

Tool: Tips for Standardized Testing

Purpose: To assist the mentor in orienting the novice to expectations related to standardized testing

Timing: Early in the school year

Accountability in the form of standardized testing can be a significant threat to novice teachers. The mentor can help alleviate some of the anxiety by sharing his/her perspective on how to attend to the test in constructive ways and how to create success conditions for the students.

- Provide any resources that would be informative and helpful—written information, websites, supplemental materials and activities.
- Share strategies for preparing students. These could include-

Strategies to help enhance students' intrinsic motivation--

- Help each child expect success and take risks to achieve it.
- Link test taking to students' interests and future goals.
- Help each child believe that performing well is worth the effort.
- Help students think about their own standards for comfort during test taking.
- Teach students to use positive self-talk.

Strategies to help enhance students' extrinsic motivation--

- Take the stress out of the testing situation. Make testing days as much like every other day as possible -- or more fun!
- Create an environment where performing well on the test is seen as opportunities to present “personal bests.”
- Introduce the concept of “bracketing” -- putting away other thoughts for the time being.
- Choose incentives and rewards to encourage best performance.
- Break up the intensity with food, movement, music, and _____.

Considerations when planning lessons--

- Integrate reasoning and test taking skills.
- Decide what skills to teach when -- paying systematic attention to them across the grades.
- Be sure time is allotted to teach all tested skills/objectives prior to testing dates.
- Use previous year's results to target students and objectives (when applicable).
- Develop a chart to track student progress on specific needs.
- Begin a resource bank of materials requiring reasoning skills -- determine where they are covered or could be taught in the curriculum and then identify what else is needed.

Considerations during instruction--

- Identify and help students acquire the essential concepts, content, and procedures in the most effective & efficient ways possible.
- Provide students with the reasoning “tools” they will need to apply their knowledge-- teach steps and provide practice and feedback.
- Provide adequate practice with reasoning processes in a variety of situations.
- Tailor instruction to address individual and collective needs (reinforce, maintain, and extend strengths and reteach weaknesses).
- Take advantage of tutoring opportunities (teacher with ad hoc skill groups, peer tutoring, cooperative learning, parent, volunteers).
- Provide opportunities for students to practice with the testing format and conditions (fun, games, themes, healthy competition).
- Remember that it is “OK” to teach to the test when its reasoning processes that are being taught!

- **Other ideas?**