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## ***The Test Ready Program Description***

### ***What is The Test Ready Program?***

Mainstream Development Educational Group (Mainstream) develops and delivers highly effective academic support services for students in grades K-12, provides professional development, coaching, and support to teachers, and engages school communities in the effective implementation of change strategies. Services are designed in cooperation with schools and districts and tailored to meet the unique needs of each participating school.

***The Test Ready Program*** is one of those services. This Program is available to students in grades 6-12 and is designed to be delivered in a semester-long format. The program can accommodate classrooms with up to 30 students and Mainstream coordinates with the school's leadership team to develop the specific requirements for each session. In addition, Mainstream collects student-specific data and shares student progress data with the school as often as the school wishes (but at least at the halfway point and at program end).

***The Test Ready Program*** was designed to solve a problem. That problem derives from the high-stakes involved in college testing outcomes. One of the most significant measures of College and Career Readiness is a student's performance on the ACT. To achieve to their highest potential on the ACT, students require proper exposure, practice, and guidance. For far too many students, limited family resources result in poor preparation for this high-stakes test. Mainstream's Test Ready Program levels the playing field, allowing all students (regardless of income) the opportunity to gain the experience, confidence, and ability to perform at their best.

Mainstream's mantra, "***Basics First, Basics Last, Basics Forever***" serves a dual purpose: first, it is a constant reminder of past academic accomplishments deeply rooted in essential skill development, and, second, it is a beacon of hope pointing the way toward brighter tomorrows. MDEG's programs and services are aligned with Illinois' educational standards, established college readiness standards, and other relevant academic measures. MDEG's instructional

materials and methodologies are designed to improve student skills, confidence, and performance in 21<sup>st</sup> Century classrooms and/or work environments.

Five core principles drive MDEG's program design and offering: **Flexibility**, is the ability to adjust to new measures, standards, and methodologies without deserting proven educational practices; **Individuality**, recognize that each student, family, community and school district is unique and has a right to skill development plans that build from their strengths while improving weaknesses; **Integrity**, MDEG is committed to honesty and transparency in all of its business transactions; **Persistence**, MDEG understands that improving the academic performance of underachieving students is a slow and tedious process requiring commitment, patience, and a well-designed plan of action; and, **Vision**, to focus our attention on supporting each student's achievement of his or her highest potential.

**The Test Ready Program** begins to expose young people to the requirements of College Readiness in middle school. Through instruction and exposure, young people begin to incorporate the skills and experience necessary to achieve to their own highest levels of ability. With multiple opportunities to practice the ACT, students reduce their anxiety about this high-stakes test. By deconstructing the test, students are able to learn the academic language and test structure function so critical to success.

What follows is a brief synopsis of the content area included in Mainstream's Test Ready Program. Through this model of exposure, skill building, and content expansion, students learn and practice the knowledge and skills necessary to score at their own highest level.

### **Mastery of Essential Skills**

1. English
  - Usage Mechanics
    - ✓ Sentence Structure
    - ✓ Grammar and Usage
    - ✓ Punctuation
  - Rhetorical Skills
    - ✓ Strategy
    - ✓ Style
    - ✓ Organization
  
2. Math
  - Pre-Algebra
    - ✓ The Four Operations
    - ✓ Understanding Math
    - ✓ Understanding Numbers
    - ✓ Integers Qualities
    - ✓ Factors and Prime Numbers
    - ✓ Consecutive Integers

- ✓ Symbols and Terms
- ✓ Fractions Mastery
- ✓ Fractions vs Decimals Conversion
- ✓ Proportions, Percentages
- ✓ Mean, Median, and Mode
- ✓ Counting & Probability Principles
  
- Algebra
  - ✓ Basic Operations
  - ✓ Powers, Exponents & Roots
  - ✓ Basic Algebraic Operations
  - ✓ Polynomials
  - ✓ Factoring
  - ✓ Linear, Quadratic & Simultaneous Equations
  - ✓ Inequalities
  - ✓ Functions
  
- Geometry
  - ✓ Line & Angle Basics
  - ✓ Polygon Foundations
  - ✓ Triangle Basics
  - ✓ Parallelogram & Trapezoid Basics
  - ✓ Understanding Circles
  - ✓ Solid Geometry
  - ✓ Coordinate Geometry Basics
  
- Introduction to Trigonometry
- Work Readiness Math
  - ✓ Math Formula Sheets
  - ✓ Language of Math - Glossary of Terms
  - ✓ Answering Word Problems
  - ✓ Weights and Measures
  - ✓ Taxes, Sales Price & Reductions, Using Tools
  - ✓ Time and Temperature
  - ✓ Paycheck Related Math

### 3. Reading

- Strategy Based on Need Not Speed - What to do when you read 100 words/minute and the passage is designed for someone who can read at least 300 words/minute.
- Strategies for Building Vocabulary - Word Parts, Vocabulary List
- Main Idea
- Key to Reading Success: Understanding Essay/Passage Structure
- Implied idea - What to do when the answer cannot be found in the Passage?
- Application: Developing the ability to apply what has been read to new situations.
- Voice: Understanding Mood & Tone.
- Putting It All Together

4. Science: Reasoning on ACT vs. Content on other standardized test
  - Science of Sudoku = ACT Reasoning - Developing the ability to read Charts, Graphs & Tables
  - Science = Real Knowledge of Science Content: Science Inquiry, the life, physical, Earth and space sciences; and, science, technology, and society.
  
5. Writing
  - Ultimate Measure of English Usage and Rhetorical Skills
  - Critical to Mastering English and Reading Portion of ACT
  - Excellent Introduction to College Readiness Activities
  - Essays, College and Scholarship Application, and Personal Statement

### **College/Career Eligibility and Readiness**

- College Eligibility
  - ✓ 2.5 or Higher GPA
  - ✓ 21 or Higher ACT Score
  - ✓ Community Service & Leadership Experience
  - ✓ Attendance & Behavior
  - ✓ Honors & AP Course Selection
  - ✓ Dual Enrollment Opportunities
- College Readiness
  - ✓ College Major and Minor Investigation
  - ✓ Career/Profession Investigation
  - ✓ Review Gates and Dell Scholarship Applications
  - ✓ Review NCAA Clearing House Standards
  - ✓ Review Common Application
  - ✓ Draft Personal Statement
  - ✓ Introduction to FAFSA
  - ✓ Teacher & Counselor Recommendations

### **Setting Short & Long Term Goals**

- Complete Individual Student Manifesto
- Set Goals for Next Three Years
- Establish Initial Long Term Goals - Beyond High School
- Create Treasure Map

### **Mastering Study Skills**

- Using Homework, Class Notes, Quizzes/Tests and Textbook/Workbooks to Study
- Power of Forming Study Groups
- Creating Study Guides

- Technology and Studying
- Cornell Notes

There is clear data supporting the relevance of this kind of exposure and practice and Mainstream has realized significant impacts with student scores averaging in the range of 26 – 34 after completion of ***The Test Ready Program***. This is accomplished through rigorous and intentional design and delivery. MDEG’s highly trained staff take students through the process of practice and mastery that result in each achieving at their own personal best. Students who are at greatest risk of falling between the cracks will greatly benefit from Mainstream’s Test Ready Program.

The Program is designed in cooperation with each school, based upon the specific requirements of the school. Progress is monitored and shared with students, parents, teachers and administrators throughout the program year. Mainstream will work with the District and each individual school to develop a plan that achieves measurable and meaningful results for all stakeholders. Working together we can close the achievement gap and support students in acquiring the skills and competencies they need to be prepared for life after high school.

### ***How will students who need additional supports be identified?***

Students engaged in ***The Test Ready Program*** are assessed throughout their participation in the program with key assessments occurring at the beginning of the Program (baseline), at midterm, and at program end. The midterm assessment provides students the opportunity to take a practice test simulated like the actual assessment. Facilitators review the results of that second assessment to determine areas that require additional focus and adjust the students Individualized Learning Plan to incorporate those learning needs.

Throughout the sessions, formative assessments help facilitators adjust and adapt to the learning needs of each student. These formative assessments are incorporated in to the Student Workbook as well as less formal assessments based upon classroom and group work. This ongoing assessment provides the Facilitator the opportunity to align the instruction to the needs of the students to ensure they get what they need.

### ***Is The Test Ready Program research-based and evidence proven?***

Mainstream Development Educational Group develops all of its programs and services using instructional strategies and curricular content that is firmly based in research and proven to be effective with the targeted student population. Most of Mainstream’s services are delivered in urban communities with students who are at increased risk of academic failure due to risk

factors beyond their control. Those risk factors include issues such as poverty, a high mobility rate, limited English proficiency, and limited parental academic success to name a few.

To meet the needs of these students, Mainstream derives programs that are adaptable, intentionally designed with significant input from school leadership teams with respect to how, when, and where services are provided, as well as rigorous in their focus on differentiated delivery of instruction and modalities for learning. These practices are grounded in the evidence base of highly effective instructional strategies.

Test Ready is designed to introduce students to the high stakes testing that plays a determining role in how far they will go academically. This Program incorporates both content specific practice in math, language arts, and science as well as the strategies and skills required to become an adept test taker. What follows is the research base in Mainstream's Reading, Language Arts, Math and Science instruction.

*Test Ready: Reading* includes lessons for students to practice working with words, including sorting words, playing with letters to make new words, and playing word games to help students develop their sight vocabulary. These lessons not only develop students' word knowledge, but they also teach them that playing with words can be a fun, enjoyable experience.

The RAND Reading Study Group (RAND, 2000) defined reading comprehension as "the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language" (p. 11). This process involves interactions among the reader, the text, and the reading activity, all of which are embedded within a sociocultural context (Vygotsky, 1978). This definition includes a combination of cognitive, social, and cultural perspectives on comprehension (Hamm & Pearson, 2002).

Effective comprehension instruction takes into account a reader's motivation (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000), reading strategies (Paris, Wasik, & Turner, 1991), and knowledge (Anderson & Pearson, 1984) within the social environment of a classroom (Sweet & Snow, 2002).

Researchers define effective comprehension instruction as instruction that: (a) activates prior knowledge and predicting (Hansen & Pearson, 1982); (b) monitors comprehension or thinking aloud (Baumann & Seifert-Kessell, 1992; Paris, Cross, & Lipson, 1984); (c) includes summarizing text or identifying important ideas (Bean & Steenwyk, 1984); (d) encourages questioning by the teacher or self-questioning by the learner (Singer & Donlan, 1982); (e) teaches recognizing and using text structure or graphic representations (Armbruster, Anderson, & Meyer, 1991); and (f) fosters collaboration among learners to construct the meaning of a text (Stevens, Madden, Slavin, & Farnish, 1987). There is also evidence for the efficacy of comprehension instruction that includes multiple text-construction strategies (Brown, Pressley, Van Meter, & Schuder, 1996; Rosenshine & Meister, 1994).

Mainstream developed its comprehension instruction model based on several common elements. These are represented well by the five components articulated by Duke and Pearson

(2002, pp. 208-209): explicit strategy description, teacher and student modeling of the strategy, collaborative use of the strategy, guided practice of the strategy, and independent strategy use. As Duke and Pearson state, “a large volume of work indicates that we can help students acquire strategies and processes used by good readers—and that this improves their overall comprehension of text” (p. 206).

[http://www.learner.org/workshops/teachreading35/pdf/Dev\\_Reading\\_Comprehension.pdf](http://www.learner.org/workshops/teachreading35/pdf/Dev_Reading_Comprehension.pdf)

*Test Ready: Reading* includes lessons in reading comprehension strategies such as making connections, making predictions, monitoring understanding, visualizing, questioning, retelling, and summarizing. Students learn how to apply comprehension strategies and how to monitor their understanding, so they know when they need to apply fix up strategies to correct a comprehension failure. Teaching students to monitor their own comprehension offers the added benefit of helping them take responsibility for their own learning.

Reading vocabulary, the ability to understand the meanings of words, is a significant predictor of reading comprehension (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997; Davis, 1944, 1968). Mainstream’s instruction in vocabulary was designed based upon the research of Graves (2000). Graves proposed a four-part vocabulary instructional program that accommodates multiple objectives and perspectives for vocabulary learning.

[http://books.google.com/books/about/The\\_Vocabulary\\_Book.html?id=iBSZ8KpX358C](http://books.google.com/books/about/The_Vocabulary_Book.html?id=iBSZ8KpX358C)

*Test Ready: Reading* develops students’ vocabulary with direct instruction and through writing, oral reading, and word play activities that immerse students in important vocabulary throughout instruction. Lessons in the Word Strategies and Word Skills sections of the program teach how to create a word bank, how to figure out word meaning from context, how to use word parts to figure out meaning, and how to play with words. In addition to word building activities, teachers pre-teach vocabulary prior to reading and students develop their vocabulary as they hear text read aloud, read independently, and through shared reading activities.

Mainstream’s instruction in mathematics is designed to promote student opportunity to talk about their mathematical understanding, which promotes the integration of learning in math (Cobb, Yackel, and Wood, 1991). Instruction through discourse and collective reflection helps children achieve mathematical understanding. Whitin and Whitin discovered “[T]alking was an effective way for children to clarify their thinking, discuss new possibilities, [and] extend the thinking of others” (Whitin & Whitin, 2002). Cobb states in his observations of first-grade students, “the children did not happen to spontaneously reflect on a prior activity at the same moment. Instead, reflection was supported and enabled by participation in discourse” (Cobb, Boufi, McClain, & Whitenack, 1997).

<http://books.google.com/books?id=2vc-BAAAQBAJ&pg=PA265&dq=cobb+yackel+and+wood+1991&hl=en&sa=X&ei=wpZqVJ3PBpKtyASi24Bg&ved=0CB8Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=cobb%20yackel%20and%20wood%201991&f=false>

Mainstream's Program establishes a classroom participation structure that provides students with opportunities to explain and justify different solutions and allows teachers to build on students' contributions as they move toward desired pedagogical goals. This discourse is central to reform and makes possible students' development of mathematical beliefs and values that contribute to the development of their intellectual autonomy" (McClain & Cobb, 1999). One result of this exchange of ideas and strategies is that students build their own understandings of mathematics concepts based on their discussions. Their understanding is deeper than that gained by memorizing a teacher's examples.

"Children who have the opportunity to consistently construct their personal understandings of mathematics concepts are more mathematically powerful than those who do not" (Kamii, Lewis, & Livingston, 1993). When children have built their own personal understandings, they have a more solid grasp of the concept and a stronger base on which to build future concepts. "When children talk about mathematical concepts, they are actually increasing their understanding of that concept. Language allows them to reflect on and revise their thoughts" (Andrews, 1997).

"All the mathematics proposed for prekindergarten through grade 12 is strongly grounded in number" (NCTM, 2000). The Number Names activities focus on a specific number each day ranging from whole numbers in early elementary to fractions and decimals in upper elementary and negative numbers, exponents, and square roots in middle school. Number Names, the daily focus of the whole-group instruction and discussion, also helps students connect key math concepts from different mathematical strands including number sense, basic operations, problem solving, patterns and algebraic thinking, measurement, geometry, and data analysis. This aligns with the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics Standard that students in all grade levels be able to "recognize and use connections among mathematical ideas; [and] understand how mathematical ideas interconnect and build on one another to produce a coherent whole" (NCTM, 2000).

"Group games can provide rich context for social and mathematical development" (Hildebrandt, 1998). In *Test Ready: Math*, students work in pairs or in small groups to practice their math skills through games. With a focus on the skills required for each grade level, the games reinforce the concepts discussed during the Number Names time and provide ongoing work with number facts, computation, mental-math strategies, reasoning, and problem-solving strategies while providing hands-on, verbal, and auditory experiences. In addition to being fun,

*Test Ready: Math* games help students practice their math skills and apply problem-solving strategies. "[Games] incorporate virtually every curricular standard set forth by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (1989), most specifically, estimation, probability, and operations. It seems only natural that educators should increase their use of games in the classroom, since playing them is an important human activity that affords substantial opportunities to experience and explore mathematics within the context of culture" (Barta & Schaelling, 1998).

<http://www.nctm.org/PrinciplestoActions/>

*Test Ready:* Math games help students develop mathematical competence and confidence, build their critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and provide opportunities for students to learn from each other through discussion. As students make moves, toss number cubes, and draw cards during the games, they share their answers along with the reasoning behind their answers, allowing them to teach and learn from each other.