



## NCLB Fact Sheet #4

# Helping Your Child Prepare for Tests

Let's say your child will be taking the Maine Educational Assessment (MEA) tomorrow, and you want to help your child get ready. Will you:



- a) Tell her that standardized tests are a waste of time.
- b) Tell him to stay up late studying all of his textbooks.
- c) Have her skip breakfast in order to sharpen #2 pencils.
- d) None of the above.

Many parents and teachers have strong opinions about the value of testing students. While the debate continues, children today are becoming part of a tested generation. The testing schedule for the Federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) now requires yearly testing for all children in grades 3 through 8, and again in grade 11. Maine's new diploma system will soon require students to meet Maine's Learning Results standards in order to receive a high school diploma. With the current pressure on students to show what they know, many parents are concerned about their children's ability to perform well on tests. What can parents do to help prepare children for testing?

First, know why the test is being given and what it will cover. Students need to prepare differently for classroom assessments than for standardized tests. If the classroom teacher designs the test, many of the good study habits that parents learned in school will help children today. Planning study time over a longer period, identifying chapters and notes that will be covered, and using index cards for notes are still valuable tools for students to use. Knowing your child's learning style can also be important when helping your child develop successful study habits.

Preparing your child to take standardized tests requires a different approach. The MEA's are designed to measure student knowledge in broad areas, spanning an entire school year. Parents can help children prepare for tests like this by teaching children how to use what they already know. Coach your child on test-taking tricks:

- Read all questions and directions carefully.
- Beware of True and False questions. If any part of the statement is false, the whole thing is false. Pay close attention to words like *always* and *never* that can help decide the answer.
- Multiple-choice questions should be read all the way through before choosing an answer. If you aren't sure of the answer, take a guess, unless your teacher tells you otherwise.
- Always answer the questions you know first when matching. Remember to cross out answers so you don't use them twice.
- Read through questions before you begin reading a passage. Read all questions carefully and look for key words like who, what, when, where, why, and how.

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- Know where to look for answers. Answers about where and when the story takes place are usually found at the beginning. The problem or conflict is often found in the middle. Solutions to the problem are usually found at the end.
  - Practice the format. Sample questions for the MEA in grades 4, 8, and 11 are available online, and can help students and parents know what to expect. Go to [www.maine.gov/education/mea/mearelititems.htm](http://www.maine.gov/education/mea/mearelititems.htm) for some sample questions.
  - Help your child make a plan. What will you do if your pencil breaks? If your calculator doesn't work? If you have to go to the bathroom? You and your child can ask the classroom teacher for solutions.

The most important thing parents can do for their children before any test is to help them relax. The night before a test, clear the calendar. Let meetings, lessons, and practice go for one evening. Plan a relaxing night with a good meal, some quiet “connection” time, and an early bedtime. Begin the morning with a good breakfast, and help your child get to school on time. Ease your child’s worries with reassurance.

For more information on this and other educational topics, contact Maine State PIRC.

### Resources:

ERIC Digest, *Helping Your Child Improve in Test-Taking*,  
[www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/TestTaking/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/TestTaking/index.html)

Fay, Kayla, *ADHD Newsletter* April, May 2004,  
[www.goaskmom.com/GoAskMomNewsletters/May\\_2004\\_newsletter\\_reading.html](http://www.goaskmom.com/GoAskMomNewsletters/May_2004_newsletter_reading.html)



Maine State PIRC  
(Parent Information and Resource Center)  
A Project of Maine Parent Federation  
PO Box 2067, Augusta, ME 04338 \* 1-800-870-7746 \* 207-623-2144  
Website: [www.mpf.org](http://www.mpf.org) \* Email: [parentconnect@mpf.org](mailto:parentconnect@mpf.org)

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