

*It's testing time, again, for
students in grades 3-8!*

Standardized testing brings up many strong emotions

- ▶ Many people believe our children are being over-tested
- ▶ Many people believe our educational system is not rigorous enough
- ▶ Many people are frustrated due to the roll-out of the common core and the related examinations
- ▶ There are parents around the state and nation choosing to opt their children out of exams
- ▶ At the same time, there are parents sending their children to private tutoring companies to prepare for upcoming tests
- ▶ For some students and parents, testing season brings on a lot of anxiety

At Renaissance, we believe that standardized tests are one measure of a child's performance.

In making promotional decisions we look at a variety of metrics including -

- ▶ Classwork
- ▶ Homework
- ▶ Class Assessments
- ▶ Social - Emotional Preparedness and Readiness
- ▶ Standardized Exam Performance
- ▶ Attendance
- ▶ A Student's passions and interests
- ▶ A Student's individual learning needs
- ▶ Student Progress
- ▶ We believe that the only way to properly assess a child is to look at the WHOLE child and this is exactly what we do.
- ▶ No child would ever be retained in a grade due to standardized test results alone.

The Common Core

There are many positive components of the common core curriculum

- ▶ 1) Puts Creativity Back into the Classroom allowing students to use problems and hands-on activities to understand a concept or relationship
- ▶ 2) Gives Students a Deep Dive due to a focus on key topics
- ▶ 3) Ratches up Rigor because it requires students to critically think about the topic
- ▶ 4) Promotes Collaboration because it integrates instruction across curriculums and grades (e.g. literacy across content areas) and supports teachers in working together and sharing resources
- ▶ 5) Advances Equity because it is challenging for all students and requires a high bar for students regardless of zip code.
- ▶ 6) Gets Kids College Ready because students are taught to read texts for information and analyze and explain the premise behind a mathematical thesis
- ▶ Six Ways the Common Core is Good For Students (Cindy Long, May 10, 2013, neaToday)

Don't dismiss the overall benefits of the Common Core because of a poor roll-out!

- ▶ Tests were not always properly designed and vetted
- ▶ Teachers were not provided with the necessary time or resources to help students achieve
- ▶ Parents were not adequately informed about what the new tests would mean
- ▶ In a climate where testing is overused for students, teachers and schools and districts, it is obvious why resistance and downright disgust is present in making the shift to the common core
- ▶ Schools were not funded adequately to make the shift which requires extensive staff professional development, new programming and new resources
- ▶ Policy makers need to remember that when new initiatives are introduced that we need to start where our kids are at
- ▶ Take the politics out of education and think about what the traits of a life-long learner look like

So, what really helps students be successful on tests?

- ▶ Being strong readers and writers
- ▶ Knowing how to critically think both in ELA and Math
- ▶ Knowing how to analyze and problem solve
- ▶ Being able to apply mathematical skills to a multi-step problem
- ▶ Understanding what the test is asking for
- ▶ Knowing how to time manage
- ▶ Knowing how to apply what you know to the test questions
- ▶ Being comfortable in a test-taking environment
- ▶ Staying calm
- ▶ Feeling confident

So, what really helps students be successful on tests?

Strong Standards - Based Curriculum

Project-Based Learning

Experiential Learning

Holistic Course of Study: Arts, Spanish, Social Studies, STEM, Health and Physical Education

Outside Partnerships

Rich Literacy Program

- Guided Reading
- Shared Inquiry
- Writing Workshop
- Reading Interventions
- Differentiated Instruction
- Comprehensive Instruction for English Language Learners
- Regular Benchmarking
- Standards Mastery
- Reading Across the Content Areas
 - Book Clubs
- Opportunities for advanced readers
 - Literature Studies
- Primary Source Documents to enhance the curriculum
- And for parents: ALL STUDENTS SHOULD BE READING AT HOME EVERY DAY! MAKE BOOK TALK TIME WITH YOUR CHILD! READ TOGETHER! IF YOU LOVE READING, SO WILL YOUR CHILD!

What's going on in Grades 3 to 8 ELA?

Grade 3 - Leah (in class) -

- We have been using ReadWorks.org-units of study whole class lessons and passages; general passages with a Lexile level of 400-800 (approximate reading levels of passage on state test questions); Engage NY Annotated 2013 and 2014 test questions; Ready Book
 - We have been doing whole class lessons using ReadWorks, weekly reading comprehension questions and homework. All work is reviewed in class.
- We use EngageNY materials and passages from Ready approximately 2-3 times per week. Students are grouped based on need.

What's going on in Grades 3 to 8 ELA?

Grade 4 - Christina (in class)

- Christina plans her test prep monthly
 - For March students are focusing on Reading for the Purpose of Taking a Test
 - Essential Question: What are some strategies I can develop to be an effective test taker?
 - SWBAT: Identify explicit questions and drawing conclusion questions; use the text to find evidence of answer; note take; complete short answer questions; complete extended response questions; create outlines to help with extended response; self assess and critique responses; peer assess; develop test taking vocabulary
- Some activity focus areas will include: analyzing genres of text and types of questions, solving short answer and extended response questions by finding evidence from the text
 - timing
 - test vocabulary
- Christina also incorporates Mindfulness work in her class. Students work with, "I am motivated!", "I am brave!" If students visualize themselves doing well, then perhaps they will!

Grade 4 (after-school)

- Once a week support program for 10 targeted students. ReadWork passages are used to focus lessons on point of view, author's purpose, genre, comparing and contrasting and theme. Students will create a rubric for scoring extended responses.

What's going on in Grades 3 to 8 ELA?

Grade 5 - Khin (in class)

- Since January, students have been given a weekly test prep packet from the Ready book. Each day, Khin reviews the work completed the prior night.
- Day 1 - Introduces the common core lesson, Day 2 - Model how to practice using the skill and have students do a practice question with a mini-passage, Day 3- Go over HW passage, Day 4- Go over HW passage, Day 5 (weekend) - Practice passage with essay, review essay on Monday
- Students have analyzed questions from past ELA exams, created rubrics, grades each other's work and justifying their own answers
- Every Wednesday, since February 25th, Evan from Kaplan has been coming to the literacy class to teach a specific skill using the Kaplan strategies.

Grade 5 (after-school)

- Twice a week program for targeted students co-taught by Renaissance teachers and a Kaplan teacher using the Kaplan Keys Advantage program

What's going on in Grades 3 to 8 ELA?

Grade 6 - Cristine (in class)

- In class test prep started early in the year and takes place once a week
- Kaplan has recently been introduced on Wednesdays in lieu of Spanish
 - New writing workshop push-in with two additional teachers once a week

Grade 6 - Saturday School

- A targeted eight week program for selected students using the Kaplan Keys Advantage Program

What's going on in Grades 3 to 8 ELA?

Grades 7 and 8 - Vincent, Ariel, Nicole J. - (in class)

- In class test prep six weeks before the test two to three times a week
 - In class push in teacher supports to reduce the student to teacher ratio during test prep sessions
- Kaplan instructor on Wednesdays, offered optionally on a rotating basis (7th grade)

Grade 7 and 8 - (after-school)

- Rotating rounds of small group test prep focusing on Standard Two (main idea)

What's going on in grades 3-8 Math?

Grade 3 - Leah (in class)

- Students use FrontRow, Engage NY, Ready, Lakeshore Common Core Math Daily Journal
- Students work independently on FrontRow at home. Leah will begin using ipads in class to support this work
- Students take ongoing interim assessments to see what areas they have mastered and what areas need to be retaught

Grade 3 (after-school)

- A targeted after-school program beginning in the fall for selected students
- Students work on a current math topic and reinforcement using hands-on games

What's going on in grades 3-8 Math?

Grade 4 - Christina (in class)

- Students practice on released common core questions
- Students who complete the questions can move on to a challenge problem
 - Answers are reviewed and areas are re-taught as necessary
- We look at multi-step problems and the language used in word problems. Problems are dissected line by line and students learn to draw pictures to help visualize what the problem is requesting (Math in the City)
- Activities include: Using questions that are missing a component, using innovative strategies to solve tricky word problems, homework has a problem of the week and students use problem solving rubrics to assess their success (NCTM)

Grade 4 (after-school)

- Targeted group of ten students that meets once a week after-school. Using Math in the City materials not used in class, the teacher reinforces the importance of using the problem solving rubric and also uses math congresses to discuss thinking. Math vocabulary is also reviewed.

What's going on in grades 3-8 Math?

Grade 5 - Molly (in class)

- Weekly test prep homework
- Day time tutoring 1x weekly based on need/missing skills (1-3 students)
 - Smarter test prep based off Math in the City work
 - Review section of each exam with test prep questions
- Extensive work practicing ways to respond to long response questions
- Incentives for students who complete Khan academy work at home

Grade 5 (after-school)

- Two groups of targeted students each meeting twice weekly

What's going on in grades 3-8 Math?

Grade 6, 7, 8: Andrea, Yianna, Kelly, Ram, ET, Ray (in class)

- Test preparation is incorporated into math skills classes. Benchmark questions are reviewed and test taking tips and strategies are discussed
- Math teachers participated in Kaplan professional development this year

Grade 6, 7, 8 (Saturday School)

- Teachers were trained and are using the Kaplan Keys Advantage curriculum. It is a refresher course of grade level CCSS and test taking strategies.
 - Students are targeted and grouped according to need.

What's going on in grades 4 and 8 Science?

- 4th grade - Students recently took a mock state exam. The data was analyzed and specific content areas and skills the students need support with have been identified. The Science Department will work with Ruchika to create and deliver lessons that will target those specific learning needs. On-going monitoring and support by Dan Fanelli, Science Coach, will also continue.
- 8th grade - Students were given an initial assessment to identify content and skills they needed support with. A curriculum was created for the science skills class that takes place once a week. Beginning in May, science skills will be increased to 3-4 periods per work until the test.