

Strategies Teachers Use to Help Students with Test Anxiety in Limited Resource Environments

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Amanda Morris, M-M Intervention Specialist

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This Master's Research Project has been approved  
for the Department of Teacher Education

*Dianne M. Gut*

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Dianne M. Gut, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Special Education

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John E. Henning, Ph.D., Professor and Chair of the Department of Teacher Education

### **Abstract**

This study focuses on test anxiety and how teachers can identify and assist students who exhibit this form of anxiety cope and succeed academically. The literature reviewed for this study varied from how researchers determine the extent of test anxiety, what scales and models researchers prefer to use in determining test anxiety to strategies and methods researchers found to assist student with test anxiety. This research project was designed to determine what strategies practicing teachers have used and found successful to help improve student performance for those who experience test anxiety.

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## **Strategies Teachers Use to Help Students with Test Anxiety in Limited Resource Environments**

Everyone has taken a test at some point in their life. Testing has become common in everyday life, from school content-specific tests to tests taken to move up in jobs status. In today's schools, testing is used to determine if students are mastering the information being presented during instructional time. Students' grades depend on how well they perform on these tests. Students are also required to pass grade level achievement tests, also known as high-stakes tests, in order to graduate. As a result of the attention focused on passing important tests throughout one's educational career, a great deal of pressure added to achievement and grades. As a result of the increased pressure to do well, many children, adolescents and young adults become anxious when presented with tests (Collins, 1999; Huberty, 2010 Supon, 2004). This form of anxiety is known as test anxiety. The medical definition of anxiety according to Merriam-Webster is an abnormal and overwhelming sense of apprehension and fear often marked by physiological signs (as sweating, tension, and increased pulse), by doubt concerning the reality and nature of the threat and by self-doubt about ones capacity to cope with it. Test anxiety has been acknowledged in the past, but only briefly due to minimal academic implications. As time has progressed more weight has been placed on tests results. Due to an increased pressure to do well on tests, students are becoming more stressed about the outcome, which in turn affects their performance results (Cassady, 2002). Since the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001) was passed, there has been a huge increase on test performance and expectations that students are expected to achieve (NCLB, 2001). Studies of students from elementary to college, indicate that due to the added pressure there has been a steady increase in

the prevalence of test anxiety, (Cheek, 2002; Flannery, 2008; Huberty, 2010; McDonald, 2001; Parks-Stamm, 2008; Stowell, 2010; ).

Due to the increased rate of test anxiety, there has been a need for many teachers to find a way to help their students who experience test anxiety, succeed, and do well on tests. There are many teachers who have found that specific strategies work better for some students and some work better for others (Cheek, 2002; Collins, 1999; Erbe, 2007; Flannery, 2008; Huberty, 2010; Paul, 2007; Stowell, 2010; Supon, 2004). One obvious problem many teachers notice is that students are doing poorly on their assessments, but they do not realize that some of these students have moderate to severe test anxiety. Since test anxiety research is relatively new, there are still teachers who are not aware of this form of anxiety. They have not been given the opportunity to help their students since they are unable to identify this it, and in turn provide students with strategies to help increase test scores.

This research project focuses on how teachers assist students they believe have test anxiety. Specifically, it was designed to determine what strategies teachers use to help improve student performance. The findings of this research may help current and pre-service teachers to identify students who exhibit some form of test anxiety, and provide them with tools to help these students.

### **Review of the Literature**

For this study, the review of literature focused on research regarding strategies teachers use to assist students with test anxiety. The literature varies from how researchers determine the

extent of test anxiety, what scales researchers prefer to use in determining test anxiety, to strategies and methods researchers found assist students with test anxiety.

### **Types of Test Anxiety**

Huberty (2010) explains there are two types of test anxiety that students exhibit. These are *trait anxiety* and *state anxiety*. “Trait anxiety refers to anxiety that is chronic and pervasive across situations and is not triggered by specific events. State anxiety refers to anxiety that occurs in specific situation and usually has a clear trigger” (Huberty, 35). He explains these may be related such that, generally when a student has a high state anxiety, they also have some measure of trait anxiety as well.

Supon (2004) explains the types of test anxiety a little differently. She suggests there are three types, but instead of focusing on different types of anxiety, she focuses on student achievement. According to her research, there are three types of test anxious students. First are students who lack the proper study skills and the ability to organize or comprehend the main ideas of the information being taught. Second are students who possess proper study skills but also possess fear of failure when experiencing assessment. Finally are the students that believe they possess quality study skills, but in reality they do not, leaving this type continually in anxiety when given assessments.

Even though there are different types of test anxiety, the influences of test anxiety remain the same. Collins (1999) identifies four causes of test anxiety. First is proposed to be a learned behavior resulting from the expectations of parents, teachers or significant others in the students

life. Another cause may be the association student has built between grades or test performance and personal worth. Next, test anxiety may reflect a fear of disappointing or alienating friends, family and/or parents because of poor performance or imperfect academic ability. Finally students may experience test anxiety stemming from feelings of lack of control and/or an inability to change one's present life situation (Collins, 1999).

Another group of researchers outline very similar influences on test anxious students. Putwain, Woods and Symes (2010) found that achievement goals (fear of failure), perception of confidence and situation influences impact test anxiety for students. For some students, the teachers' behaviors influence their performance and anxiety (Collins, 1999; Supon, 2004). Therefore, it is important for teachers to keep this in mind as they go through their day. It is possible for teachers to minimize these influences in the students' classroom experience, and as a result, positively impact test scores and achievement.

With increases in high stakes testing (standardized testing) in education, comes speculation of a correlation between test scores and test anxiety.

Over the last several years, graduation has come to depend on passing standardized test. As a consequence, more students are likely to have anxiety when taking such tests and their ability to do their best will be impaired. Consequently, some students may fail sections of these exams despite knowing the material. (Huberty, 2010, p.36)

With this insight, it is imperative that together, teachers and students find ways that will help students experience success. One way this can be achieved is to have teachers trained in the causes and indicators of test anxiety.

Currently some teachers believe test anxiety is just an excuse for students to stop paying attention in class, completing homework, and studying (Black, 2005). This kind of attitude can be detrimental to student achievement and success. Passig and Moshe (2008) researched ways to impact pre-service teachers' awareness of test anxiety and found that when given a 3D simulation, that depicted what it's like to take a test with test anxiety (compared to watching a movie about test anxiety), teachers' awareness improved and were able to relate better to students with this condition. This type of high-tech training may not be accessible for most teachers, but teachers can be trained by their principals and school mental health practitioners about test anxiety including strategies and interventions that can assist students.

### **Assessments Used to Identify Test Anxiety**

To determine if students have test anxiety, teachers, school counselors and psychologists need to assess the students. The assessment of students to determine if they have test anxiety varies. In the literature, researchers have stated that there are a variety of models used to determine if a student has test anxiety. Some of the models mentioned include the classical test theory, and the cognitive test anxiety scale. The researchers in this literature state that there is not one specific model or theory used by everyone (Cassady & Johnson, 2002; Conroy & Elliot, 2004; Elliot & McGregor, 1999; Wicherts & Scholten, 2010). These studies all focused on the effectiveness of a specific model or scale, which differed in each study.

## Strategies and Interventions

Strategies and interventions used to help students with test anxiety are among the more common topics found in the literature. There are many strategies to choose from, but they all depend on the individual student's unique needs.

**Student-focused strategies.** Flannery (2008) and Paul, Elam and Verhulst (2007) found that controlled breathing strategies helped students to relax and focus their attention to accomplishing the task at hand. Flannery (2008) found that teachers use controlled breathing to help quiet the students' minds and focus on the assessment. Flannery states:

Quiet your mind. Let it wander to somewhere peaceful. On testing days in Clifton, New Jersey, Donna Weiss takes her seventh- and eighth-graders on just a journey to contentment. First her students close their eyes, then she asked them to inhale, hold and release, three times. With their eyes closed, she narrates a walk on the beach, the sensation of the sun on their shoulders, the wind on their face, the feelings of aloneness- or maybe a hike in the mountains. Then she brings them back to the classroom with three more breaths... It unknots anxiety and costs nothing! (p. 42).

Paul, Elam and Verhulst (2007) studied how deep breathing meditation was "used as a tool to counter symptoms associated with testing stresses" (p.288). They found participants in the study were, at the end, able to successfully identify when they were getting stressed or anxious and knew how to react in a positive manner to counter these symptoms. Deep breathing meditation allowed students to calm down and focus on situations presented to them.

**Teacher-based strategies.** Flannery (2008) found that teachers use multiple strategies. Some of these include burning peppermint-scented candles during the test (peppermint is said to stimulate brain activity), rest between tests with coloring books and crayons and using physical stretches before test taking (Flannery, 2008). Using a ‘cheat sheet’ helps prepare students for the information being tested, and gives them a confidence about the information they know. Erbe (2007) stated that college students performed much better on their exams when given the option to create an 8 ½ by 11 sheet of paper with reminder information (different for each student) to use during their test. Another study completed by Stowell and Bennett (2010) showed that college students with test anxiety performed better when given the opportunity to take their tests online. This gave test anxious students the opportunity to determine where and when they would take the test. “Because students can take their exam virtually anywhere they have a computer and internet connection, they can take their test in an environment that is less likely to contain anxiety-provoking stimuli” (Stowell & Bennett, 2010, p 169).

The literature reviewed for this study covered a very broad spectrum. Research was reviewed regarding certain models and scales used to assess students that exhibit test anxiety. Other research focused predominantly on what strategies educators use to assist students that experience test anxiety. Additional literature was reviewed to develop the purpose and methods used in this study.

## **Methods**

This research project focuses on how educators are able to assist students that exhibit test anxiety. The information gained was designed to determine what specific strategies educators use to help improve student performance. To gain this information, participants were asked to

answer a series of questions, both extended response and multiple choice, that focused on teachers' experiences with test anxious students, the strategies they have used to assist students, if they have had official training specifically related to test anxiety, and the best advice they have received or given when they have taken or given a test.

**Participants.** The location chosen for this study was an intermediate school located in a suburban/rural Appalachian County in Ohio. This location was selected due to the researchers' prior years of substitute teaching in the building. The participants in this study are teachers that educate students from fourth to sixth grade, with a range of learners needing services for mild to moderate special education needs to students identified as gifted and talented. Many of the participants teach in general education classes as well as inclusion classes (where students with disabilities are educated alongside their typically developing peers). These teachers have one to thirty one years of teaching experience.

**Instrument.** The tool used to obtain data was an anonymous researcher-created online survey that included 10 questions regarding test anxiety. The results were gathered using the online survey created using Qualtrics Survey software. This software allowed the researcher to create an online survey of any length, and send a link to any participants to guide them to the survey. Once the participants clicked the link they were automatically given a response identification number that combined numerical and alphabetical symbols to create their unique ID. This was done in order to keep the responses anonymous.

The questions participants were asked to answer included open-ended questions that allowed them to elaborate in their own words, as well as multiple choice questions that allowed participants to choose one or more of the responses provided. Some examples of the open-ended

questions incorporated in the survey include: *What strategies have been the most helpful for your students? Why? What is the best advice you have been given/or give when you take/give a test?*

Some examples of the multiple choice questions include: *What strategies have you used to help your students with test anxiety? (visualization, controlled deep breathing, muscle relaxation, positive self-talk, dress comfortably, look for key terms in the questions, watch out for trick questions, read directions carefully, take a break when needed, other\_\_\_\_\_). What type of classroom do you teach? (general education, inclusion, intervention pull out, special education).*

See appendix for a complete list of questions included in the online survey.

**Procedures.** Potential study participants were sent an email inviting them to participate in the study. The email included details of the study and the purpose of the study. Attached to the email was a form explaining that if the teachers chose to participate, they would be giving their consent by simply clicking the link provided at the end of the document. This link allowed teachers to anonymously complete the survey online without any identifiers.

Once the participants completed their survey, the software stored their answers which allowed the researcher to view the data in aggregate or individual responses. After two weeks the survey was closed, in order to begin the analysis process.

## **Results**

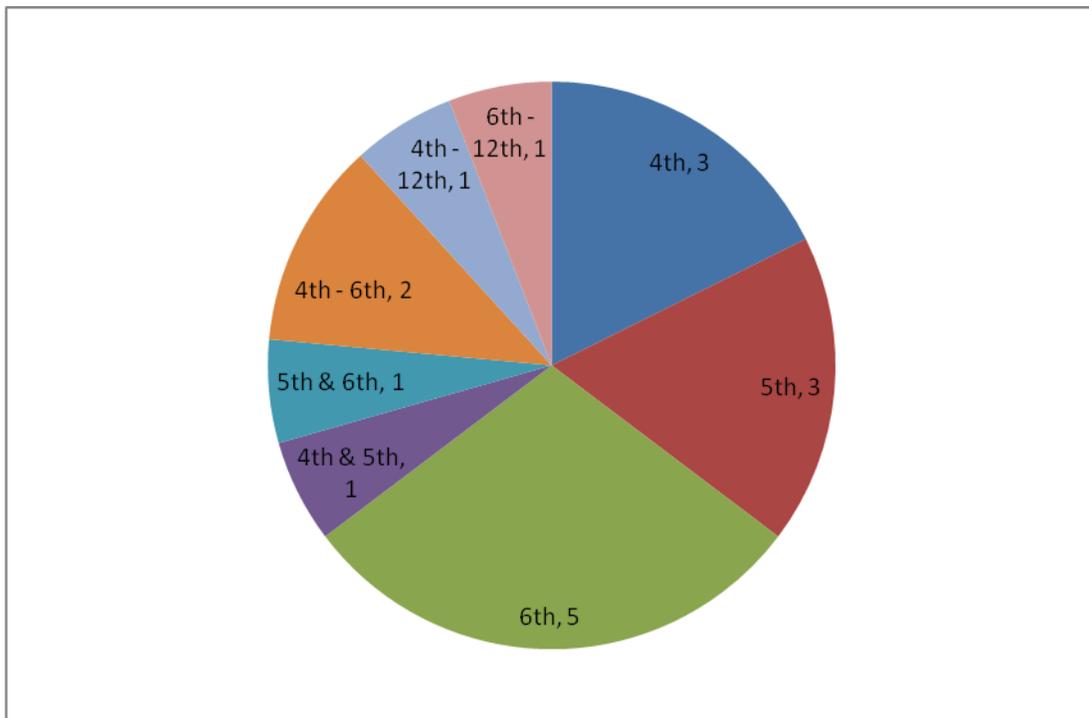
The data obtained from the surveys were analyzed by comparing the responses to each of the ten questions. The survey questions consisted of open response, multiple choice and multiple answer questions. For the open-response questions, the researcher compiled the answers into

lists and analyzed for common themes. Descriptive statistics were calculated for responses to the multiple choice questions which were then reported in graphs and tables.

The survey was sent out to 35 potential participants and completed by 17 participants, resulting in a response rate of 49%. Figure 1 indicates the number of teachers who participated and the ranging of grades they taught from fourth grade to twelfth grade.

Figure 1

*Grades Taught by Participating Teachers*



**Number or years teaching.** Responses to a question regarding the number of years teachers had been teaching ranged widely. Some teachers have taught for one year while others had taught up to thirty years. Table 1 shows the individual responses of each participant.

Table 1

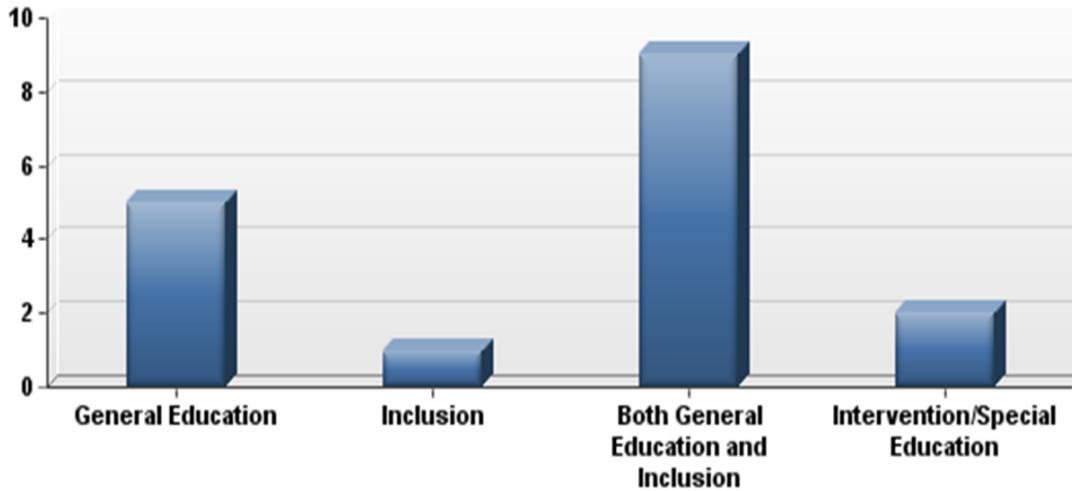
*Number of Years Teaching by Respondent*

<b>Number of Years Teaching</b>	<b># of Participants</b>
One - Five	2
Six - Ten	5
Eleven - Fifteen	2
Sixteen - Twenty	3
Twenty - Twenty Five	2
Twenty Six - Thirty	3

**Teaching assignment.** Participants were also asked what type of classroom they teach currently in. The options included General Education, Inclusion, both General Education and Inclusion, Intervention/Special Education. The responses for this question indicate that 53% of the participants taught both general education and inclusion classrooms, 29% taught general education, 6% taught in an inclusion setting and 12% taught in intervention/special education classrooms. This information is represented in Figure 2.

Figure 2

*Type of Classroom Taught*



*Definition of Test Anxiety.* Teachers were asked to define test anxiety. As a result, there were seventeen individual answers to this question. Table 2 summarizes teachers' responses.

Table 2

*Teachers' Definitions of Test Anxiety*

<b>Participant ID</b>	<b>Participant Response</b>
6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher	A student, who under normal circumstances - understands the material but on a test becomes so nervous that he/she freezes and is not able to recall the information. Some students may even become

	physically ill as a result of their nervousness.
6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher	Any adverse reaction to any kind of testing- stomach aches, physical pains, trouble breathing, emotional breakdowns
4 <sup>th</sup> - 12 <sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher	Students developing a "state of mind" that adversely affects performance on an exam.
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher	a level of anxiety that affects academic performance on assessments
4 <sup>th</sup> - 6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher	Test anxiety is a negative emotional response to the process of being evaluated/assessed.
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher	Feelings and behaviors which result in a child not being able to complete to the best of his/her ability a given task or test. These could include feelings of being overwhelmed, panic, illness, being unable to focus.
6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher	becoming worried about not doing well on the test; studying the wrong information and fear of not remembering the necessary information.
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher	test anxiety is a when a student does not perform to expected or previously demonstrated levels based on stresses associated with an assessment that can involve the following: timed response, timed readings, limited methods of response, et.al.
6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher	no response
6 <sup>th</sup> - 12 <sup>th</sup> Grade	The state of being nervous or uncomfortable taking a formal

Teacher	assessment
5 <sup>th</sup> & 6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher	Students who do not perform to their highest potential based on how worried they are about the test.
6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher	Unusual fear of taking a test that interferes with a student's ability to demonstrate their knowledge.
6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher	test anxiety involves a combination of emotional and physical aspects, stemming from the stress of worrying and dreading one's performance on an assessment, and can interfere with learning and can lower test performance.
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher	When a student has a look of fear or anxiousness prior to taking a test or during and who has already decided they are going to fail the test. Often times these students do not know how to properly prepare for a test.
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher	Fear that makes a student nervous and might contribute to not being as successful as they might be
4 <sup>th</sup> & 5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher	Student's anxiety impairs their performance with any formal assessment
4 <sup>th</sup> - 6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher	nervousness and/or anxiousness brought on by various stressors before, during, and sometimes after a testing situation

In response to a question asking teachers if they had ever worked with a student with test anxiety, there was a unanimous positive response from all seventeen participants. This question

was followed by another asking teachers what strategies they have used to help their students with test anxiety. Respondents were encouraged to select all that apply for this question, so each participant was able to indicate more than one strategy. They were also encouraged to write in a strategy that was not listed. Figure 3 indicate the results from this question, while Table 3 lists other strategies participants listed.

Figure 3

*Strategies Utilized by Teachers for Students with Test Anxiety*

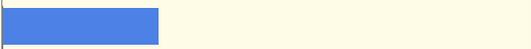
#	Answer		Response
1	Visualization		5
2	Controlled deep breathing		13
3	Muscle relaxation		5
4	Positive self-talk		14
5	Take a break when needed		16
6	Dressing comfortably		3
7	Look for key terms in the questions		13
8	Watch out for trick questions		8
9	Read directions carefully		13
10	Other		13

Table 3

*Other Strategies Listed by Teacher for Test Anxiety*

Other
Have had students come prior to the actual testing time to get a head start.
relaxed attitude- water and snacks
cognitive behavioral therapy
building confidence with extra practice or practice quizzes
expressing confidence in the student
putting the test into perspective
move on if a question stumpss them, then return to the question at the end of the test
small group, seating placement, encouraging notes from parents
individual or small group administration, working a section at a time
Brain Flush: students use the first 5 minutes of a test to write down everything they learned about the topic of the test, then can use these "notes" on the test
Students read questions aloud to me. Students complete three to five problems and then review their answers with me. Students orally explain their thoughts and then they write their responses.
Study the way the test is given-- if it is an oral test, study orally; if it's a written test, study by writing the responses, terms, and definitions that you may need to know-- I think this I learned that studying this way helps you best due to muscle memory, not exactly sure though; also I have the kids skip the problems that they don't know, keep working, and come back to the tricky questions later

**Successful strategies for test anxiety.** Participants were asked what strategies they found work best for their students with test anxiety. Responses to this open-ended response question, resulted in many individualized answers that are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

*Teacher-Reported Successful Strategies for Students with Test Anxiety*

Successful Strategies
Permitting the students to test at a less formal time in a small group
preparation for tests and discussing test taking strategies. When students feel empowered they do better on all tasks
Breaking the test up in "chunks" and allowing the student extra time to complete it if needed.
cognitive behavioral therapy techniques
building confidence
Positive self talk and expressing confidence in the student--with 9-10 year olds it seems to help them re focus. Breaks are also really helpful to get the mind off of the stress of the testing situation. I also allow children to take the time they need without fear of being judged or rushed.
putting a perspective on the test
knowing the general format of the test to be given, SQ3R techniques, positive self-talk have been helpful because these are techniques that most can use easily and can be used in everyday situations so they are skills that are used all year,not just during high stakes testing days.
deep breathing, breaks
Breathing. It calms students and helps them focus
Taking lots of breaks, chunking test materials
individual or small group administration - even though I do not prompt answers, students seem more comfortable having the teacher close by
taking a break and having questions reread to them
taking a break when needed, because my students often get frustrated when they forget or get stumped, increasing their test anxiety further; taking a break and breathing allows them to calm down, re-focus, and remember and use other problem-solving strategies to complete the test
Focus on remain calm
Student rereading the questions aloud, orally explaining ideas before they answer the questions, chunking questions, and underlining key terms. When students underline key terms they can filter out the information that does not apply. Reading the question and orally answer the question using another sensory that help the student comprehend, organize, and feel confident in their answer. Chunking helps to lessen their anxiety when the quantity of the questions is overwhelming
Positive self talk, taking a break, reading carefully, study the way the test will be presented

**Teacher training regarding test anxiety.** Participants were asked whether or not they had received any specific training about test anxiety. The majority of the responses, 59%, stated they had not received or taken any training related to test anxiety. There were 24% who were not sure if they had received any training about this topic or not. The remaining 18% stated they had received training. Figure 4 indicates the responses to this question.

Figure 4

*Teacher Training Related to Test Anxiety*



The next question was related to the previous, as it asked the nature of the training and when they received it, if they had answered yes to the previous question. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

*Types of Training Received Regarding Test Anxiety*

<b>Training Received</b>
spring quarter CBT at Ashland University
I have been using Brain Gym strategies.
SQ3R training (on the job training when my third graders were shown how the method works). Formal adult training, no.
general education classes (methods, teaching diverse learners, literacy development for struggling learners, etc.) during undergraduate teaching program

The final question asked participants what the best advice has been that they have been given/or give when they take or give a test. Their responses are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6

*Advice Regarding strategies to Alleviate Test Anxiety*

Advice
Prepare well and do your best - beyond that try not to worry.
skip questions when you are unsure of answers
Many times students develop by watching other kids. Giving them alternate place to take the test helps.
relax think positive and take your time
Be prepared/study and know the material
I always type YOU CAN DO IT on all of the tests that I give. I have children who circle it, highlight it, etc...
Look for the questions you can answer first.
Take your time, remain as calm as possible, and above all...you are ready for this! Show what you know and if something seems to stump you, what makes the most logical sense.
be calm, as long as you do your best that's all you can expect
Relax and have fun.
relax, it is not the end of the world, giving your best effort is the most important thing
highlight key words, take your time, check your work before turning it in
I tell my kids that tests don't define them, but explain the purpose behind them in the classroom. A bad grade is not the end of the world but a clue that we need to work on being prepared and overcoming the fear of taking the test.
take deep breaths, take your time, read ALL directions carefully, write down whatever you can remember about the topic if you get stuck
Try to focus on your breathing and let your brain think about something else
Believe in yourself and ask questions when a question is confusing
For me: Relax, think positively, study the way that the test is given (written exam, written practice), skip and return later to the tricky questions, really look at what the question is asking of you; I typically advise my students to use the strategies that work best for me, I also provide them with stretch/walk breaks, I really encourage positive self talk

The findings indicate teachers are aware of test anxiety in their classrooms, regardless of the lack of training regarding this topic. The results show that participants were able to

identify what test anxiety is and assist students by providing multiple strategies to alleviate test anxiety. Participants also reported they had not been provided with any training on test anxiety.

### **Discussion, Recommendations and Conclusions**

The results from the research confirmed the findings in the literature reviewed for this study indicating that teachers incorporate strategies in their classrooms to help alleviate test anxiety, which then helps improve student performance. Results also indicated that many educators are not being provided with training regarding test anxiety. Huberty (2010) concluded that, “effective intervention begins with school administrators, who can create an awareness of the problem and provide resources and leadership to help students. Mental health specialists and teachers can be strong advocates who help anxious students improve school performance” (p.38).

Analysis of the data from the survey indicates that many teachers are aware of test anxiety. Though they may be aware of it and utilize a variety of strategies to help their students, the researcher found that many, if not all of them had little or no training in regards to test anxiety. The purpose of this study was to determine if teachers were able to identify test anxiety, and the strategies that they used to assist students with test anxiety. An additional purpose was to determine if the knowledge of test anxiety was provided through teacher training.

It was determined that all of the study participants were able to identify at least one or more component of test anxiety. The definitions provided by the participants demonstrated teachers’ ability to identify test anxiety in students. Many of the participants identified the

physiological signs that result from test anxiety such as, *“Any adverse reaction to any kind of testing- stomach aches, physical pains, trouble breathing, emotional breakdowns,”* and *“Feelings and behaviors which result in a child not being able to complete to the best of his/her ability a given task or test. These could include feelings of being overwhelmed, panic, illness, being unable to focus.”*

Additionally, participants were able to identify how students are unable to cope with the threat, also known as the test, such as, *“A student, who under normal circumstances - understands the material but on a test becomes so nervous that he/she freezes and is not able to recall the information. Some students may even become physically ill as a result of their nervousness.”* Another teacher defined it as *“Students developing a “state of mind” that adversely affects performance on an exam.”* Others defined it as, *“Students who do not perform to their highest potential based on how worried they are about the test”* and *“test anxiety involves a combination of emotional and physical aspects, stemming from the stress of worrying and dreading one's performance on an assessment, and can interfere with learning and can lower test performance.”*

The answer to the question regarding what strategies teachers use also demonstrated that the participants know a little about test anxiety. It's important for the teachers to be aware of how test anxiety affects students, in order for them to accurately give their student successful tools to help them overcome that anxiety. All of the strategies the educators were able to choose from, were represented in the responses. Many, if not all of the participants used the nine strategies provided. These strategies are ones identified from the existing literature on the topic of test

anxiety. Of the additional strategies provided, only two (expressing confidence in the student and putting the test into perspective) were found in the literature.

An additional strategies outlined by the participants are helpful to provide other professionals with new or additional techniques. The eleven additional strategies can be divided into four categories. These categories include encouragement/confidence, environment, techniques, and small group/teacher-assisted.

**Encouragement/confidence.** The encouragement/confidence category includes strategies that help give students confidence in what they are doing as well as encouragement that they will be successful, such as encouraging notes from parents or building confidence with extra practice or practice quizzes.

**Environment.** The environment category focuses on how the classroom environment affects students, such as seating placement or water and snacks at desk.

**Techniques.** The techniques category encompasses techniques teachers can teach their students to improve test performance, such as brain flush. With this strategy, students use the first five minutes of the test to write down everything they learned about the topic. These notes are then used as “notes” for the test.

**Small group/teacher-assisted.** The small group/teacher-assisted category consists of strategies that include students working in small groups or with the teacher, such as individual/small group administration, working a section at a time, students reading questions aloud to teacher, then orally explaining their thoughts and writing their responses.

The responses to questions designed to determine whether or not teacher training were provided regarding test anxiety was surprisingly few. Very few of the teachers had been given any training regarding test anxiety. The participants who stated they had received some training regarding test anxiety learned about it from college courses. The difficulty with this is that not every teacher is taking college courses.

Most of the literature reviewed on this topic suggested there needs to be more research done to determine how to help students, both young and old, do well on required tests. Due to the fact that this subject has not been the target of a great deal of research, it is recommended that future research done on how much teacher training addresses test anxiety and the strategies used in classrooms today. In a society where testing is greatly relied upon, it is imperative that teachers are able to give our students successful strategies to help them succeed in their academic careers.

### **Implications for Practice**

The findings of this study are important for educators, no matter what topic they are teaching. Every class includes tests and assessments of some sort. As pressure increases with high-stakes testing, so does the pressure on the student to succeed, which also increases feelings of test anxiety.

For students who deal with test anxiety, it is important for their teachers to understand what they are going through in order to assist them in the best way possible. The findings from this research study are valuable for providing useful strategies that can be implemented in any

classroom. The findings are also beneficial in addressing the need for future research on teacher training for test anxiety. The research shows that not many of the participants have had formal if any training in regards to test anxiety.

With an increased knowledge of test anxiety and strategies to help students overcome it, teachers will be able to assist their students in a whole new way. They will be able to identify test anxiety, as well as provide students with strategies to overcome this anxiety. Knowledge of test anxiety may change the environment of a classroom, which in turn will have the potential to increase student success. Future research is still needed to focus on teacher training for test anxiety, as well as strategies to assist students with test anxiety. For now though, it's important to take all of the available information to assist students in the best way possible.

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**Appendix**  
**Survey Questions**

1. What grade level do you teach? (open ended)
2. How long have you been teaching? (open ended)
3. What type of classroom do you teach? (general education, inclusion, intervention pull out, special education)
4. As a teacher, from your experience, how do you define test anxiety? (open ended)
5. Have you worked with students that have test anxiety? (yes, no, not sure)
6. What strategies have you used to help your students with test anxiety? (visualization, controlled deep breathing, muscle relaxation, positive self-talk, dress comfortably, look for key terms in the questions, watch out for trick questions, read directions carefully, take a break when needed, other\_\_\_\_\_)
7. What strategies have been the most helpful for your students? Why? (open ended)
8. Have you had any training about test anxiety? (yes, no, not sure)
9. If you answered yes to the previous question, what was the training and when did it occur? (open ended)
10. What is the best advice you have been given/ or give when you take/give a test? (open ended)