



End of Year Tests—a Time to Be RELAXED and Celebrate!

By Jan Wilton, Homeschool and Public School Representative

It is the dreaded time of a school year; the state-mandated testing time is upon us! Students and teachers alike are voicing concerns and questions: Are the tests necessary? Why do we have to put students through the rigorous hours of testing? Teaching is so much more fulfilling. How can teachers approach test week with more positive attitudes? How can teachers encourage students to have positive attitudes about testing? Students and teachers are anxious. What can a teacher do to reduce anxiety and celebrate what the students have learned?

A teacher's approach to testing makes the difference. The old saying, "If Mom isn't happy, the home isn't happy," is true in the classroom. When the teacher starts the day in a "bad mood," that attitude is reflected in the classroom as well, which makes the day more difficult. When we begin the day with a positive attitude, the students tend to mirror the attitude, leading to a productive day. When approached with a sense of celebration, testing day can be a positive attitude day. Perhaps it needs to be called Celebration Day, a day to celebrate your students' learning!

RELAXED

A frequently referred anchor chart for test strategies placed in the classroom can equip students for the BIG TEST DAY. I am a reading teacher for students who struggle with reading. They come to class with "the attitude." In the past, any discussion about testing used to be met

with negativity. This year, I have used an anchor chart for testing strategies with the following: RELAXED.

R – Read the questions carefully; then reread the passage or problem to find the right answer.

E – Examine every choice before you choose your answer.

L – Label your answer in the passage; leave the hard ones for last.

A – Always check your word and answer sheet.

X – X-out (eliminate) answers that cannot be right.

E – Erase neatly and fix your answers when you check your work.

D – Don't spend too much time on one question. Don't doubt yourself!

My students and I spent time understanding each of these strategies and how they can be used for every subject. The students were encouraged to practice the techniques in their daily assignments and regular class tests.

Did It Work?

Recently, all over Texas, students in grades 3-6 spent four hours for three days in benchmark tests by following STAAR test rules and security. The school was so quiet that one could wonder if students were in the classrooms. Tension was running high for teachers, and smiles were missing from students' faces as they walked to the classrooms.

Then, Cedrick saw me, gave me a thumbs up, and said quietly, "I remember RELAXED!" Following a day of tests, I saw some of my students in the hallway and heard the word, RELAXED! What a joy to see students using strategies and embracing the testing day! Was it a fun day? NO! It was a day to test, RELAX, and do your best,

Celebrate!

Encourage the students to look at the test day as a time to celebrate! Celebrate what they have learned! RELAXED and celebrate could possibly encourage an anxiety-ridden student to have the positive attitude. Teacher, celebrate! Celebrate all that your students have learned. Relax and celebrate—you have done your best!

Remember 2 Timothy 2:15: "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth" (NIV).

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