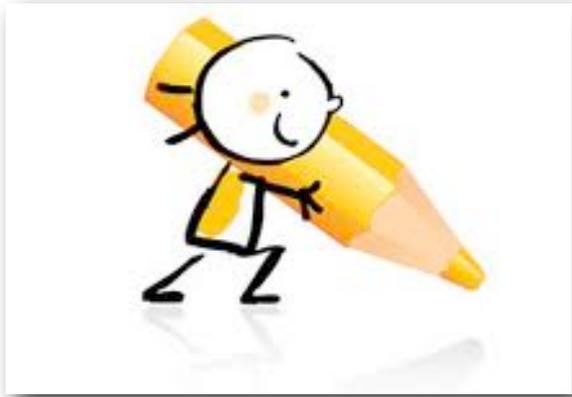


4 Ideas for Lowering Test Anxiety

Idea #1: Embedded Test Support

How it Works: Write encouragement and reminders directly into your tests. For example:

- After question #5 you might write "You are doing great. Remember, if you come to a question you can't answer, skip it and return to it later."
- After question #15 you might write "You are half way there. Take a deep breath. Look at the clock. If there is more than 20 minutes left, you are right on track. If there is less than 20 minutes, try to speed up a little bit."
- After question #20 you might write "The next 4 questions are based on the paragraph below. Read the questions first, before you read the paragraph- sometimes that helps."
- Before the last question you might write "Only 1 more question to go! I knew you could do it. Great work! Don't forget to go back and check your answers or answer questions you skipped."



Why it Works: The best way to reinforce testing strategies is during testing because it allows the brain to metacognitively view the test, during the process of taking it. The brain loves metacognition as a way of "organizing its closet." But this strategy can also reduce feelings of isolation and anxiety while testing. It's harder to feel stressed out and alone when your teacher is right there in the test helping and encouraging you. And even though standardized tests don't allow us to put in words of encouragement, the kids will tend to internalize the calm and strategies in

our tests, and thus be better prepared for the state tests.

Tip: As the year progresses, consider slowly removing the number of embedded supports you write in, so students slowly become accustomed to tests without them.

Idea #2: Naming & Framing

How it Works: Don't call anything a "test." Call everything a "quiz," or even better, an "assessment."

Why it Works: Students are programmed to fear "tests." Sometimes, if you just use another word, that learned fear response doesn't get triggered.

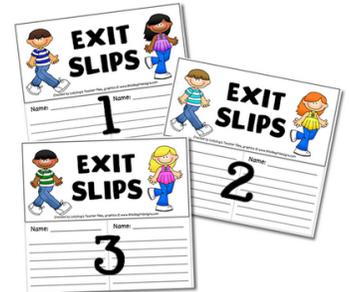


4 Ideas for Lowering Test Anxiety

Idea #3: Test Question Exit Slips

How it Works: At the end of the day or the period, hand students 2-3 test questions, based on that day's content, on a small slip of paper. Students answer the questions and hand them in as their ticket out of the room.

Why it Works: Test anxiety often stems from the perceived "high stakes" nature of the tests, combined with infrequent exposure to them. An exit slip each day with just a few test questions increases the frequency and the familiarity students have with answering test-like questions, consequently lowering their anxiety.



Tip: You don't necessarily have to grade the slips or hand them back to students. But you can use them to assess who "got it" that day and who didn't. Or consider using their responses as part of the next day's warm-up activity.

Idea #4: Prescription Candies



How it Works: Take a prescription bottle and tape a picture of a brain on it. Label it "Brainium." Fill it with smarties or sweet-tarts or some equivalent small candy. Tell students that before each test they will have the option to take a "Brainium" pill to help them relax and to stimulate their brains so they can do their best.

Why it Works: Students know that the bottle holds candy. The point is not to "trick" the students, but to lighten the atmosphere around testing, which the silliness of the candy does.

Tip: This is especially effective with high school students, because they find it the most ridiculous and consequently derive the most levity from it.