



## Literacy at Hartford Public High School

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### Appropriate Activities to Prepare Students to Take Standardized Tests from William A. Mehrens

Researchers Ligon and Jones suggest that an appropriate activity for preparing students for standardized testing is "one which contributes to students' performing on the test near their true achievement levels, and one which contributes more to their scores than would an equal amount of regular classroom instruction" (1982, p. 1).

Another researchers, Matter, suggests that "Ideally, test preparation activities should not be additional activities imposed upon teachers. Rather, they should be incorporated into the regular, ongoing instructional activities whenever possible" (1986, p. 10).

If you follow the suggestion by Ligon and Jones, you might spend some time teaching students general test-taking skills. These skills would help students answer questions correctly if they have mastered the objectives. Without some level of test-taking skills, even knowledgeable students could miss an item (or a set of items) because they did not understand the mechanics of taking a test

It is appropriate to spend some instructional time teaching test-taking skills. Such skills are relatively easy to teach and should take up very little instructional time.

#### Read the Directions!

Teaching students to follow directions is an important skill for them to master. Often, students do not know what is expected of them on a test. Students taking tests regularly skip over directions only to find they have misunderstood what they were being asked to do, and hence, performed poorly on the test. This exercise is designed to give them practice in reading test directions and locating key words. It contains a variety of question types for different subjects. Regardless of the subject you teach, this exercise should prove useful for improving test-taking skills.

**Directions:** Did you know that reading the directions is an extremely important strategy for acing

that next test? Read the directions on this sheet carefully. Circle the words that indicate what you are being asked to do, such as compare, contrast, antonym, synonym, solve, same and opposite. There may be more than one word to circle for each set of directions.

1. Place the following events in chronological order from last to first.
2. The passage below is followed by questions based on its content. Answer the questions on the basis of what is stated in the passage.
3. According to the author, *The Matrix* is a weak film because...
4. Each question below consists of a related pair of words or phrases, followed by five pairs of words or phrases labeled A through E. Now, raise your head and eyes from these directions and make eye contact with your teacher for extra-credit. Then, select the pair that best expresses a relationship similar to that expressed in the original pair.
5. Over which of the following countries has this flag never flown?
6. Of all the following statements, which would a historian least be able to establish as true?
7. Which of the following was an immediate cause for the fall of the Roman Empire?
8. The fraction  $30/48$  equals all of the following except...
9. Below you will read a series of statements about photosynthesis. Which of the following statements are not true?
10. If the truck that was carrying a shipment of 10,000 apples got into an accident and 25% of the shipment was lost, then how many of the apples were lost in the accident?

#### Answer Guide

1. Circle *chronological* and *last to first*
2. Circle *stated*
3. Circle *weak*
4. Circle *similar*
5. Circle *never*
6. Circle *least* and *true*
7. Circle *immediate cause*
8. Circle *except*
9. Circle *not true*
10. Circle *how many* and *lost* in the question stem