

A Balancing Act

High Stakes



Low Stress

We've always worked hard to support student achievement, and standardized test scores are one measure we look to in gauging performance. In-class assessments are ongoing, and we use these data to determine student needs and inform day-to-day instruction. Yearly standardized tests, taken by students across the state and nation, provide a glimpse into how our students perform against external standards of excellence.

We take standardized testing seriously at Keysor and in Kirkwood, and we hope our kids and parents do as well. We spend considerable time on "test prep," helping students prepare and making sure they feel confident in their test-taking capabilities. Our challenge has been in finding an important balance:

We want Keysor Kids to take tests seriously so they can achieve to their potential, but we don't want students to feel undue stress.

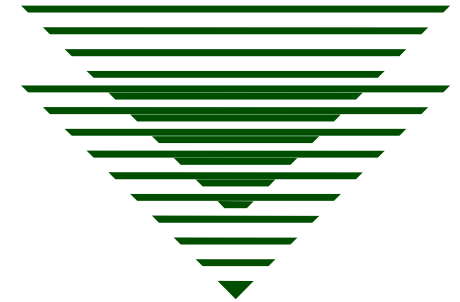
Standardized tests have become more "high stakes" for schools and districts with federal passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (2001). Student scores aren't high stakes for individual kids – scores don't determine what middle school you get in or whether you move onto the next grade, but test results are high stakes for our school and our district. State and federal agencies now use test results to hold schools more accountable. No Child Left Behind means just that – and we have until 2014 to ensure that 100% of our students perform at the "Proficient" level or better on our state exam. Test results serve as a measuring stick when comparing schools and districts to standards – and to each other. The stakes have clearly been raised.

Q & A

No Child Left Behind & Adequate Yearly Progress

- Q How does No Child Left Behind hold schools more accountable?
- A Schools are required to measure student achievement on state exams. Each year the stakes are raised a little higher; we are expected to have more students scoring "Proficient" or better than the year before, so that by 2014 we have 100% of students scoring at this level. NCLB forces us to look not only at our total student population, but also at achievement scores of students in each population subgroup. If any one subgroup doesn't meet expectations, we don't make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Schools that consistently fall short on AYP could face state and/or federal sanctions.
- Q What are these subgroup populations?
- A We have four subgroups at Keysor, and each must meet AYP goals for us to meet expectations for the year:
 - o African-American students
 - o White students
 - o Students with diagnosed disabilities
 - o Students receiving free or reduced lunch
- Q What are Missouri's AYP goals for 2008?
- A 51% of students in each subgroup must score Proficient or Advanced on the MAP communication arts exam. 45% of students in each subgroup must score Proficient or Advanced on the MAP math test. AYP targets for science have not been determined.

STANDARDIZED TESTING



What Keysor Families Need to Know About The Big Show

Keysor Kids in grades 3-5 will take standardized tests this spring, beginning April 8. We call our two-week testing window "The Big Show," because it is Keysor's opportunity to show the world what Keysor Kids have learned and can do.

Our students will take the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) in communication arts, math, and science. These tests assess what students have learned during their entire elementary school careers. Students in primary grades (K-2) are also assessed in April using local assessment measures.

Keysor's Big Show Kick-Off Assembly is Monday, April 7. Testing begins on April 8, and most Keysor Kids will be finished testing by April 20. For additional information, visit our website:

<http://www.kirkwoodschoools.org/keysor/parents/bigshow/>



What does the test look like?

What kinds of questions will your child face?

All students in grades 3-5 will take MAP assessments in math and communication arts (reading, writing, and spelling).

Both the math and communication arts tests include multiple choice and short answer questions.

Students are expected to show their work on the math tests and often explain how they've arrived at their answers. Fourth graders will also see a "performance event" item in math – longer in nature and requiring multiple steps to complete.

The communication arts assessments require students to read stories, poems, and other passages and answer questions about the text. Third graders will also be asked to write a story or narrative from a given writing prompt.

Fifth graders will take a newly added science assessment this year. The test is expected to include short answer and multiple-choice items.

Be Ready to Be Your Best!

- ☑ **Get a good night's sleep.** For most elementary-age kids, 10 hours a night is best.
- ☑ **Eat a healthy breakfast.** Try foods high in protein and avoid those high in fat or sugar.
- ☑ **Be here on time.** Make sure kids get to school on time, ready for a good day.

Important Test-Taking Skills

Skills you can talk about and reinforce at home:

- ✓ Always read and follow directions. You'd be surprised how many kids miss items they know how to do because they don't pay attention to directions. This may be the most important thing for kids to remember when testing.
- ✓ Answer the question that is asked. This is especially important on the math MAP test. Sometimes kids solve the problem, show their work, and get the right answer but don't identify what their answer is.
- ✓ Don't be confused by distracters. On multiple choice questions, the wrong answers (called distracters) are there for a reason. Test-writers know what mistakes kids tend to make, so they add wrong answers to try to confuse students.
- ✓ Take your time. Only some sections of the MAP test are timed and everyone should have plenty of time to finish. Kids should use whatever time is needed to do their best. Never worry about when others are finished – every Keysor Kid works at his or her individual pace.
- ✓ Always check your work. Students should always look over their work and their answers before deciding they are finished. Think about scoring guides (rubrics) and how the test will be scored. On multiple-choice items, kids should make sure their bubbled answers match their real answers.
- ✓ If you have to, make smart guesses. Multiple choice questions have four or five answers from which to choose. If kids don't know an answer, they should eliminate the ones that can't be right and choose the best one left.
- ✓ Stay focused! Take deep breaths, sit up straight, and take advantage of any breaks the teacher may provide.

11 Must-Know Words

Did you know there are eleven words that consistently confuse kids on tests, even when they might otherwise know the answer? We talk about these words at school, but parents can help kids by talking about the words and their definitions. When possible, try using the words in your at-home conversations.

- ⊙ **Infer** - Read between the lines, tell what it doesn't say
- ⊙ **Compare** - Explain how things are alike and different
- ⊙ **Describe** - Tell all about it
- ⊙ **Summarize** - Tell just the key points; give the short version
- ⊙ **Predict** - Tell what you think will happen next
- ⊙ **Support** - Given a reason, tell why, defend your ideas
- ⊙ **Explain** - Tell what it means, tell in your own words
- ⊙ **Trace** - Tell about it from the beginning to the end, list the steps
- ⊙ **Analyze** - Break it down, break it apart, think about it
- ⊙ **Evaluate** - Tell the good and the bad about it
- ⊙ **Formulate** - Create or come up with new ideas, develop something.