

Supporting Students During Testing and Assessments

Creating Equitable, Supportive, and Accessible Testing Environments

Purpose & Overview

This guide supports educators in effectively supporting students with disabilities during tests, quizzes, and classroom assessments. Many students experience challenges related to anxiety, processing speed, comprehension, or attention, which can impact how they perform during assessments.

The purpose of this guide is to help teachers implement appropriate supports and accommodations, reduce barriers, and create a testing environment where students can accurately demonstrate their knowledge.

Instructional Outcomes

By applying the strategies in this guide, teachers will be able to:

- Recognize common challenges students face during assessments
 - Apply accommodations appropriately and consistently
 - Reduce anxiety and barriers during testing
 - Support student engagement and focus
 - Ensure students can demonstrate their knowledge effectively
-

Understanding Testing Challenges

Students may struggle during assessments due to:

- anxiety or pressure to perform
- difficulty understanding directions or questions
- slow processing speed
- attention and focus challenges
- time constraints

These challenges can affect how students perform, even when they understand the material.

Common Signs of Difficulty During Testing

Teachers may observe students who:

- rush through tests or finish too quickly
- leave questions blank or incomplete
- frequently ask for clarification
- become frustrated or shut down
- lose focus or become distracted

Testing Supports and Strategies in Practice

<i>Testing Scenario</i>	<i>Student Need</i>	<i>Appropriate Support</i>	<i>How the Teacher Applies It</i>
<i>Student rushes through the test</i>	Anxiety and pacing	Extended time and pacing reminders	Teacher reminds student to slow down and review answers before submitting
<i>Student struggles to understand questions</i>	Language or reading difficulty	Clarified directions or read-aloud support	Teacher rephrases directions or reads them aloud without changing meaning
<i>Student becomes overwhelmed</i>	Task endurance	Break assessment into smaller sections	Teacher allows student to complete one section at a time
<i>Student loses focus</i>	Attention challenges	Reduced distractions	Student is seated in a quiet area or alternate setting
<i>Student avoids difficult questions</i>	Low confidence	Strategy reminders	Teacher encourages starting with easier questions first

Real Classroom Examples

Example 1: *Test Anxiety*

A student rushes through a quiz and finishes very quickly.

Teacher Response:

The teacher provides reassurance and reminds the student to check their work before submitting.

Result:

The student slows down and improves accuracy.

Example 2: *Overwhelm During Testing*

A student stops working midway through a test.

Teacher Response:

The teacher breaks the test into smaller sections and allows a short break between sections.

Result:

The student completes the assessment with less frustration.

Example 3: *Difficulty Understanding Questions*

A student repeatedly asks for help understanding directions.

Teacher Response:

The teacher simplifies and restates directions without giving answers.

Result:

The student is able to continue independently.

Best Practices for Testing Support

Teachers can improve testing experiences by:

- reviewing accommodations before the assessment begins
 - giving clear, simple directions
 - allowing flexible timing when appropriate
 - monitoring student engagement during testing
 - checking in without leading answers
-

Student Testing Check-In

Students can reflect on their testing experience using prompts such as:

- What helped me during this test?
 - What was difficult for me?
 - What strategy did I use when I got stuck?
 - What can I try next time?
-

Teacher Implementation Reflection

Teachers may consider:

- Were accommodations implemented consistently?
 - Were directions clear and accessible?
 - Did students have enough time to complete the assessment?
 - Were students able to stay focused?
 - Did supports help students demonstrate their knowledge?
-

Connection to Instruction and Student Success

Supporting students during assessments helps:

- ensure fair and equitable testing practices
 - improve accuracy of student performance
 - reduce anxiety and frustration
 - support progress toward academic goals
-

Closing Reflection

When teachers provide appropriate supports during assessments, they create an environment where students can demonstrate what they truly know. By reducing barriers and applying accommodations effectively, educators promote confidence, fairness, and meaningful success.