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Test Anxiety

Stephanie Bemboom and Stephanie France

LS 400: Senior Capstone

Spring 2010

Instructed by Dr. Scott Waltz

Backstory: Stephanie Bemboom

Once in a fourth grade math class, I became so ill I was sent to the hospital. If you have ever heard school cannot make you sick, it can. I suffered from such severe test anxiety I had an uncontrollable panic attack while still in elementary school. I felt this same anxiety when I would take standardized, vocabulary, science, spelling, and every other test. I was a smart child hindered by a horrible fear. I hated school I would stay at home sick on certain days because I didn't want to take a test. I would rather fail a class than take a test, even if I knew the material. I was often labeled as lazy, incompetent, and dumb. I had a hard time in school because of all the problems I had taking tests.

Before I entered school I was always labeled as a smart child. I was talking and forming sentences at a young age, my vocabulary was also very advanced. I was a smart child until I reached first grade where I encountered some of my first tests. I have one memory that has and will forever stain my memory. It was time for the state testing, at that time I believe they were called Star Testing. My teachers' name was Mrs. West an over all nice lady, but she was as strict as a Catholic schoolteacher. We were not allowed to write in the test booklet at all. As a first grade student does, I found myself sitting in class bored of reading sentences and filling in bubbles. I started to draw in the booklet. It seemed to me Mrs. West found her way to me as if she had popped out of thin air. "I have told you not to write on the pages of your booklet, have I not? If this cannot be erased you will be forced to sit in that corner for the rest of the test taking time!" Well I started to cry and ruined my booklet anyways. This was where I believe my test anxiety started many other students may have the same experience as me. That was the first of many horrible test experiences I have had.

Mr. Martinez, my archnemesis. He would throw numbers at me from his tool belt; equations would spill from his chalk like sleeping gas. I had very few powers that could fight back. I have never had a mathematical mind; I have always preferred the abstract. He had the hardest tests out of any fourth grade teacher. We would rotate and I had him for math. I was a good student give I had ample time to work and think about one problem. Tests, tests always had to be timed, and he would pack a test with as many questions as he could think of. I had made myself ill in a sea of numbers rocking back and fourth powerless to see land. I sat down already sweating and dizzy from the lack of sleep the night before, looked down, and at that moment I couldn't breath. Tears streaming down my face until life went black. I had fainted and woke up on the floor of the classroom still in shock. My dad had come to school to pick me up and take me to the hospital. Where the doctor declared she could not find anything, except exhaustion. There has to be other students that have had experiences similar to mine that had the same affect.

I had problems taking test even until this day. If given the choice I would rather write a ten-page paper on a subject than take a ten-question test on a subject. I am often so scared to take test I will study for a month in advance and get to the test and still have a hard time focusing. First I must assure myself I will do ok or my mind will go into a state of panic and I will loose vision, sweat, and become ill. I have come a far way from the days of a hospital visit, but I have yet to actually beat this fear. During tests like the CBEST I fall back into old issues like severe test anxiety. Many others are just like me and have a mental block for tests. I am not sure that my test anxiety is ruttled in my first grade experience or not, but I know that I am not alone.

There are many other students that suffer from these same issues. I have a personal connection to test anxiety because of these experiences. I have chosen to look more deeply into test anxiety to help students to not be as scared as I was. I want to help a student before it gets to the point of a breakdown. I want to help teachers understand that they have a large impact on how a student feels about a test. They can control a lot more than just the content of the course.

Backstory: Stephanie France

Since the first day we start school as young children, testing has played an important roll in our success or failure as students. School has always been a vital part of my life, so much that I want to be in a classroom for my entire career as an elementary teacher. However being that I have been through elementary, middle, and high school and am almost done with college, I have experienced testing in all different ways, either taking tests or helping implement them. School may be important to me, but testing has always been something I have dreaded. From the SATs to the CSET, to regular exams in my classes, there has always been something that has stressed me out about taking an exam, and this stress has undoubtedly shown in my scores.

One idea I used to live by in high school was that if I did all my homework and attended every class, then the points I had saved up from this would help me pass my classes and still have wiggle room for getting poor grades on my exams. I am not sure why I have always had trouble with testing; I am an intelligent girl and have always gotten A's and B's. But that frustration I feel right before I start an exam, even to this day is something I have always wanted to grow out of.

A memory of my own test anxiety that has stuck out in my mind since the beginning of elementary school was when I took the STAR tests. My school would have students take the tests in the multipurpose room, sitting at what seemed like a sea of tables and uncomfortable benches for hours on end. I remember my mom packing me a snack of ripe strawberries for that day. During a break in the testing, as I dove into my delicious treat, a small drop of juice from my strawberry dripped down onto my test booklet. Afraid I would get in trouble, I tried patting the stain out, only rubbing it more into the booklet. A proctor saw me do this and came and ripped the strawberry bag out of my hand, reprimanding me for making a mess. I was then on pins and needles throughout the rest of the test. This same proctor, who was a teacher's aid at my school, would visit my classroom from time to time, ironically sometimes during testing time. She

would always make me nervous, even when I was not armed with my fruit artillery. However I find it humorous that something so innocent has stuck out in my mind for this long, almost as a root of the problem for my current ordeal.

I know that test anxiety is something that affects more than just me – students of all ages, all across the nation are having trouble taking exams. The resulting grades that are altered because of these emotions students have are an issue that needs to be addressed. Although my college career is coming to an end, I know I will still encounter tests throughout the rest of my life, including my teaching credential program next year. I would like to find a way to assist students like me to take control of the anxiety exams give us to further succeed. The information we could find could be considered priceless in our education and our lives.

My partner Stephanie and I have become fed up with our anxiety of testing and are determined to find out why or what makes us feel this way before testing. Hopefully we can discover a physical cause or just find great studying advice to pass onto others who are anxious of testing, and even use this advice and information ourselves. No matter what, I'm sure Stephanie and I will be less apprehensive to determine this cause than to take a test about it!

Nature of the Problem

Today's academic world is encountering an issue that is becoming more prevalent day by day: test anxiety. From a student feeling emotions of fear, anxiousness and rampant stress, test anxiety is a hindrance on a student, especially on their resulting grades. The causes of this problem can range from the student themselves, as well as outside factors. Researchers have found solutions, such as feedback, test format, and humor; these assist the student's emotional needs, which result in higher academic achievements. A student must help control these emotions in order to prevent their anxiety from taking control and becoming an ongoing problem that will last well into adulthood.

Test anxiety can be caused by many different environmental factors such as personal and parental pressure. Wigfield and Kennedy addressed this issue and found that a parent can apply an extreme amount of pressure to the point where the student feels inadequate and discouraged. According to Diana Baumrind, pressure is added to students by parents from a primal instinct, forcing the child to perform at their best. Students may also be adding to their own test anxiety by putting unnecessary pressure on themselves to succeed (Wigfield & Hill, 1984; Kirkland 1971).

Another contributing factor to test anxiety is the considerable emphasis America has designated to large-scale testing. Sadker and Zittleman state that the students are not currently failing the tests provided by the schools, the schools are failing the students by providing them with these tests. Teachers are now forced to teach for short-term information rather than teaching for long-term knowledge. Wigfield and Kennedy found this same information to be true when studying high-stakes testing. This stress added around the test comes from the conditions put forth by teachers and administrators, who are reprimanded if their classes do not do well on the state tests.

Testing format is also a reason high-stakes testing can be overwhelmingly stressful. Students were found to have added stress and anxiety while taking a timed, broad knowledge and right/wrong test (Walen, 2002). These tests are given throughout the states and are an example of a “norm” reference exam. George F. Madaus marks that this kind of pressure from these exams will directly affect the cognitive abilities of students, therefore increasing test anxiety and lowering knowledge retention.

The results of students’ emotions due to test anxiety can continue and inhibit their performance throughout many of their educational endeavours. Walen and Williams deduced that when a student is under pressure during testing periods, anxiety prevents an equitable assessment of their skills. Concurrently, Peter D. MacIntyre explicates this similar idea in that a student will experience a cognitive delay or will “freeze up” during an exam, regardless of how prepared they are. They are restrained by their emotions to be able to properly demonstrate the information they have learned. These anxious feelings can immediately become a detriment to a student during assessments that can be carried with them for an infinite amount of time. Students then become more worried about the test itself in addition to their resulting outcome. Students test differently depending on subject matter, preparedness, and focus; embracing the individual differences of students and applying this to assessment can effectively lower the resulting anxiety (Reeve, Heggesad, Lievens, 2009). If this were more commonly utilized, students could control their anxiety before it escalates.

Test anxiety can commence at an early age, and if not facilitated or prevented, can continue into further education. For instance, if a young child encounters test anxiety, as they grow older, these anxious feelings can be prevalent in their careers. Although there are ways for this to be avoided, such as leisurely activities, exercise, or sometimes even substances such as alcohol or tobacco, as described by Patterson, Bennett and Wiitala, students may not have these same luxuries when at a young age. A student who has suffered from long-term test anxiety could already be past a point of recovery, even experiencing apprehension in quizzical situations throughout everyday life. Someone who has experienced anxiety of this sort may even feel pressures in common tasks such as computing a tip at a

restaurant or writing a professional letter with no spelling or grammatical mistakes (Ashcroft, 2002). Feeling these emotions to the extent where it affects a person outside of a scholarly environment is an unfortunate outcome if the stress and anxiety is not expelled or at least tamed. Finding the best way to decrease this anxiety is the first step to recovery.

Feedback plays a major role in reducing test anxiety. Students respond positively to immediate feedback, thus lowering anxiety. According to Attali and Powers, students feel less stress if they have a chance to hear immediate feedback and can revise on spot, also known as the “immediate response and correct” method. The instant ability to revise work can mediate a stronger retention of information at the forefront of learning. As assessed by Walter P. Vlspoel, having an instantaneous response like ones given on a computer adaptive test reduces anxiety and improves test scores by taking pressure off students prior to testing. In order for a teacher to access the success of immediate feedback, students must have a prior knowledge of the process involved. Students still must be just as prepared when entering a test with immediate response as one without it. A factor when giving immediate feedback is the ability for students to be able to pull from prior knowledge to find the correct answer (Anderson, Kulhavy, and Andre, 1972). Students will overall, with the right emersion, benefit from an immediate response with engaging feedback. As well as using immediate response to reduce test anxiety, many studies suggest using humor.

Humor can reduce anxiety overall and can be used as a coping device or an intervention. According to Berk and Nanda, humor can reduce test anxiety overall when written into the chosen form of test or there is a sense of humor surrounding the conditions of the test; students tend to perform better if stress is cancelled by humor. Humor for many Americans is used as a coping device, as proven by Arthur Perlini and Roger Nenonen; this still is true for test anxiety. Students who use humor to cope will perform better under a stressful situation than their counterparts who state suffering from test anxiety and do not use humor. Not only do students use humor to cope with a stressful situation, humor can be used as an intervention during or after a breaking point. Students with a lower sense of humor benefit

greatly from a comedic intervention while in a stressful situation (Newton, Dowd, 1990). Humor can be used before, during and after an exam to prevent and stabilize a stressful testing situation.

There are ways to reduce anxiety just by minimizing the pressures surrounding the outcome. Parents can be a factor in how a student performs on a test at school; they should push their students to do their personal best and not pressure their children to be the best of the class (Baumrind, 1972). Marjorie Kirkland found that students would perform better if they apply their pressure in a focused way. By having the student focus on their success rather than their failure, they are more likely to perform well, both emotionally and scholarly.

Test anxiety is an issue in students that can range from a young age and continue into adulthood. There are many causes of these emotions, from parental stresses to personal goals of achievement. When a student is being assessed by their knowledge, not of the test itself, they seem to have less anxiety over the examination. An outcome can consist of a range of solutions such as humor or feedback to positively reduce anxiety, perhaps even stopping it altogether. Test anxiety will be a constantly ongoing topic of research, and to understand the root of the problem can be a way to discover a solution.

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Project Details

There are many different approaches to reducing and stopping test anxiety. Humor has been proven to reduce stress and anxiety around testing. Our plan is to make a flipbook of humorous activities to use when students enter a stressful testing situation. We would also like to make a pamphlet to inform teachers of their role in reducing anxiety.

We have contacted King Elementary School and talked with Janet Belardo to become our community partner. She said she is willing and eager to have us implement our ideas within her first and second combination classroom. With the help of our community partner, we decided to perform at least two activities with the students to help reduce test anxiety. After gauging student's initial stress levels, we will have the whole class interact and engage in these activities. We will be talking with Mrs. Belardo's six second graders, asking them questions about their test anxiety before exams. After the exercises and the test Mrs. Belardo will implement, we will talk to the same students to see if the exercises worked the way we planned. **See Appendix A for interview questions.** During these interviews, we will video-record them for future playback and reference. **See Appendix B for Parental Permission Form for videos.** Then we will assess their feelings and how our exercises helped. In order for this to be useful, we will leave the flipbook with Mrs. Belardo and encourage her to use the activities before a stressful testing situation. These findings will be implemented into a pamphlet to be passed out to the other teachers at King Elementary to keep and hopefully use in the future.

Along with the flipbook, we want to inform the teacher of the benefit of immediate feedback and what we learned from our activities. Within this pamphlet, we will be adding scholarly information we have found. There will be alternative ways to assess students that provide immediate feedback. We want teachers to be aware of the role they play in reducing test anxiety in their classrooms. **See deliverables for pamphlet and flipbook activities.**

Timeline

February 22-28

This week, we are trying to figure out exactly what we want to do for our project. However we are having trouble finding a community partner because people are not returning our phone calls! Our ideas for the project have mainly included creating a flipbook of tricks for reducing test anxiety and implementing them in a classroom. We then want to take the information we found after using the flipbook to create a pamphlet to give to teachers to employ in their own classrooms. We are excited to expand our idea and create a great project!

March 1-7

For this week, we need to determine what the importance of our project is. Because both of us have suffered from test anxiety, we know that there are other students that are in need of assistance to reduce their stress before it becomes irreversible. We will start drafting our “significance” section of our Capstone notebook, referring to our back-stories for help as to why we think this project is important.

March 8-14

Our project to tackle this week is to determine an assessment for our Capstone. By this time, we should hopefully have heard back from our community partner. We also want to have a few ideas of exercises to add to our flipbook. Our community partner will help us decide to what standards our work should be and if we are up to par.

March 15-21

This week, we have the next three parts of our notebook due. We hopefully have not been procrastinating and have at least the first drafts done. We will work together to edit each other’s work and come up with a clear, coherent addition to our notebook. Then, we will be on spring break!

March 22-28

Spring Break! Take time to relax, however keep contact over the vacation so nothing falls through the cracks. Lots of chatting on the web over break – no falling behind for S&S!

March 29-April 4

This week, we will have to separate from our dynamic duo to do a bit of self-reflection. The journal on significant degree experiences will let us take a look back to our time here at CSUMB. Although we are writing separately, we will still be meeting up to continue working on our project.

April 5-April 11

This week, our community partner Janet Belardo at King School will be back from spring break and we will be figuring out a time within the next couple of weeks to come into her classroom to utilize our flipbook. We also will be writing a retrospective paper about our time within the Liberal Studies department, also reflecting on the mission statement.

April 12-18

We will both be submitting our retrospective papers this week. By this point, we should already have gone into Ms. Belardo's classroom for at least the preliminary meeting with the students about their test anxiety. We also should have Ms. Belardo's feedback on our progress so far on how she thinks our flipbook will work in her classroom.

April 19-25

Although we flood Dr. Waltz's inbox and already meet with him practically every two weeks, we get a mandatory meeting with him this week. Because we already should have gone into Ms. Belardo's classroom at least once at this point, we can bring in evidence of progress of what the students had to say about anxiety.

April 26-May 2

By this week, we should have visited Ms. Belardo's classroom for the second time, using the flipbook with the students. We will then create at least a draft of the pamphlet that will be passed out to other teachers at King School.

May 3-9

We will be finishing up our last two sections of the Capstone notebook: the final deliverables as well as how our project turned out. Hopefully we did a great job and affected at least one or two students with their anxiety. But if not, we will write about it in our final section.

May 10-16

Now that all of the written work is out of the way, it is time to create our presentation for Capstone festival. Whether we decide to present at the podium or with a poster, it is time to gather all of what we have worked on all semester to tell the public what we did.

May 17-22

Capstone Festival is this week! Finishing up the last-minute touches on either our presentation and deliver a great Capstone presentation. And graduation is on Saturday, we are finally college graduates!!

Significance

Stresses within education have become prevalent in today's society more than ever before. With more students seeking post-high school degrees and the work force becoming more cut-throat, education is widespread not as a privilege but as a necessity. However with these responsibilities comes preparation that starts at a young age. Students feel constant pressure from education that has consequently caused an epidemic of testing anxiety that is severely affecting grades. However finding a way for students to reduce their anxiety about academics is the first step in finding a solution to the additional stresses of education.

Test anxiety can be caused by numerous factors, including parental and personal pressure, as well as high-stakes testing. No matter what the cause, more and more students are becoming so nervous about taking a test that it is causing grades to drop in a range of subjects. As future educators and experienced students, Stephanie and I feel passionate about helping other students who suffer from test anxiety to decrease these stresses, ultimately raising grades. Our goal is to reduce the fear many children have of exams to make a difference personally and professionally for these students.

For our Capstone project, we have decided to create a flipbook of humorous and physical exercises teachers can use with their students before tests to help decrease anxiety. After testing our flipbook, we then will create a pamphlet explaining our findings that teachers can reference in addition to the flipbook itself. While our project is geared towards providing materials for teachers, we feel the ultimate significance of the project is helping the students themselves.

Students have more standards now than in the past, having to adhere to benchmarks, STAR testing and other classroom assignments. We are realistic that our flipbook will not completely wipe out all the anxiety a student has; when students learn to relax before exams, the more they will be able to use this same advice in the future. Any little bit helps, and we would be more than happy to hear that at least one student was positively affected by our findings.

Our main goal for the flipbook is to provide a tool to help decrease anxiety in the classroom. Humor will be used as a managing tool for stress. In turn, this will help to reduce student's overall anxiety. By helping them cope with situations inside the classroom, they will be more able to cope with situations outside of the classroom. This will make the students healthier and less stressed, overall aiding to build a healthier school; they will be learning tools they can use for years to come. Teachers will also benefit from our flipbooks and pamphlets by having a healthier classroom.

A goal we have for our flipbook and pamphlet is for teachers to deliver it as a tool they can use for the future. We want to show teachers the immediate effects of the anxiety their students have. With the pamphlet information, teachers can have a keener sense of why students suffer from such anxiety and how to address the causes. Teachers will continue to use it and even develop their own ideas of how to help harness test anxiety. While we are getting involved with only one school, if our project provides a significant result, we ultimately can improve more than just our own remote area.

Being in the Liberal Studies department, we have seen and experienced our fair share of educational practices. We have been told to make an impact in mainstream education, and Capstone has given us a chance to do this. From our personal experiences with testing anxiety, Stephanie and I want to make a difference in students' experiences with education, making it a pleasant one as opposed to a negative and stressful one. Our Capstone aims to help students and teachers alike, and the tools we provide can be used for the future.

Assessment

In order to test how effective the flipbook was in intervening on test anxiety, we interviewed Mrs. Belardo's six second graders in regards to their test anxiety. When implementing our project into the classroom, we visited Mrs. Belardo's first/second combination class two separate times. The first visit, we talked to the students as a group about why we were visiting, as well as interviewed the second grade students about their history of any preexisting test anxiety. When we visited the second time, we brought our flipbook of activities and had the class participate in a few of the fun games. Mrs. Belardo then gave the students a spelling test to help us gauge how our activities may or may not have worked. After the test, we interviewed the same students again, asking them if our games helped them relax before their test. This measures the aim of the project because the exercises are geared to reduce test anxiety.

To help prevent test anxiety from forming, there will be a pamphlet made showing teachers how they can negatively and positively affect student's stress. We will give this to Mrs. Belardo as well as her fellow teachers at King Elementary. Mrs. Belardo will give us feedback on our flipbook and pamphlet; we believe this is the best way to gauge if our information was effective because as a teacher, Mrs. Belardo is our target audience. She can give us the most relevant information through a personal response. This measures the aim of the project because the pamphlet was made to teach teachers what they can do to help.

Results

After visiting the classroom and interacting with the elementary students, overall, our project happily met our expectations. Humor has been an important aspect of reducing test anxiety throughout this entire project, and we were able to smoothly incorporate this type of enjoyment and engagement into all the facets of our activities. Our community partner, Janet Belardo, was a great resource and was very flexible and accommodating. Her second grade students we worked with helped us conclude questions about anxiety, as well as gave us helpful hints about preparing for tests that even we had not thought about! Our project went smoothly and we accomplished our overall goal of lowering test anxiety in students, even with some glitches we encountered.

One of the most important aspects of the flipbook was our incorporation of humor to reduce anxiety. The students were well versed on the idea of deep breathing and calming down before a test, but had never done fun exercises like we introduced to them. The students really enjoyed these activities and had fun participating with us! An example of an activity we did is called "Mirrors," where children sat across from each other and mirrored what their partner did. One thing we saw was their smiles and laughs even seemed to work in unison. This game is silent and humorous and a great thing for this class to do to calm down before any test.

One student, Daniel, who had expressed a large amount of anxiety before tests stated that participating in these games made him much more calm and ready for the test he was going to take. He seems to be a bright student and had a large vocabulary to describe his anxious feelings about testing in general. He told us he feels very nervous and anxious before tests; he would even do times tables in his head to calm himself down. Daniel showed us that all different students have their own ideas of how to calm themselves before tests, which was an exciting discovery for us. After participating in our exercises, Daniel told us that he noticed he was less nervous. He said

he would like to continue to do these games before future test to calm him down. He also informed us that these activities would help him to prepare for the STAR testing that is coming up within the next weeks.

Mrs. Belardo was an excellent community partner to have involved in our project. Her encouragement started from the first time we contacted her and was constantly excited to hear what information we were finding and what we would implement in her classroom. Even before we came to the classroom, Mrs. Belardo had briefed her students on what we were going to do with them and had them excited and ready for us to come in. Even after we left, she has been contacting us, saying that her students found our activities to be fun and engaging, and our involvement showed her that they were gaining something. Mrs. Belardo told us that many of her students have been reminding her of the activities before other tests she has been giving to the class. She was the perfect teacher to work with: her availability was very open and she was always more than helpful. There was time set away just for us to talk to students and for them to take a test with which we could investigate our findings. She gave us great feedback on how to improve the instructions for the flipbook, as well as encouraged and enjoyed our classroom presence. One example of her improvement was to add “watering the flowers” while doing “Seed to Flower.” She also encouraged us to state that “Line Up” should be done with minimal to no help from the teacher. **See deliverables for individual flipbook activities.** Her support definitely made the project flow smoothly!

Although Mrs. Belardo was a fantastic community partner, we found it hard to find other outside help. We contacted all seven of the school psychologists within the Monterey Peninsula Unified School District and did not get a single reply. We would have ideally had many teachers and many resources to talk to and get advice from, but it was difficult to get a response from practically anybody we reached out to. However along with Mrs. Belardo being a great partner for our project, she is also a great resource regarding the pamphlet we created along with our research. The pamphlet is a short overview of findings within our research and field work that we plan on passing out along with our flipbook. Mrs. Belardo encouraged us to pass out this information to her fellow teachers at King Elementary,

which hopefully will spread our knowledge on the issue of test anxiety. Although it would have made our project stronger if there was more support, regardless of how many teachers we can come in contact with, the classroom we were involved with was extremely helpful and enjoyable.

One thing we also believe would have been beneficial to our project would be to have older children to work within addition to Mrs. Belardo's class. These second grade students were right at the age where high-stake testing was just being introduced, but they did not seem to be experienced enough with difficult curriculum to feel strong anxiety over testing. Older students would have an easier time being able to describe their feelings about testing, as well as have an arsenal of testing emotions they have felt compared to the younger students. Many of Mrs. Belardo's students were unclear with what feeling words they had about testing besides happy or sad, and were shy and reluctant to talk to new people. Many of the students would also not answer open-ended questions and would only respond with a yes or no. Potentially, we could have made drawings of faces that they could have identified with to express their feelings. Having older children would have made our project go more smoothly, however we are happy with the information we did find.

One aspect of our research that we wanted to implement in the classroom, but could not, was the activities based around a high-stakes testing situation. There are too many rules and legalities that prevent anyone from entering campus during those times. At any grade level, these kinds of tests are a major source of anxiety and stress for students. These activities would benefit the students the most during these stressful times because this is a new and scary thing for them. There is a lot of pressure built up on the students to perform well, from schools, teachers, and parents. These activities would be a needed release for students, and hopefully Mrs. Belardo will use our flipbook before her students begin their STAR tests in a few weeks.

We felt a sense of accomplishment while walking out of Mrs. Belardo's classroom. We had some bumps in the road, but were able to overcome any difficulties to produce a great result. This experience also helped us find things that would be beneficial if we are to

implement this project in our own future teaching careers. Overall, our project did what we set out to do: lower student's anxiety surrounding testing. We hope that our flipbook will be used for years to come, benefiting more and more students.

Deliverables

Flipbook activities:

Boom Chicka Boom

I said a boom chicka boom!

[Students repeat]

I said a boom chicka boom!

[Students repeat]

I said a boom chicka rocka, chicka rocka, chicka boom!

[Students repeat]

Oh yeah (echo), uh huh (echo), next time (echo)

A little **softer**... (echo)

A little **louder**! (echo)

A little **slower**... (echo)

A little **faster**! (echo)

Line Up

Have students line themselves up (without teacher assistance) in various ways. To get them acquainted with the exercise, first have them line up by height. As their skill at the exercise increases, have them line up by height without talking. Then you can, depending on success levels and age, have them line up by name alphabetically, age, birth date or foot size. This game can be played inside the classroom before a test, or outside when lining up to go inside after recess, lunch, etc.

Buttons

Hi, my name is Joe and I work in a button factory.

I've got a wife, two kids, both boys, uh huh!

And I spend my days pushing buttons.

One day my boss came up to me and said, "Are you busy Joe?"

And I said, "No, Mo!"

He said, "Push the button with your right finger."

He said, "Push the button with your left finger."

He said, "Push the button with your nose."

He said, "Push the button with your tongue."

Seed to Flower

In a circle, students crouch into a ball, or a "seed." Then students slowly sprout and grow, eventually flowering towards the sun. When the students finally grow into their flowers, they jump into the air, letting out relaxing sighs. Teachers can narrate the growing of the seeds to flowers by "watering" the students while they are seeds, or raising their arms, acting as the sunshine helping the seeds grow.

Mirrors

Involves students grouped into pairs, with one student mirroring the actions of the other. Designating students as "Partner A" and "Partner B" helps teachers shift between who leads within the pairs easily and efficiently.

Magic Tag

This fun chasing game involves suspense, laughter and exercise. Designate students as: giant (arms up with loud roars), elf (hands up as “pointy ears”), or wizard (waves wand while saying "kazaam").

Giant beats elf, elf beats wizard, wizard zaps giant.

Human Knot

Form students into groups of four. Tell them to put their right hand into the air and grab the person’s right hand across from them (**not** the person immediately next to them). Have them untangle the human knot without letting go of any hands.

Pull a Joke

Have students partner up. Put jokes written on small pieces of paper into a hat. Have one student pull out a joke and have them read it to their partner. Have the partners switch back and forth with pulling and reading.

Twister

Have students partner up. Demonstrate how: Put arms out so you can clap your hands crossed over one another, then pull them in towards your body. Have their partner point and tell the one with the twisted hands which finger to move around. Make sure the student pointing to the fingers does not touch the actual finger.

Appendix A

Interview questions for students on first visit:

How do you feel before a test?

Why do you feel that way?

Do you feel you are ready?

What do you think would help?

On a scale of 1-5, how bad do you feel about tests?

Interview questions for students on second visit, after test with exercises played before:

Did like these games?

What about them did you like?

How did they make you feel?

Was it easier or harder to take your test?

On a scale of 1-5, how helpful were the activities?

Appendix B

April 22, 2010

Parents,

This letter is to ask permission for your student to be filmed for educational purposes. The footage taken will not be used for any reason other than as a supplemental tool for lessons. If you have any questions, please contact your teacher.

I give permission for to use the footage of _____ (student name) to be used educationally:

Yes

No

Parent Signature

anx·i·e·ty /æŋ'zi:ti/

Distress or uneasiness of mind caused by fear of danger or misfortune

pres·sure /'preʃər/

A constraining or compelling force or influence

test /tɛst/

The means by which the presence, quality, or genuineness of anything is determined; a means of trial

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Janet Belardo

Ms. B's 1st & 2nd combo class

King Elementary School

CSUMB Liberal Studies Department



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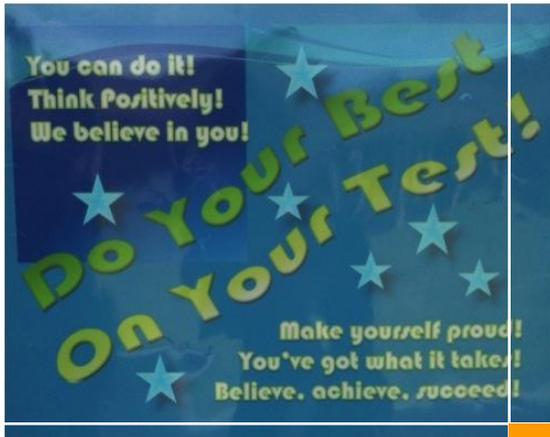
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A, B, or C?

Strategies for Reducing Test Anxiety

Stephanie Bemboom
Stephanie France





Our Research...

According to Attali and Powers (2010), students feel less stress if they have a chance to hear immediate feedback and can revise on spot, also known as the "immediate response and correct" method. The instant ability to revise work can mediate a

stronger retention of information at the forefront of learning

According to Berk and Nanda (2006), humor can reduce test anxiety overall when written into the chosen form of test or there is a sense of humor surrounding the conditions of the test; students tend to perform better if stress is cancelled by humor.

Our Project...

Many children suffer from severe test anxiety that inhibits their performance throughout many years of their education. Personal and parental pressures, a bad testing experience, as well as high-stake testing formats are just some of the causes of student anxiety. We looked at anxiety on two levels: student stresses and teacher prevention.

To help students cope with their anxiety, we made a flipbook of fun and engaging physical and mental activities that help lower student stress levels before a test. We interviewed students about their stresses to see if the activities we implemented helped to calm student stresses. We then compiled the information into a pamphlet to provide to teachers for further use in their classrooms. The pamphlet held the findings of our activities, research on alternate test forms and the benefit of immediate feedback.

Our goal is to help students feel more confident about taking tests and to help teachers better understand test anxiety.

Our Findings...

Humor has been an important aspect of reducing test anxiety throughout this entire project, and we were able to smoothly incorporate this type of enjoyment and engagement into all the facets of our activities. An example of an activity we did is called "Mirrors," where children sat across from each other and mirrored what their partner did. One thing we saw was their smiles and laughs even seemed to work in unison. This game is silent and humorous and a great thing for this class to do to calm down before any test.

One student, Daniel, who had expressed a large amount of anxiety before tests stated that participating in these games made him much more calm and ready for the test he was going to take. He told us he feels very nervous and anxious before tests; he would even do times tables in his head to calm himself down. He expressed that these fun activities made test taking easier. Each teacher must find a way to reduce anxiety that works for his or her classroom, and the incorporation of humor has been proven to be effective.

