

5 More Ideas for Lowering Test Anxiety

Idea #1: Test Buddies (for any test)



How it Works: When a test is coming, take a box of small stuffed animals or plush toys, like beanie babies, and let each student choose one to have on their desk as their “test buddy” during the test. **Why it Works:** At the younger grades it works because it gives the students a friend to support them, and is something they can touch and hold when they get nervous. Companionship and soft tactile input can lower stress. At the upper grades it works because it is goofy, and humor can reduce stress and put the test in a softer perspective.

Idea #2: Test Recovery (for teacher-created tests)

How it Works: After students receive their test or quiz back, they can restore partial credit for incorrect answers. They need to complete 3 steps:

- 1) In a new document, write down each question answered incorrectly.
- 2) Write down the answer you gave and explain why you thought this was the correct answer.
- 3) Write down the correct answer, elaborate on why it’s correct and/or explain how you can prove it’s correct.

Why it Works: This recovery requires students to explain their thinking and learn the content in the process. It allows them to earn some of their lost points back, lowering their stress. And just knowing that this restoration process is possible can lower their stress on future tests as well.



Idea #3: Give Out the Questions (for teacher-created tests)

How it Works: Give students all the questions that will appear on the test in advance, but not the answers. **Why it Works:** Students now know they have all the information they need in order to ace the test. This doesn’t take away the need to study or to know the content well. It just clarifies what they need to study. Stress is reduced, and appreciation for you is increased. One variation is to provide more questions than will appear on the test. The questions you provide in advance serve as a “bank” from which the actual test questions will be chosen.

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Idea #4: Prep From Day 1 (for high stakes tests)

How it Works: From the first week of school, make test prep part of your daily or weekly routine, but don't call it "test prep." You might incorporate sample test questions into your daily warm-up routine. Or you might add state test questions from previous years into your regular "finished early" routine or your "exit" routine.

Why it Works: When we cram all our preparation for state tests into the weeks before the test is given, anxiety for students can dramatically increase. But if on-going exposure to these types of test questions has been woven into daily and weekly routines throughout the year, then the weeks leading up to the test can be business as usual. And the test itself will seem like a familiar friend because nothing on it will be new or different from what they've been exposed to all year.



Idea #5: No Counting Down (for high stakes tests)



How it Works: Resist countdowns to big tests, such as the state tests in the spring, or the end of semester test. Counting down inflates the status of the test and can add to the anxiety kids feel as the date draws near. Instead, just make it part of your regular agenda and weekly schedule.

Why it Works: The more we build up the importance of a test, the more we increase student stress around it. By simply making it part of our weekly or daily agenda, we can normalize it and keep student stress levels low.