

COMMITTED TO EXCELLENCE  
**ETHRIDGE ELEMENTARY**  
Linda Humphrey, Principal

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Dear Parents,

January 11, 2008

An indicator of the speed with which our year is passing came this week as, incredibly, we have received preliminary training and our first testing materials! That means the testing season is officially upon us. Time has come to begin working on those *test-taking skills* that are not really part of the actual Texas Assessments of Knowledge and Skills but which, left *undone*, can often be the real “undoing” of many students’ performance outcomes.

As a matter of information and clarification: a separate curriculum for testing does not exist. The tests are actually assessments to help determine how well our students have learned “what they should” (some of you call this the three ‘R’s’) at each grade level beginning with 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Public school curriculum is set by the State of Texas and the criteria for teaching/learning are referred to as the TEKS. Please be assured that *Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) are taught all year long* and tests are given to students in the second semester of each school year. When teachers refer to “teaching TAKS”, they are referring to teaching those test-taking *skills* necessary for students to acquire valid test results based on actual learning rather than inaccuracies/penalties for confusion on test format. (This includes skills like how to “read” multiple choice questions, or how to mark answers on a bubble sheet so credit will be given for answers, etc. The testing experience provides opportunity to learn and practice life-long skills that students will use not only in public schools but also on college entrance exams and scholarships, job and/or loan applications, etc., on into adulthood.) Test reports provide us with valuable information regarding the learning/progress of each individual student, as well as the level of success of our school programs and teaching. I’m sure you can see how important it becomes for each child to be encouraged to do his/her personal best during testing. Your interest and active, concerned involvement are the best encouragement your child can have. With your positive help, we will continue moving toward that goal of excellence for our kids. If you have any questions or concerns regarding any part of testing, please give your teacher or myself a call or send us an e-mail.

Keep working on those tardies! Many of our walkers/bikers have “rides” to school on bad weather days, thus lengthening the normal line of cars in our front drive for drop-off/pick-up. We probably have many cold and wet days still ahead, so that means leaving a few minutes early to actually arrive on time in classrooms. I have to say in that same breath, though, to *please remember, also, that our doors do not open until 7:30 in the mornings*. Please make sure your child is never put in the unhealthy or potentially unsafe situation of having to wait for doors to open or to be picked up in the afternoons.

REMINDERS: 1) Please remind your child that “forgotten” items are not retrievable after 3:45. 2) Please help us maintain safety and discipline at dismissal time by waiting to meet your child outside. If you have a conference with a teacher immediately after school (3:00), please sign in on the office computer and the teacher will meet you there. Your help in this matter will be greatly appreciated.

**Next week will be short: Early dismissal at 1:30 on Thursday the 17th and holidays on Friday the 18<sup>th</sup> and Monday the 21<sup>st</sup>.** Have a safe and happy family weekend! (Send Eagle folders/planners back on Monday signed, please!) ☺

Sincerely,

*Linda Humphrey*  
*Leslie Smiley*