



Teacher Tip of the Week

Prepare Students for High-Stakes Tests

Sound assessment practices and policies encourage individual academic gains and overall academic improvement in schools. While classroom assessment typically involves a myriad of factors that represent the progress or achievement of a student in a variety of ways, a new kind of assessment has permeated education, high stakes testing.



Once reserved for students gaining admission to competitive colleges or graduate programs, high stakes testing now reaches all students. Among other things, it often determines grade promotion and high school graduation for students, as well as performance status for schools under the *No Child Left Behind Act*.

Educators must prepare students to perform satisfactorily on high stakes tests. The following tips may help you incorporate high stakes testing preparation into your classroom.

Preparing Your Class for High Stakes Tests

- Help students become familiar with the content and format of the test. If there are specific objectives or standards that are tested, be certain students understand the facts or skills specified by each standard. Sharing this information with students can help ease anxiety about what they think is the "unknown."

- Infuse your instruction with test question practice. Incorporate the various types of questions students will encounter on their test—multiple choice, short response, and/or essays—into daily instruction and model strategies for dealing with all types

of questions.

- Share with students your knowledge about how the tests are scored. If available, share the rubrics used to score writing tests and share the cut scores for other core area tests. Students who understand cut scores and scoring practices create a goal and work toward that goal.

- Teach "test" vocabulary. Review released tests, if available, and search for key test words that students may not know. Words like "elicit" and "infer" are words that may show up in a question and confuse a student. Familiarization with words may help a student choose a correct answer.

- Review the correct and incorrect answers to practice tests. Discussing incorrect responses can correct misunderstandings.

Teach your students test-taking strategies. Teach students how and when to use test-taking strategies:

1. *Process of elimination*—when you know at least one answer that is incorrect, cross it off the list. Eliminate the answers that are least likely to be true.
2. *Pacing*—wear a watch to the test or sit near the clock.
3. *Marking in the test booklet*—circle key task words such as "opposite" or "not". Underline key phrases. Check that this is permissible.
4. *Highlighting*—highlight key facts in written texts, task words, and skipped questions.

Continued on next page...



Ideas to Share

FOLDER REWARDS

Each time a student makes a 100 on a test or worksheet or other things, print out things that say stuff like "100 on Reading test!!!" and tape it to a homework folder or any kind of folder. Once the child gets so many taped onto a folder they can get either extra recess, eat lunch with a friend, pick a special prize, etc. This will encourage kids to make good grades.



Helpful Website for Teachers

<http://www.atozteacherstuff.com/>

A to Z Teacher Stuff is a teacher-created site designed to help teachers find online resources more quickly and easily. Find lesson plans, thematic units, teacher tips, discussion forums for teachers, downloadable teaching materials & eBooks, printable worksheets and blacklines, emergent reader books, themes, and more.

The New Teacher Support Program

Prepare Students for High-Stake Tests

(cont...)

5. *Skipping questions*—skip questions that are very difficult or time consuming, mark them on the test booklet, and return when all other questions are complete. Use with caution.
6. *Guessing*—make a best guess as a last resort. Use process of elimination first.

Helping Struggling Students Succeed

Regardless of grouping practices, in every classroom there will be students of various abilities and skill levels. High stakes tests create a unique obstacle to struggling students, and teachers should plan special activities to help struggling students prepare.

- Pair struggling students with a student who has solid content knowledge. Students who are struggling can benefit and learn from students with a greater mastery of the skill or better grasp of the subject matter.
- Pair struggling students with a student who has

already performed satisfactorily on the high stakes test. One-on-one is usually non-threatening and the successful student may share ideas or tips that will help the struggling student.

- Promote confidence in the struggling student. Knowledge that the teacher believes in a struggling student's ability transfers to increased self-confidence.
- Emphasize breaking down tasks and completing one thing at a time. Coach struggling students through appropriate test-taking methodology, emphasizing strategies they can implement when they do not understand or know the answer to a question.

Teachers must be a support network for all students as they work to perform satisfactorily on high stakes tests.—*Janice Christy, Louisa County High School, Louisa, Virginia*



**“I TELL YOU
AND YOU
FORGET. I
SHOW YOU
AND YOU
REMEMBER. I
INVOLVE YOU
AND YOU
UNDERSTAND.”**

**—ERIC
BUTTERWORTH**

**Suggested
Journal
Writing
Prompts
for students this
holiday season:**



- *Draw Santa's sleigh and reindeer.
- *What do you think the North Pole looks like?
- *At Christmas, I can smell/hear/see/taste/feel.....
- *All I want for Christmas is...
- *If you worked for Santa, what would your job be?
- *What would be the best gift you could give someone?
- *What would be the best present to give your Mom or Dad?
- * The presents were all wrapped in pretty bows, Zachary decided to....
- *I love to give to others because....
- *T'was the night before Christmas and

MEET THE PRINCIPALS: Bill Moss

School: [Wilson County Vocational Center](#)

How long have you been a principal at this school? [I have been principal since 1996.](#)

Colleges and universities attended: [University of Tennessee at Knoxville and Middle Tennessee State University.](#)

Special interests and hobbies: [The outdoors and reading.](#)
Who or what inspires you each day as you do your job and why?

[Knowing that students depend on me to offer CTE classes that will make a difference in our lives.](#)

If you had not gone into education, what type of job would you have chosen: [I would have probably been on active duty in the military or been in some occupation that would keep me outdoors.](#)

What is the favorite part of your job: [The best part of my job is helping students be successful.](#)



Suggested Reading for Teachers



Best Christmas Pageant Ever by Barbara Robinson, Judith G. Brown (Illustrator), Judith Gwyn Brown

The Herdmans are absolutely the worst kids in the history of the world. They lie and steal and smoke cigars (even the girls). They talk dirty, hit little kids, cuss their teachers, set fire to Fred Shoemaker's old broken-down toolhouse, and take the name of the Lord in vain. So no one is prepared when the Herdmans invade church one Sunday and decide to take over the annual Christmas pageant.

None of them has ever heard the Christmas story before. Their interpretation -- the Wise Men are a bunch of dirty spies and Herod needs a good beating-- has a lot of people up in arms. But the actual pageant is full of surprises for everyone, starting with the Herdmans themselves.



CHRISTINE MILLER

6TH GRADE/ WATERTOWN ELEMENTARY

The beginning of a new school year is about to begin. You were sitting in the principal's office in your new suit, sweaty palms, butterflies in your stomach, portfolio in hand, and rehearsing your "philosophy of teaching". You introduce yourself with a smile and a firm handshake to the principal. You have been given a chance of a lifetime. This is your chance to make a difference.

I always knew that I wanted to become a teacher. I still remember "dumpster-diving" when I was seven years old. I would grab all of the old teacher editions, workbooks, and any other material that I could get my hands on at the end of every year. That was my "candy store". I would then force my younger sister to be my student as we played school in our basement. That spark of excitement still lives within me after thirteen years of teaching. At the beginning of every school year, you tell yourself that this will be the best year yet. I feel that you are born to be a teacher. You have the motivation and creativity to make any child become successful. You have been given a gift that only certain people can instill into others.

As an aspiring teacher, you never stop planning. You spend countless hours after school and over the weekends making the "perfect" lessons for your students. You have overplanned, organized, and aligned the standards to

Continued on next page

New Teacher Support Group Participants



CHER CARLISLE
MT. JULIET HIGH SCHOOL
SCIENCE TEACHER



JASON COLE
WILSON CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL
MEDIA CONCEPTS/ ELECTRONICS

WHY DID YOU BECOME A TEACHER?

"I am a mid-career professional. Until February, 2007 I was a lab manager/scientist at Vanderbilt. After 14 years I have given all I can to conducting cutting edge research. Now it is time for me to train the next generation of scientists."—Cher Carlisle

WHY DID YOU BECOME A TEACHER?

"I was in the Marine Corps for almost 10 years. I have seen hundreds of young men and women that were not ready for life. It is my goal to help prepare them for all the obstacles they might face in life. I like to see people succeed, not fail. This is just another stepping stone that I can use to help people."—Jason Cole





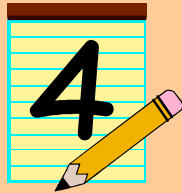
WILSON COUNTY SCHOOLS

Advice and support from the Veterans continued...

every lesson highlighting them in your plan book. You feel that you are ready to conquer the world. No one is going to stop you from teaching the lessons you have put your heart and soul into.

I hope that passion continues with you every year. No one said that teaching would be stress-free; no job is. Remember that the sun will still come up tomorrow if you don't get everything graded, your copies aren't ready, and you have run out of your "emergency" chocolate. You determine what is truly important.

You do make a difference in every child's life. Teaching is a gift. How you visualize your life as teacher is seen through your students. They are the reflection of you and your lifelong goals and ambitions. Thank you for becoming one of us.



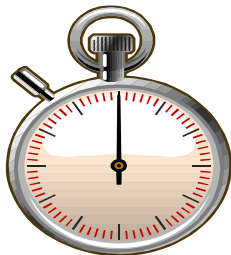
**GOOD TEACHING:
THE TOP TEN RE-
QUIREMENTS**

4—Good teaching is about not always having a fixed agenda and being rigid, but being flexible, fluid, experimenting, and having the confidence to react and adjust to changing circumstances. It's about getting only 10 percent of what you wanted to do in a class done and still feeling good. It's about deviating from the course syllabus or lecture schedule easily when there is more and better learning elsewhere. Good teaching is about the creative balance between being an authoritarian dictator on the one hand and a pushover on the other.

Time Management Tips for Teachers

ORGANIZING THE CLASSROOM

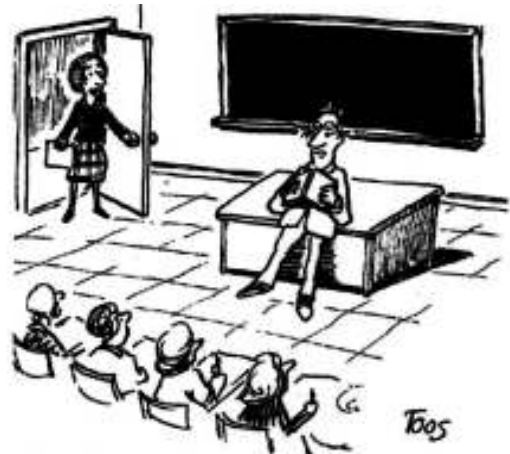
1. Helping your students stay organized will make your classroom operate more efficiently. Devote some time every Friday afternoon to having students clean out and straighten up their desks and notebooks. (You can use this time for attending to your own desk!) everyone will start the next week with a neat workspace where everything



2. Take stock of you're your classroom is set up. A well-managed space can save you and your students from wasting time searching for materials or moving things out of the way. An area that is constantly cluttered or needs cleaning up is probably over-used, and one that is never messy is likely underused.

Continued next week.....

Need a Laugh?



It is the policy of the Wilson County School System not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or disability in its educational programs or employment policies as required by Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Equal Pay Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act.