



# JEI

## EDUCATION NEWSLETTER

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## The Common Core Testing

Over the last three months, we've tried to give our JEI parents an overview of what the curriculum changes in math and English mean for your children. We will conclude the four-part series on the Common Core State Standards this month with a final article on the recent changes to standardized testing.

With the newly changed U.S. curriculum now in place, pilot testing will begin this spring. However, the scores on these tests will not be released to parents or schools. The voluntary pilot test is a trial run before the full implementation begins during the 2014-2015 school year. Just like the newly created curriculum, the new standardized, uniform test will be given to students across the country; the states will no longer have their own standardized tests.

Although these new standardized tests will be similar in the sense that they will be multiple choice, fill-in-the-bubble type formatting with an essay writing component, the new tests will include many glaring changes. The tests will be mostly computer based, meaning that each student will need access to a PC, Mac, or

iPad/tablet. Many questions have arisen from this need for electronic devices, such as: "What happens if an application crashes during testing time?" and "Will there be enough devices in each school for all students to be tested at the same time?" These issues will need to be resolved prior to full implementation.

Another change is the grade the testing will begin. Prior to the common core initiative, standardized testing grades varied from state to state, with the majority of the testing beginning in the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> grade-level range. Now, standardized testing will begin at the 1<sup>st</sup> grade level and include word problems and fill-in-the-bubble, multiple choice questions; these are two skills that some 1<sup>st</sup> graders may not possess. These new requirements will not only lead to increased pressure on young students, but on kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade teachers as well. These teachers will now be responsible for not only teaching rudimentary skills, but also for test-taking skills, a combination of tasks that pose a very important question for educators: "Will younger students learn less due to increased

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*Grand prize winner Jocelyn Wang (7<sup>th</sup> grade)  
from JEI Learning Center in Warren, NJ*

### JEI Essay Contest

See the winners of  
the contest on page 4!

# Top 5 Suggestions for Being Good Parents

By Gil Choi

Apples indeed don't fall far from the tree. I would say that nine times out of ten you will have good children if you are a good parent. What does it mean, then, to be a good parent, and how do you become one? Here are my top five suggestions for being a good parent.

First, lead by example. If you're telling your children to read a book while you're watching TV, your kids won't be happy, and won't respect you. They may follow your rules when they are young, but it won't last. As they get older, they will simply rebel against you or ignore you. So don't force your child to do something they don't agree with. They first need to understand why they need to do it.

Second, negotiate or compromise with your children just like you would with anyone. You may think of your children as babies, but, no matter how little, they do each have a brain and the ability to reason in their own ways. When you treat them with some respect, they will be more responsible and motivated to work hard. So treat them as individuals; you will need to do this eventually.

Third, if your children are not doing so well in school, the biggest key to long-term success is developing good study habits. Children actually like to learn until the work becomes too burdensome. Many children will begin to dislike math, for example, because it will gradually become difficult, and they are likely to fall behind at some point. So set up a daily schedule with enough time for work and play, but strictly adhere to it. The schedule, which should include when and where they study, must be kept regularly so that it becomes part of the routine they have accepted.

Fourth, if your children are behind, you need not panic; you still have a lot of time. Even if your children are in 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade, there is still plenty of time. If your goal is getting them into a good college, you still have four to five years to do so. The worst thing you can do is try to do too much at once. That will not work. Again, have your children develop better study habits, and have them work slowly and steadily. If you try to catch up too quickly, they will tire out and fall farther behind. You want your children to be the tortoise that, in the end, beats the hare.

Lastly, take a moment and think



*Gil Choi, Senior Vice President of JEI Self-Learning Systems, Inc.*

about what you really want for your children. Most parents are preoccupied with getting their kids into good colleges. But why do we want them to get into good colleges? Probably it's because we want our children to be financially successful. Financial success is important. Still, it's just one of the many ingredients for happiness.

I think for anyone to be truly happy there has to be a balance in life. You will need a good marriage because one cannot be happy without it. You will also need some friends and hobbies. These and many more are the ingredients for happiness in life. What we really want for our children is that they become successful, responsible, and well-rounded people who are truly satisfied with their lives. Perhaps there should be as many courses on marriage and friendship as the SAT.



# BRIEFS

## Teachers able to Communicate with Parents via App

Parents eager to keep tabs on their kids' classroom activities have a new tech tool to help. Class Dojo is an app that allows a teacher to instantly send a message to parents about a child's conduct. Entrepreneurs created the app using \$75,000 from the 2011 Citi Innovation in Education Award. Teachers who have been using the app say the program brings out students' competitive streaks. They want to earn more points so that they can redeem for incentives such as using the teacher's rolling desk chair or sitting with a friend for the day. Other than simply showing whether a child had a good or bad day, Class Dojo includes time-stamped information about students ups and downs in each day's report.

*(www.educationnews.org, 12/2013)*

## School Lunch Times Shortening in the US

At many public schools, kids are lucky to get more than 15 minutes to eat. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends at least 20 minutes. Ironically, relatively new federal school-nutrition guideline changes may worsen the situation when making an effort to improve nutrition and to fight childhood obesity. Eating more healthful foods such as salad can take more time than eating french fries, unfortunately.

*(www.parents.com, 12/2013)*

## Parents Get Cash for Homework Help

In an attempt to raise standards in poor areas, and as part of a taxpayer-funded program in 2014, UK parents will be paid hundreds of pounds to be taught how to help their children with homework and how to support their skills in numeracy, literacy, and science.

*(www.educationnews.org, 12/2013)*

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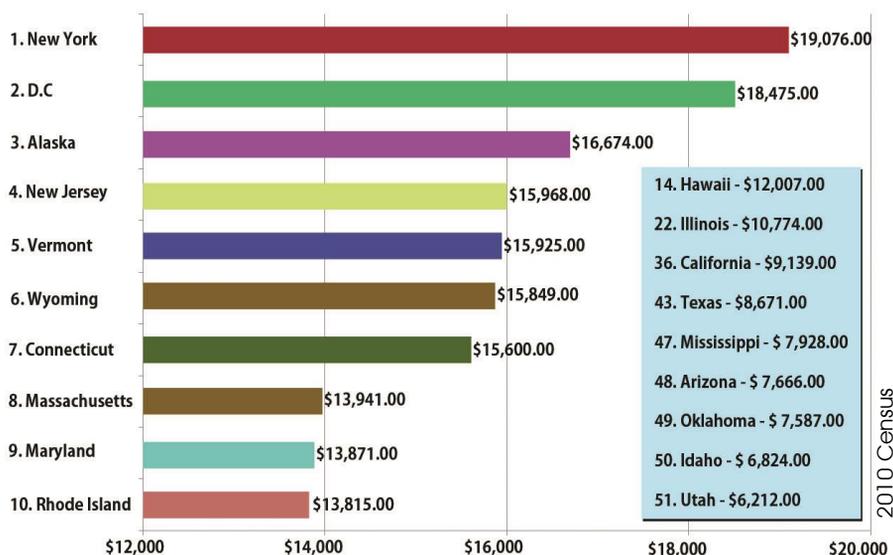
standardized testing?"

Yet another major change that has been proposed is the computerized grading for writing. This new type of grading, developed by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, has been challenged by many top state officials throughout the United States. Many feel as though computerized grading cannot take a 'writer's voice' into account; they believe that this portion of grading should be left in the hands of teachers.

Overall, the tests will be more difficult. The common core standards for 1<sup>st</sup> grade English Language Arts, for instance, will include a far more rigorous approach to evaluating reading comprehension than even 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students had previously encountered: rather than reviewing a story and identifying its main characters and plot, students will be asked complex questions regarding the characters' relationships to one another, as well as what conclusions can be drawn from these relationships. In short, even the youngest students will be asked to engage in analytical conversations about what they've read. Similarly for mathematics, students at all grade levels will be required to learn not through repetition alone, but through a much more in-depth understanding of the subject's applications for daily life.

Although we will know more of what to expect when the common core pilot test is offered this spring, it is important that educators, parents, and students approach the impending changes with a mindset of preparedness and determination. In the very near future, the new curriculum will transform the face of education in the United States. It remains to be seen whether or not the standards of the common core initiative are overly ambitious; if they are indeed effective, the changes could very well put students ahead of the curve.

## PER STUDENT SPENDING BY STATE



# The Winners of the JEI 2013 Essay Contest

## Congratulations!

Out of more than 300 essay submissions from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> grade students nationwide, the judges chose one grand prize winner.

The best entry was proficient in all categories and was written by Jocelyn Wang (see picture), 7<sup>th</sup> grade, from JEI Learning Center in Warren, New Jersey. The young writer received a brand new Apple iPad, and JEI wishes her a delightful experience with the device.

First place winners are proud owners of a Samsung Galaxy Tab. Second and third places received \$100 and \$50 Barnes & Noble gift cards, respectively.

Please see all winners from each grade listed on the right.

Please stay tuned for our next contest - the JEI Math Olympiad 2014 which will take place on March 15, 2014. As always, amazing prizes will be awaiting!

### Grand prize

Jocelyn Wang (Warren, NJ)

7<sup>th</sup> grade

### 2nd Grade

1<sup>st</sup> Place:

David Shin (Calgary, CAN)

2<sup>nd</sup> Place:

Sophia Park (Great Neck, NY)

3<sup>rd</sup> Place:

Sharon Lee (Bayside, NY)

### 3rd Grade

1<sup>st</sup> Place:

Julianne Hwang (Valencia, CA)

2<sup>nd</sup> Place:

Arha Gatram (Edison-Piscataway, NJ)

3<sup>rd</sup> Place:

Emelie Kim (Vancouver, CAN)

### 4th Grade

1<sup>st</sup> Place:

Nandita Gupta (Princeton Junction, NJ)

2<sup>nd</sup> Place:

Julia Swanson (Walnut Creek, CA)

3<sup>rd</sup> Place:

Maggie Xia (Marlboro, NJ)

### 5th Grade

1<sup>st</sup> Place:

Andrew Chen (North Brunswick, NJ)

2<sup>nd</sup> Place:

Aarhi Katakam (Princeton Junction, NJ)

3<sup>rd</sup> Place:

Anoushka Shrivastava (East Fremont, CA)

### 6th Grade

1<sup>st</sup> Place:

Amy Bao (Walnut Creek, CA)

2<sup>nd</sup> Place:

Krishi Desai (Paramus, NJ)

3<sup>rd</sup> Place:

Linette Jun (Cupertino, CA)

### 7th Grade

1<sup>st</sup> Place:

Rachel Shin (Toronto, CAN)

2<sup>nd</sup> Place:

Jeonghyun Lee (Toronto, CAN)

3<sup>rd</sup> Place:

Savan Patel (Montgomery, NJ)

[www.jeilearning.com](http://www.jeilearning.com)

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