

Parents and Teachers Partner to Help Children Succeed

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Teachers and parents play a vital role in the educational process. When they partner, students meet with success. When teachers and parents work together, students reap the benefits.

Teachers prepare students in their classrooms through the delivery of a rigorous, state-aligned curriculum, thus challenging students to achieve their fullest potential. Our teachers have been working since the first day of school to help their students achieve their best, while helping to prepare them for their future – both in life and in their education.

At the same time, parents complement what is being accomplished in the classroom by supporting their children at home. Parents are asking their children how their day went at school. Parents are helping their children with homework, as well as attending PTA meetings, parent/teacher conferences, and school activities. This support shows children that their parents are partners in their education.

In Worcester County Public Schools, our school system is blessed with devoted, highly-qualified teachers and devoted, highly-involved parents. This combination is powerful, and our students are the winners; their achievement is among the highest in the state.

In life, tests are a part of our culture, and we are faced with taking many different types of tests. We take a test to get a driver's license, to get into college, and to get a license for a job. In school, students also take many different types of tests – spelling tests, chapter tests, benchmarks, and state assessments. Tests and assessments are a natural outcome of the curriculum being taught. Like tests in life, they measure what has been learned. If children are successful in the classroom, they will most likely be successful on an assessment.

The Maryland State Assessment (MSA), mandated by the federal No Child Left Behind Act, is the natural outcome of the state-aligned curriculum taught at each grade level tested –

from grade 3 through grade 8. The MSA in both reading and mathematics will be administered in April, and our students are ready to show what they have learned. Through multiple choice and written response questions, the MSA assesses the state curriculum that is being taught to all children in Maryland.

The partnership between teachers and parents remains crucial during this part of the educational process. Here are some general testing tips that parents can use to help their children before an assessment:

- Parents can help calm any fears their children may be having by listening to their concerns about testing. Some students may just need to “put a voice” to what they are feeling, and to hear reassurance from their parents that they are ready and prepared for the test. Before an assessment, it is particularly important for parents to remind their children that they have confidence in their abilities.
- Parents can remind their children that getting enough rest is essential to having a sharp mind. Helping to make sure that children get to bed early will also help children to be more self-assured. Without a doubt, sufficient sleep will help students be at their best.
- Especially on test day, parents can help ensure that their children get a good and balanced breakfast. Preparing one of their favorite breakfast meals may help to encourage even the fussiest of eaters! A good breakfast will enable children to have the energy they need to do their best. The brain, as well as the stomach, needs to be well fed.
- When students come home from school after an assessment has been administered, it is helpful for parents to “debrief” their children. Parents will help their children get worries or concerns out in the open by asking them about their testing experience. Parents can ask about the areas in which their children were confident, as well as the areas which posed a challenge.

There are specific strategies which can be applied to the MSA. These strategies can help increase a child’s likelihood for success. Here are specific testing tips that parents can say to their children before an MSA:

- Listen carefully to all the directions. Parents should remind their children to ask the teacher if they do not understand the directions given.
- Read each question, each multiple choice item, and choose the best answer. When your children consider multiple choice items (called “selected response”), remind them to read all the choices before making an answer selection. Review some of the multiple choice work they have brought home from school. Ask them to explain why, on a specific question they had answered correctly, they knew that they had chosen the best answer. Be sure to have them explain why they knew the other multiple choice items were not the best answer. This review activity helps to remind students to read all multiple choice items in order to select the best answer.
- Take the time to think, and avoid guessing. Remind children that if they are not sure of how to answer a question right away, they should relax and give themselves some time to think about it.
- Go back to the reading selection at any time during a session. Talk with your children about the importance of using the text to support the answers they choose.
- When answering a brief constructed response (known as a BCR or an essay-like question that students must answer in eight lines of writing), carefully read the question and underline key words. Ask your children to think about what the question is asking and to make sure they are answering the question that is asked. Help remind your children that they must include information from the text to support the answer they give. In addition, they must explain the text-support that they have chosen. Remind them to reread their answer when they are done to make sure that their answer says what they meant it to say.

Testing is a natural outcome for what is being taught in the classroom. Together, teachers and parents can help make testing a positive experience for students. If you have any questions or concerns prior to an assessment or the MSA, please contact your child’s teacher. If you have any questions about testing requirements or procedures, you may call me at 410-632-5041.