

# OSWEGO NEWS

The Newsletter of the Seventh Grade Team at Lincoln Middle School

## PARENT TIPS: HOW TO HELP YOUR CHILD PREPARE FOR NYS TESTS

Standardized tests currently play a major role in the United States public schools. Your child may take one or more standardized tests during the school year, and your child's teacher may spend class time on test preparation throughout the year. As a parent, there are a number of ways that you can support your child before and after taking a standardized test, as well as a number of ways you can support your child's learning habits on a daily basis that will help her be more prepared when it's time to be tested.

While many parents, educators, school leaders, and policymakers disagree about the kinds of tests administered, how the scores should be used, and how frequently students should be tested, it is important to be supportive of your child's efforts on standardized tests, and to help her do her best. You can also learn more about testing from teachers, parent liaisons, and your local PTA organization to better understand how testing is being carried out at your child's school, and how the results are being used.

Please note that these tips have been adapted from articles published by Scholastic, Inc., the National Parent Teacher Association, and the International Reading Association, and that the sources are indicated after each section of tips.

### **Before the Test - Be prepared**

Many teachers will send information home about testing schedules and class preparation plans.

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- Are there ways that you can help your child prepare for the test? (Narang, 2008).

### **Help Your Child in Areas that are Difficult**

If your child has struggled with a particular area or subject in the past, you may be able to help her overcome some of that difficulty by providing some extra practice. Many workbooks target test preparation by offering practice exercises and questions like the ones students see on the test. Focus your practice on your child's weaknesses rather than her strengths so that she doesn't get bored with the exercises (Narang, 2008).

### **Give Your Child a Chance to Practice**

If your child has trouble taking tests, try practicing test questions and studying new words. Your child's school or the library may have some samples to use. Keep the sessions short, and set small, manageable goals so that the extra practice boosts your child's confidence (Narang, 2008).

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### **UPCOMING EVENTS:**

**January 10**  
First Friday for After-school Program

**January 17**  
Last Day of the 2nd Marking Period

**January 20**  
No School - MLK Jr. Holiday

## MY MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT IS ANXIOUS ABOUT SCHOOL. WHAT CAN I DO?

It's very common for kids to have some degree of anxiety about moving to a new school or transitioning from elementary to middle school or middle to high school. This is especially true for kids who have anxiety issues. Starting middle school can trigger fears of getting lost, being late to class, difficulty managing more complicated schedules and being socially isolated.

The most important thing for you to do is to stay calm and project a sense of confidence in your child's ability to succeed. This doesn't mean to ignore your child's fears. Listen to her concerns and then normalize them as much as you can. You can do this by saying things like:

- "Most kids worry about adjusting to a new school and keeping up with homework."
- "It's OK to feel this way. It may take a little time for you to figure this all out, but I'm confident that you'll do fine."
- "You're right that every year classes get a little harder, but it all evens out because you're a year older."
- "When I was your age, my friends and I were all a little nervous about adjusting to middle school because we didn't know what to expect. But it turned out to be great. I'm sure it will turn out fine for you too."

Projecting an attitude of confidence can be difficult if you're anxious yourself or very worried about your child's ability to cope. If you fit into either of these categories, do your best to avoid directly or indirectly communicating your own anxiety to your child—which could reduce her confidence even further.

The way you model brave behavior and positive coping strategies is an extremely powerful tool for enhancing your child's resilience and confidence. There are several other important ways you can help your child:

**Remind her of past successes.** Try to be as specific as possible when you do this. Help your child see how the strategies she used successfully then could help her now: "Remember your first day of soccer practice last year? You talked to the coach, and he paired you up with Ashley so she could show you the ropes. Once you learned your way around, things were fine."

**Practice deep breathing.** Slow, rhythmic breathing that starts deep in your belly is a great way to calm down. Even just a few breaths like this can be very helpful. This exercise is something the two of you can do together at home. It's also something subtle your daughter can do at school or in other social situations to help her manage her anxiety.

**Focus on logistics.** Go with your child after school to locate her locker, classrooms, bathrooms and other important locations. Draw a map of the school to help her visualize moving between classes. These strategies may help ease her fears of getting lost or being late. (They'll also be very helpful to reuse in late summer before she begins seventh grade.)

The transition from one to multiple teachers is a very common concern. This can be challenging for anxious children or those with organization issues. In these cases, proactive planning can be helpful.

**Establish and maintain a regular routine for your child.** This includes setting a specific time for homework as well as a time for going to bed and waking up. It's important for your child to get a full night's sleep. Make clear that rather than staying up late to try to complete an assignment, your child could ask you to write a note to the teacher asking for more time.

No matter how you choose to reward her, remember to acknowledge the hard work she's putting in to develop coping strategies. This can help motivate her to stick with these strategies or try new ones.

## PREPARING FOR NYS TESTS THIS SPRING

### If You Have Concerns About the Test or Testing Situation, Talk with Your Child's Teacher

Discuss your concerns with the teacher and/or school administrator. If you're not satisfied with the outcome, however, you can reach out to some other organizations that monitor testing, including your local PTA, The National Center for Fair & Open Testing or the ERIC Clearinghouse on Assessment and Evaluation (Narang, 2008).

If you believe that your child's difficulty with standardized tests may be the symptom of a problem such as a language or learning difficulty, speak with your child's teacher to learn if your child qualifies for any assessment accommodations.

### On Test Day Make Sure Your Child Gets a Good Night's Sleep and Eats a Healthy Breakfast

Many teachers report that students who don't do well on tests haven't gotten enough sleep, and haven't eaten breakfast on the morning of the test. Doing both of these things will ensure that your child is working at full capacity (Narang, 2008).

### Make sure your child is prepared

Some schools may supply the tools your child needs for the test, such as pencils, an eraser, paper, and a calculator. Others may require the students to bring those materials themselves. Check with your child's teacher to see if you need to provide your child with any of these materials. Also, check to see whether your child will be able to make up the test if she is sick on test day (Narang, 2008).

Remain positive Staying calm will help your child stay calm. If she gets nervous about the test or is likely to experience anxiety during the test, help her practice some relaxation techniques that she can try once she's taking the test (Narang, 2008).