of performance section?

Section D, along with the student's scale score and state mean score (which is the average score of the students taking the assessment in Missouri), includes the *TerraNova* National Percentile score. *TerraNova* questions are the portion of the assessment that is administered to students across the nation – not just Missouri. You can use this percentile to see how your child's score compares to scores of children across the nation. With a percentile, students are compared or ranked with other students who took the same test. For instance, if my daughter's national percentile score is a 64, she scored better than 64 percent of the students nationwide. An average score is the 50th percentile.

What is the Lexile Measure?

The Lexile Measure applies only to Communication Arts assessments and is taken from *TerraNova* Reading items only. *The Lexile Framework for Reading* is a scale that matches reader ability with appropriate reading materials. The score is the point on the scale where a reader can be expected to comfortably comprehend or understand 75% from a list of recommended reading materials and still be challenged. A Lexile Score can range from 200 for easy to read text to 1700 for advanced text. To learn more about Lexile Scores go to <http://www.lexile.com> and see how they apply to your child.

What information is found in the final section of the student report?

Section E helps you and your child's teachers to identify important skills on which to work. These include ideas to help boost or enrich your child's performance. For example, if your 16 year-old failed the driver's test because they missed a stop sign, you might work with them on being more aware of their surroundings for the next exam (and the safety of other drivers).

How is the MAP Grade Level assessment data used?

MAP Grade Level assessment data is used to help students become more successful. Several groups use the results. These results play a major role in making the state, the schools and the teachers accountable for providing the best education possible. The information below helps identify who receives this information and provides a short description of how the reports are used.

State officials use this information to identify schools in need of improvement or who are top performers. This can help them to provide resources to schools that need help, or to study high performing schools in hopes of passing along "best practices." They can also compare our Missouri results with the results of schools in other states to see how we measure up nationally.

School districts can use the results to set goals or create plans to improve in areas where expectations are not met. Districts can also compare their results to those of nearby districts and to the state of Missouri as a whole. Test results are used to compare data from previous years as well.

Teachers can identify any improvement areas in content or process standards. For example, the data might show that most fifth graders could name the body systems, but a low percentage of the same students could identify the function of each system. The teacher could use the information gained to devote more time to teaching the functions of each body system. A teacher might also use the information to address needs of individual students. Based on the results, certain teachers can also receive additional training to become more effective.

Parents can not only see how well children performed, but can also see how well the schools are teaching children. Parents can work with the community to support schools when they need help. The reports also give us ideas to help our children achieve greater academic success.

Children also benefit from the test results when the state, school district, teachers and parents work together to make improvements for our students. Individual results can help identify kids who need extra help or enrichment.

The news media uses Grade-Level assessment data to report information to the public. It's important to remember that children's individual test results are private. Only the parent and the child's school receive those results. The media reports on the state, district or school as a whole group.

How can I find out my child's school results?

You can check out district and statewide MAP Grade-Level assessment results at <http://dese.mo.gov/schooldata/> , and choose your district or charter school from the alphabetical list. Look for "School District Report Card" in the upper right hand corner of the screen. The reports found here will show information on how your child's school and district performed. Many school district websites will also show these results.

On the DESE School Data site, you'll find out how each grade level performed as a whole group in each subject. You'll also see the data broken down into groups, such as low income students, those receiving Title I services, African-American, Hispanic and many others.



Can the school district pass or fail my child based on his Grade-Level assessment scores?

No. School officials may use the results as a guide to best meet the educational needs of your child, but the *Student Report* is only one factor of many to be considered in a child's education. For example, the student's grades, teacher and/or parent recommendations and further testing along with MAP Grade-Level assessment scores may help determine placement in special classes such as Gifted Education, Title I, Special Education or whether to pass or retain a student.

It's important to remember that the MAP Grade-Level assessments are not designed to make sweeping judgments about skills or ability. They do measure content (*knowing*) and performance (*doing*) standards, but they won't tell you if your child is going to be the next Einstein. If the results are not what you expected, try to think of it this way. One test cannot possibly show everything your child can or cannot do.

How can I work with my child's teachers to help prepare for the Grade Level MAP Tests?

Your willingness to work with the school is an important step. Parents and teachers can collaborate on your child's strengths and concerns that are noticed at home and in the classroom. Together, you can identify your child's needs.

You and your child's teachers can access the DESE website at http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/assess/Released_Items/riarchiveindex.html and click on released items for examples of constructed response and performance event items for Communication Arts, Math and Science. These are questions that were once a part of actual MAP Grade-Level assessments or field test items, but are no longer used. For more sample practice items/tests in Communication Arts and Mathematics, go to http://www.dese.mo.gov/divimprove/assess/Practice_Tests/index.html. These can give you and your child's teachers ideas on what questions to ask and how best to ask them. Many schools use these released items to help students prepare for the Grade-Level assessments.

It would also be helpful to study the NAEP website. This is the National Assessment of Educational Progress. You may know it as The Nation's Report Card. The questions on the NAEP are very similar to the MAP Grade-Level assessment, so the sample questions found on the website, <http://www.nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/itmrls/> can help you and your children further prepare for Missouri's Grade-Level assessment. This site will also give you a great explanation of the NAEP tests should you want to know more. The NAEP measures and reports on a regular basis what students in America know and can do in core subjects like Reading, Mathematics, Writing, and Science, Civics, Economics, Geography, and U.S. History.

Many schools host a MAP Grade-Level assessment information night or achievement testing night to share information with parents and their children about achievement tests. Try to attend if your child's school offers a similar activity.

What if I have more questions about the Missouri Assessment Program's Grade Level Tests?

You have many options. Your child's teacher or school counselor can help. You can use the DESE website. Go to <http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/assess> to explore the website, or read the full *Missouri Assessment Program Guide to Interpreting Results (GIR) Revised 2008*. You can also get contact information from the website if you'd like to speak to someone in the Assessment Section of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.



Accommodations for Students With Disabilities

My child has a disability. Will she still have to take the MAP Grade-Level assessment?

Yes. Children with disabilities, just like other children in public or charter schools, are required by a number of state and federal laws and regulations to show that they can put knowledge into practice.

Can my child have extra help if her disability keeps her from performing her best?

Yes. Many students with disabilities take the MAP Grade-Level assessment at the same time and in the same way as their classmates. Some students with disabilities take the test with the help of certain accommodations. The purpose of an accommodation is to “level the playing field” so that students with disabilities can demonstrate what they know and are able to do. To see the list of accommodations, go to <http://dese.mo.gov/divspeced/Compliance/IEP/Index.html>
Pay special attention to the notes at the bottom of each page, as some accommodations may result in test invalidation.

Who decides if my child takes the MAP Grade-Level assessment with or without accommodations?

Every student receiving special education has an Individualized Education Program, or IEP. The IEP is developed by a team. You are a member of this team as a parent or legal guardian of your child. Decisions about accommodations that are needed for the MAP and classroom instruction are made by this team. Generally, accommodations should not be used for the first time on the MAP tests. They should already be in use during classroom instruction or tests.

What are some accommodations that can be provided on the MAP?

Accommodations are commonly categorized in four ways: administration, timing, response, and setting. For a student with limited vision, Large Print and Braille editions of the MAP test are available. This is an example of an accommodation for a physical disability. A student with a learning disability in reading who is taking the mathematics test may need to have the test given individually so that the questions can be read aloud for better understanding. Some students may need additional time to complete the test or additional breaks during the test.

Are there any accommodations that would cause the test results to be invalid if they were used?

As you may have seen at the bottom of the chart, reading the Communication Arts test aloud to the student invalidates the results of that test. If the IEP team determines that this accommodation is needed, the team needs to understand that the use of this accommodation *does* invalidate the results. Students identified as blind/visually impaired (who do not read Braille) may use the oral reading accommodation if it is their primary instructional method without invalidating the results.

Paraphrasing test questions will invalidate results for any of the MAP tests. Students will still receive a *Student Report* with an achievement level that reflects their performance with the accommodation that invalidated their test.

What are some reasons why an accommodation should not be used?

Accommodations should NOT:

- Give students with disabilities an unfair advantage.
- Jeopardize test security in any way.
- Be used for the first time on the MAP tests.
- Give clues to the correct answer.

Is there someone I can contact if I have more questions?

Yes. You can start by asking your school counselor, test coordinator, or special services teacher or director. The DESE Division of Special Education at (573) 751-0187 can help to answer your questions. You can also visit their website <http://www.dese.mo.gov/divspeced/> for more information.



MAP-Alternate

Do all students take the paper and pencil MAP tests?

Most kids, including students receiving special education, will take the regular MAP tests. However, regular paper and pencil tests may not be appropriate for some students with significant cognitive disabilities who are working mostly on essential skills. The term “essential skills” means that the main focus of the student’s education is on daily living skills. These are students with whom educational priorities address essential skills needed in adult daily living, and who, after high school, will likely require supported or assisted living. The MAP-Alternate (MAP-A) was developed for these students.

What is the MAP-A?

MAP-A is completely different from the paper and pencil tests usually given for the MAP and it’s required by federal law. The MAP-A is a portfolio-based assessment that measures student performance based on alternate achievement standards. The MAP-A is aligned with Missouri’s Show-Me Standards, Grade Level Expectations (GLEs) and Alternate Grade Level Expectations (AGLEs) in communication arts, mathematics and science. The newest version of the MAP-A assesses information on a student’s knowledge and skills in communication arts, math and science. The MAP-A is a much more individualized assessment.

Who makes the decision on whether a child takes the MAP-A or the regular MAP tests?

The child’s IEP team, including you as the child’s parent/legal guardian, makes that decision with input from other instructional staff such as therapists and paraprofessionals.

Each student being considered for the MAP-A must meet all five of the below criteria, as outlined by DESE.

- 1) The student has a demonstrated significant cognitive disability and adaptive behavioral skills. Therefore, the student has difficulty learning new skills, and the skills acquired must be taught in very small steps.
- 2) The student does not keep pace with peers, even with the majority of students requiring special education, with respect to the total number of skills gained.
- 3) The student’s educational program centers on the application of essential skills related to the Missouri Show-Me Standards.
- 4) The IEP team, as documented in the IEP, does not recommend participation in the MAP subject area assessments or taking the MAP with accommodations.
- 5) The student’s inability to participate in the MAP subject area assessments is *not* primarily the result of excessive absences; visual or auditory disabilities; or social, cultural, language or economic differences.

When do students take the MAP-A?

MAP-A is required in certain years, much like the subjects tested on the paper and pencil MAP tests. MAP-A is required for grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8. The math assessment is required in grade 10 and communication arts and science is required in grade 11.

Is the MAP-A scored?

Yes. The child's teacher is required to observe and assess a student's performance and collect evidence in communication arts, math and science during two specific collection periods. Your child's performance is assessed on Alternate Grade-Level Expectations (Alternate-GLEs). You can access the Alternate-GLEs by going to the following link:

<http://www.dese.mo.gov/divimprove/assess/mapa.html>. The teacher is then responsible for submitting the MAP-A to the Assessment Resource Center for scoring. The scored assessments will result in score reports and student achievement levels consistent with regular MAP results.

Where can I find more information about the MAP-A?

Contact your school's special education director or district test coordinator, DESE's Assessment Section at (573) 751-3545, or the Division of Special Education at (573) 751-0187. You can also find more information by going to the DESE MAP-A website

<http://www.dese.mo.gov/divimprove/assess/mapa.html>.



Taming Test Anxiety

What would you say about students who have stomach cramps, headaches, need to use the bathroom a lot, have trouble breathing, shaky or sweaty hands, and can't remember things they know?

Perhaps those students should stay home in bed! Are they sick?

They may not be sick after all. They may be suffering from test anxiety. Whether we like it or not, testing is a part of life. More and more kids are feeling pressure to do well, not just on standardized achievement tests, but also in everyday life. We can help our children learn to stay calm and beat test stress.

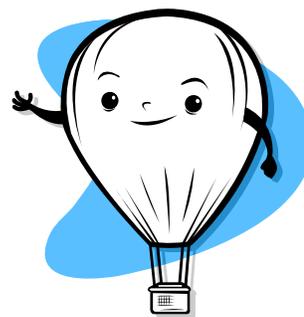
Lots of people are nervous about taking tests. Why do we get so worked up?

Well, a little stress is okay - everyone feels stress at one time or another. Let's face it; tests can cause A LOT of stress. Here are some reasons kids tense up when they hear the "T" word:

- Many children feel pressure from adults to perform well. They want to please their parents and teachers and worry about disappointing them.
- Students feel nervous when their familiar classroom settings are changed, like when the volume changes from the "normal" classroom sounds to very quiet, or if the room has been rearranged for testing.
- Some students get upset when they are tested in unfamiliar surroundings or with someone they don't know well.
- Some kids are worried about how their test results might affect their school.
- Many students put lots of pressure on themselves to succeed. This pressure can lead to anxiety and undue stress.

That's so much pressure! How can I help?

First and foremost, keep the lines of communication open with your child and the school. Find out what you can do at home to support your child. Second, always encourage a good night's sleep and a healthy breakfast on the day of the test. Studies show that a well-rested, well-nourished child learns better. Next, try to be encouraging and positive. Show your child that you are confident in their abilities. Find a healthy balance in emphasizing that you want them to do their best, but no matter what, you'll be proud of the effort they made. Make it clear that no matter what the results are, you'll love them just the same.



It also helps to be aware of your own stress level. Children are indirectly affected by the stress levels of their caregivers. Parents and teachers alike should remember that children can sense your attitudes toward the testing process and are likely to copy your behaviors. That's why it's so important that you STAY POSITIVE!

Is there anything else I can do?

Try to make studying fun, or at least bearable, for your child. Take breaks when needed, and try to squeeze in activities that your child enjoys, like figuring a major league baseball player's batting average when studying averages. It's also a great idea to get some exercise during breaks. Just like eating and sleeping well, studies show that physical activity stimulates the brain for learning to take place. Allow your child time to be a child – to play, to explore, and to daydream. Encourage laughter!

Avoid talking about the test more than necessary in front of your child. Remember, tests aren't everything. You can share stories with your child about challenges you've faced in the past. Teach your child to have a positive attitude, and let them know that it's okay to make mistakes. You can also help by teaching them some stress-relieving tips.

Any suggestions?

How about counting to ten slowly, taking deep breaths, tensing and relaxing tight muscles, practicing positive "self-talk" or squeezing a stress ball? Some adults take a short walk, stand and stretch or close their eyes and imagine being in their favorite place. This works for kids, too. Help your child explore healthy choices for coping with stress. Children are individuals and will develop their own coping mechanisms.

These sound like good ideas to beat stress every day. Any other ideas?

Many studies suggest that eating different foods can contribute to "stressed out" feelings like lack of energy or excitability. If you know your day or week will be especially stressful, it's a good idea to avoid these possible stress-producing sources: caffeine, processed sugar, saturated fats and sodium.

Here are some other techniques for reducing stress in children (taken from PPP Wellness Notebook 3-Handling Personal Stress and Home Visit Notebook 19-Stress):

- Recognize how your child responds to stress.
- Be in touch with your child's world; know what is happening in his life and what might be producing stress.
- Examine ways to reduce overcrowded schedules and cut back on activities
- Maintain a sense of structure and routine at home
- Provide consistent boundaries and guidelines
- Reduce excessive competition and avoid comparison to other siblings or classmates

Successful Test Taking Tips

How else can I help my child succeed on tests?

There are many ways to help. Again, always communicate with your child's school and teachers.

- It's very important that your child **attend school regularly**. Missing even one day could mean missing out on skills and knowledge that will last a lifetime.
- **Practice reading every day**. You can read to your children, or have them read to you, as often as possible. Books, newspapers, magazines, recipes, credits on the television screen or the back of a cereal box are all handy tools for reading. The only way to practice reading is by reading!
- Point out natural ways to **use math in daily life** – such as in baking or shopping for groceries.
- Help your child **get organized** and stay organized! Point out a comfortable time and place to do homework, and encourage your child to stick with a schedule.

Help your child understand different types of questions. Find the sample questions at http://www.dese.mo.gov/divimprove/assess/Practice_Tests/index.html or released items at http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/assess/Released_Items/riarchiveindex.html. Use them to help your child identify different kinds of questions, such as:

- Which item does not belong?
- Which statement is NOT true?
- Describe the best route to take to school. Explain why you chose that route.
- What was the problem in this passage and how was the problem resolved?

Learning to restate questions can help your child being to develop analytical skills. This simple skill helps the child to show understanding of what is asked. For example, if you asked, "What is your name?" The child's answer should be, "My name is Pam." When asked, "How old are you?" a student should respond with, "I am ten years old," rather than a one-word answer like, "Ten."

When faced with test questions like, "Compare and contrast apples and oranges," or "How are apples and oranges alike, and how are they different?" students have a better chance of earning all points possible by identifying each. "Apples and oranges are alike because both are fruits that grow on trees. They are different because apples come in many different colors, and oranges are the color orange. Oranges are different because they have a thicker peeling than apples and the pieces come in segments." This identifying answer is much different than saying, "One is orange and the other isn't. They are fruits."

Use vocabulary words that your child is likely to see on a test so she is familiar with and understands them. Words like describe, explain, interpret, define, details, examples, compare, and contrast are often seen on tests.

Discuss the process of elimination. If they don't know the correct answer, have them work in reverse, mentally removing answers that they know do not belong. Try to choose the best answer from those remaining.

How can my child help herself in preparing for tests?

You and your child's teachers should encourage her to approach the test with a positive attitude and to keep the following tips in mind.

- Carefully listen to or read directions. It's okay to ask questions if you don't understand the directions.
- Read the entire question or problem before trying to answer. Be sure you understand the question, being careful to notice words like "not" or "never" or "all of the above."
- Take notice of special headings or pictures on the page. These may give clues to help answer the questions.
- Go back and check answers if you have time. Even the best test-takers skip questions or make simple mistakes.
- Although it may be tempting, never try to get answers from another student's test. First of all, the test is created for you to show what YOU know. Second, the penalty for cheating can be severe. Finally, the other student's answers may be incorrect.
- Understand that some sections of a test will take longer than others. For example, when you have to read a story and answer questions, there is usually plenty of time allotted. It's okay if you don't remember all the answers; you can look back at the story and skim through it to find the answers you need.
- Wear comfortable clothes.
- Be prepared with extra pencils and erasers, just in case.
- If you don't know an answer to a question, skip it and come back to it later. Don't want to spend too much time on questions you don't know – you can always come back to those later.
- Think positive thoughts!

You can find more tips by doing an Internet search for "Test Taking Tips." There are also many books available on test taking skills. Just remember, as your child's primary caregiver, you can be a great help to her in preparing for tests.

Thank you! You've given me lots to think about. Any last thoughts?

Just remember that communication and a positive attitude are important. If you have questions, don't hesitate to ask school personnel or contact the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.