



# Tips for Involved Parents from Gwinnett County Public Schools

*Be There is a national movement that inspires parents to become more involved in their children's education. Teachable moments are everywhere. Be your child's favorite teacher. Connect in meaningful ways and your simple actions will reap immense rewards at home, play, and school!*

## Help your child manage test anxiety

*Anxiety is a common emotion that all people feel to varying degrees throughout their lives. While it is normal, and even can be helpful, to feel this emotion, anxiety also can significantly impair an individual's ability to function. For some children, test-taking anxiety may have an adverse effect on performance. Following are some strategies that parents and students can use to prepare for assessments and manage test anxiety so that children can meet their fullest potential.*

- **Maintain a consistent, but flexible routine that includes regular, vigorous activity and adequate sleep.** Both have been shown to have positive effects on mental health and academic performance. On test days, make sure your child has a good breakfast and a good night's sleep the night before.
- **Have high expectations, but accept "less than perfect."** Let your child know that no one is expected to do everything equally well. Perfectionism can contribute to anxiety. Share your own mistakes with your child. You can show that everyone, including adults, makes mistakes and that we all can learn from the mistakes we make. Keep a rein on your own "test anxiety" and help your student keep things in perspective.
- **Know that testing and performance anxiety are real.** Anxiety is an emotional response to a stressful situation, often characterized by physical symptoms.

Anxiety may cause a student to "go blank" during a test or performance, forgetting answers he knows or flubbing lines he had down pat. Racing thoughts or difficulty concentrating may throw your student for a loop. Negative thoughts about past performance or consequences of failure may cause your student to "shut down" when faced with another "opportunity to fail."

- **Teach your child to recognize the signs of anxiety.** Everyone is different, but physical symptoms may include nausea, cramps, faintness, sweating, headache, dry mouth, increased heart and breathing rates, tense muscles, and fluttery or tingling feelings in the body, especially the stomach.
- **Help your child communicate his emotions in stressful situations.** Work together to identify, describe, and talk about his emotions. Understanding what's happening can help your student conquer, or at least tame, his anxiety. Be patient and prepared to listen. Understand that reasoning is not always effective in reducing anxiety.
- **Identify strategies that relieve anxiety.** Examples include relaxation training, breathing techniques, visualization, positive self-talk, and deconstructing irrational beliefs (*a poor test grade means I'll never go to college...*). Have your child verbalize and even write out the steps in her plan for managing test anxiety.
- **Communicate with your child's teacher.** Make sure that the teaching team is aware of any concerns and knows what strategies work best for your student. (Or ask for tips that might be helpful.) Work with your child's school counselor or psychologist or seek outside help if needed.



Together, we will be there for our students—  
Gwinnett County Public Schools and YOU!

**Make the ordinary extraordinary!**

*Tips adapted from information provided by GCPS Special Education and Psychological Services*