



# Ed Directions-SWAEC School Improvement Professional Development Session 3

February 2024

## Test Planning and Readiness

### *Participant Guide*

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# Section 1 – Testing Period Timelines and Academic Leadership

## Testing Period Timeframe

From three to four weeks before the test through the week after the test.



## Testing Period Priorities

- Building an optimum test environment
- Identifying and practicing optimum testing behaviors
- Preparing all students for best practice test taking and best effort engagement
- Reactivating long-term memory and linking new and old learnings assessments
- Eliminating all extraneous distractions
- Completing the evaluation of the Opening, Formative, and Calibrating Periods
- Continue turnaround planning for the end of year, summer, and formative periods next year

## Testing Period Overview

One of the principals in a turnaround school asked her Ed Directions coach how important the Testing Period was in the overall scope of things. The coach answered that while the school focus should be on the end-of-year transition and on the competencies described in the standards, schools are held accountable for test scores and state labels. As educators, we are expected to build competent learners and performers and to prepare those learners and performers to make successful transitions to the next stage of their education or their life. At the same time, we are expected to increase student performance on a paper and pencil test and our status with the state Department of Education will be defined by that test performed. Underperformance on the state assessment can have serious negative consequences for schools and for the staff at schools and for this reason we must take the test preparation part of our job seriously.

We like to tell schools we cannot win the game in the Testing Period, but we can most certainly lose the game in the Testing Period. In many schools, the focus for planning the test is on administration. There are rules and regulations, ethical concerns, materials acquisition and distribution concerns, test coverage concerns, and behavior management concerns. These are all legitimate concerns. If we ignore any of them, we can cause many students to score below their potential. It is also possible, however, that we can do all these things well and still allow students to perform below their potential.

In planning for the Testing Period, if we want students to have the opportunity to perform to their potential, we must make our plans and build our environment from the student perspective first and then develop the adult components so they enable all students to perform to their potential.

**For this reason, we divide the Testing Period into four phases:**

- 1. The 3 to 4 weeks before the test begins are called the Preparation Phase.** At this time, administrators, students, and teachers need to prepare the school and the students for the test. For the administrators, this means they must not only take care of the adult issues, but they also need to find out how many barriers to student success create serious issues and begin planning to prepare both students and school staff to help students overcome those barriers. Teachers need to provide work that links new and old learnings to sample test questions and to standards expectations. Students need to practice optimum behaviors (e.g., getting to school, completing tasks, etc.) and contribute high-level engagement of work to prepare them to demonstrate their potential on a high-stakes assessment. It's also important during this phase of the Testing Period to address attitude and perception issues and link "must move" students to an adult who has access to those students.
- 2. We call the week before the test the Activating Phase of the Testing Period.** During this week, we practice with the students the schedule, rituals, and routines that we plan to use during the test week and provide feedback on student perception of the schedule, rituals, and routines. Administrators need to be visible in classrooms supporting student effort. Recognitions of success in the schedules, rituals, and routines need to be celebrated and encouraged during this week. The "must move" students need daily contact with their adult mentor, and all students who have been trained to use band aid strategies need to have those strategies reviewed and utilized and practice work.
- 3. The third phase of the Testing Period is the test itself (or the Enabling Phase).** Administrators and teachers need to have a "we are ready for this" attitude as students enter the building each day and need to recognize the students' effort as they leave the building. Students need to be reminded daily of the way the day's schedule will operate and encouraged to "show them what we can do." Each day teachers and students need to look at the next day's assessment and what students have done to get ready.
- 4. The week after the test we refer to as a Transition or Refocusing Phase.** It's a time when we can debrief for the students and honor their effort and successes and help them prepare for the type of work that the class will do for the rest of the year. We emphasize that the goal for this work is to help all students make a successful transition to next year.

## Activity 1: Testing Period Self-Assessment – Overall School Readiness

Best Practice Indicators	Yes/No	Priority
Teachers and coaches have a plan for developing optimal testing environments in all classes.		
Academic leaders and coaches have developed backup plans for unforeseen disruption of the testing cycle (e.g., behavior, illness, emotional stress, etc.).		
Academic leaders, coaches, and instructional staff have established plans for mitigating all controllable disruptions (e.g., announcements, drills, maintenance, etc.).		
Student/teacher testing groups have been designed to match students with teachers who can solicit best-effort and high-level engagement for the course of the test.		
Administrators have planned for increased visibility before, during, and after testing and altered their observation checklists to meet the demands of the Testing Period.		
The school day during testing has been altered to ensure that all students can get to school, have breakfast, and go through pre-testing rituals.		
All teachers have been trained to engage students in pre-test focusing activities and post-test decompression activities.		
All teachers have plans to maintain the teaching/ learning environment after the testing is completed for the day.		
All adult mentors and “lightning rods” have plans to meet daily with their target students to make sure they are emotionally ready for best-effort work on the test.		

Notes:

## Section 2 – Testing Environments and Priorities

### Four Testing Environments At-a-Glance

Academic Test Preparation, Emotional Environment Test Preparation, Social Environment Test Preparation, and Physical Environment Test Preparation (broken into responsibilities by role)

#### Academic Test Preparation

- Leadership - Enable and support effective learning/assessment environments
- Teachers - Build a performer-friendly classroom
- Students - Commit to a best-effort work ethic

#### Emotional Environment Test Preparation

- Leadership - Build positive performance culture
- Teachers - Create a “we are in this together” atmosphere
- Students - Be a part of the solution

#### Social Environment Test Preparation

- Leadership - Formulate and market “test prep” and “testing” etiquette
- Teachers - Integrate new etiquette and build collaborative culture
- Students - Practice being the solution

#### Physical Environment Test Preparation

- Leadership - Enable and support effective performing environments
- Teachers - Build performer-friendly classrooms
- Students - Self assess and contribute

## Academic Environment Test Preparation

### Leadership - Enable and support effective Learning/assessment environments

- Increase classroom visibility supporting student performance
- Eliminate all controllable distractions
- Identify up-to-date data to inform planning and decision-making
- Plan the distribution of students based on student needs for optimum performance

### Teachers - Build a performer-friendly classroom

- Review school and class goals and enable students to establish individual assessment goals (e.g., come to school every day, show a year's growth)
- Prior learnings in their relationship to current learnings and to assessment
- And must provide timely shaping feedback for all student performance

### Students - Commit to a best-effort work ethic

- Actively engage in cumulative memory work and linking learnings to assessment
- Work independently
- Define tasks and complete all parts of tasks
- Self-assess
- Revise to proficiency

## Academic Environment Strategies (Tactical and Systemic)

### Leadership

#### ***Band Aid Strategies***

- Create a classroom “walk-through” observation tool to monitor/conference all tested area teachers
- Increase classroom visibility supporting student performance
- Eliminate all controllable distractions
- Develop a student distribution plan that ensures all students take the test in their optimum environment
- Regularly recognize students who have “mastered” recommended school and classroom changes (recognize more rather than fewer)

#### ***Systemic Strategies***

- Develop and market a plan for student success
- assess/address classroom cultures and climates
- Redesign of school data management plan
- Facilitate and monitor intentional student support systems
- Develop test day schedules, rituals, and routines
- Assess and remediate classroom readiness for the assessment demands

Notes:



## Teachers

### ***Band Aid Strategies***

- Create classroom visuals that represent a collective “memory” of language and strategies that have been learned
- Ensure classroom communication in discipline specific language
- Provide “directed” activities that walk students through a complex learning task or assessment task as a prequel to independent proficiency
- Identify and communicate students who are underperforming because of attitude or anxiety issues
- Regularly recognize students achieved a success or reached proficiency (e.g., recognition of 100% attendance or classes are homerooms)
- Create opportunities for individual, pair, small-group, and whole class learning and mastering activities
- Most visual displays of examples of student mastery or exemplary performance

### ***Systemic Strategies***

- Create an optimum learner/performer classroom
- Build a “literate” classroom that is user-friendly
- Provide work that links learnings (prior and current) to assessment
- Establish unit and lesson goals that relate to assessment expectations
- Develop and have the students develop a “daily example” of a test question on the day’s learnings
- Ensure student mastery of the language and format of the state assessments
- Identify point of breakdown and cause of underperformance

Notes:

## Student

### ***Band Aid Strategies***

- Develop a morning ritual for getting up and ready for school and getting to school on time
- Evaluate performance honestly to determine if it is indeed best effort
- Work with “pair share” or small group to revise work to proficiency
- Learn to identify all the steps required an activity and check to see if all the steps were completed proficiently
- Actively engage in individual and collective work

### ***Systemic Strategies***

- Attend school
- Self-assess to determine attitude about and commitment to “best effort”
- Complete all work and revise to proficiency as needed
- Come to class prepared and with enough time to prepare for class to start
- Collect a portfolio of best learner work and assessment work
- Communicate (orally or in writing) only in the language of the discipline

Notes:

## Emotional Environment Test Preparation

### Leadership - Build positive performance culture

- Build a shared vision
- Increase classroom visibility
- Identify and support test anxious and test phobic students
- Establish an “accept the challenge” culture and avoid a “coming ordeal” atmosphere
- Plan the distribution of students based on student needs for optimum performance

### Teachers - Create a “we are in this together” atmosphere

- Review school and class goals and enable students to establish individual assessment goals (e.g., come to school every day, show a year's growth)
- Use collaborative teacher/student problem solving
- Provide timely shaping feedback for all student performance

### Students - Be a part of the solution!

- Actively engage individual and collaborative work
- Define tasks and complete all parts of tasks
- Help identify successes to celebrate

## Emotional Environment Strategies (Tactical and Strategic)

### Leadership

#### ***Band Aid Strategies***

- Schedule opportunities to meet and dialogue with timid and test anxious students
- Establish a school culture and climate that emphasizes “we can master the challenge” and eliminate any “the coming ordeal” attitudes
- Create opportunities for every class/student to celebrate success
- Move students trapped in a learning environment that prevents their success
- Regularly meet with at-risk and underperforming students to recognize their successes
- Develop a plan for volatile and potentially violent students who can disrupt the testing environment and cause a whole class to underperform

#### ***Systemic Strategies***

- Establish guidelines for inclusive and student friendly learning and testing environments
- Begin the design of and encourage the development at the classroom level of an optimum learner climate
- Emphasize positive “review and revision” the part of classroom routines
- Provide at risk students with an adult mentor to meet, guide, and encourage
- Provide support for students with test anxiety, bullying anxiety, or teacher/student mismatch

Notes:

## Teachers

### ***Band Aid Strategies***

- Create and become a part of a teacher/learner team that can collectively celebrate growth and success
- Create situations where the students can help train you reach proficiency (e.g., a video game)
- Intentionally create opportunities that enable every student to achieve some success every day
- Review student learner and performer work and encourage revision to proficiency
- Ensure that test-anxious, attitude-issue, and timid students receive the classroom and outside class support they need to be proficient
- Identify and help develop a plan for students whose attitude or behaviors might disrupt and break the momentum of the testing classroom

### ***Systemic Strategies***

- Begin creating a “student as worker” culture and a welcoming, safe, and encouraging climate
- Begin the design of and encourage the development at the classroom level of an optimum learner climate
- Emphasize positive “review and revision” parts of classroom routines
- Provide at-risk students with an adult mentor to meet, guide, and encourage
- Provide support for students with test anxiety, bullying anxiety, or teacher/student mismatch

Notes:

## Students

### ***Band Aid Strategies***

- Write to be part of the solution to the problems that identified in class
- Work independently first but then seek assistance if needed to be proficient
- Identify the tasks required by assignment and then check to make sure all the tasks of and completed
- Seek an adult that you trust if you feel anxious or threatened

### ***Systemic Strategies***

- Contribute to creating a “student as worker” culture and a welcoming, safe, and encouraging climate
- Identify what type of work you do best and where you do the best work
- Accept “review and revision” as part of the classroom routines
- Participate as a member of a teacher/learner team that can collectively celebrate growth and success

Notes:

## Social Environment Test Preparation

### Leadership - Formulate and market “test prep” and “testing” etiquette

- Increase classroom visibility supporting collaboration
- Model solution interactions in classes
- Discuss testing plans with students to solicit input

### Teachers - Integrate new etiquette and build collaborative culture

- Review school goals and class status
- Provide and react to problem solving by teacher/student teams
- Enable student communication of plans to administration

### Students - Practice being the solution

- Actively engage in problem solving
- Set personal assessment goals for each accountability cell
- Identify personal successes and score improvements

## Social Environment Strategies (Tactical and Strategic)

### Leadership

#### *Band Aid Strategies*

- Model testing and learning rituals and routines and solicit student feedback
- Practice 100% attendance days
- Practice test day rituals and routines create 100% mastery
- Meet with groups of students to discuss pre-test preparation and seek their perceptions of student buy-in. Use opportunities to celebrate student successes
- Identify and redistribute cliques, bully groups or testing and have a plan B to be used if they disrupt the testing process

#### *Systemic Strategies*

- Create and practice and “etiquette” for academic and testing days
- Create and practice academic day rituals and routines (e.g., entry, exit, transition, and lesson activities)
- Create and practice test day schedules, rituals, and routines
- Provide opportunities for adult mentors and teachers to meet and develop relationships with students
- Provide adult “greeters” to meet students and assess student “readiness” as they enter class

Notes:

## Teachers

### ***Band Aid Strategies***

- Visuals that reaffirm the etiquette and can be used to shape student performance
- Model and practice action patterns until all students understand what is expected
- Identify students struggling with rituals and routines and seek in-class or outside-class assistance
- Provide students with an opportunity to contribute to test preparations and schedules as individuals or small groups
- Identify and redistribute cliques, bully groups, or testing and have a plan B to be used if they disrupt the testing process

### ***Systemic Strategies***

- Establish a classroom “etiquette” for academic and testing days
- Design and model social interaction patterns for adult-to-student, student-to-adult, and student-to-student interactions
- Create and practice classroom test day schedules, rituals, and routines
- Create entry and exit routines that emphasize the class as a positive experience

Notes:

## Students

### ***Band Aid Strategies***

- Work with your teacher to develop pair/share and small group teams that can work together effectively
- Avoid students or groups of students that prevent you from giving best effort or performing to your potential
- Develop a support network to collectively pursue proficiency

### ***Systemic Strategies***

- Honor the classroom etiquette, rituals, and routines
- Demonstrate respect for adults and students as you interact in the classroom or in transitions
- Identify the groups of students and locations that encourage your best effort
- Keep an ongoing record of strengths and concerns and seek assistance

Notes:

## Physical Environment Test Preparation

### Leadership - Enable and support effective performing environments

- Increase classroom visibility checking physical environments
- Plan the distribution of students based on student needs for optimum performance
- Involve students in shaping classroom distribution, set up, and functionality
- Credit students/classes who generate good suggestions

### Teachers - Build a performer-friendly classroom

- Audit temperature, lighting, fixtures, and equipment
- With students, plan to eliminate all distractions
- With students, design and try different distribution patterns
- Celebrate all successes

### Students - Self assess and contribute

- Participate in data gathering and experimentation
- Identify “personal best” environmental conditions
- Monitor impact on personal performance
- Celebrate successes

## Physical Environment Strategies (Tactical and Strategic)

### Leadership

#### *Band Aid Strategies*

- Meet with each class to determine student perceptions of what a best practice testing room would look like
- Conduct regular visits to assess physical environment and its impact on learning and assessment
- Provide alternative testing environments for students with special needs (not just IEPs)
- Meet with classes/students who have made suggestions about testing environments and note observed improvements that came from those suggestions

#### *Systemic Strategies*

- Ensure every testing classroom meets optimum assessment standards (e.g., distance, lighting, temperature, potential distractions, etc.)
- Anticipate “outside” distractions and develop plans and interventions that either exclude them or at least minimize their impact

Notes:

## Teachers

### ***Band Aid Strategies***

- Invite academic leaders into your class to watch your students be successful and recognize their successes
- Conduct regular visits to assess the physical environment and its impact on learning and assessment
- Provide alternative testing placements and/or environments for students with special needs or characteristics (not just IEPs)

### ***Systemic Strategies***

- Ensure that your classroom meets optimum assessment standards (e.g., distance, lighting, temperature, potential distractions, etc.), provides all students with an equal opportunity to succeed, and meets state ethical standards
- Anticipate “outside” distractions and develop plans and interventions that either exclude them or at least minimize their impact

Notes:

## Students

### ***Band Aid Strategies***

- If something about your classroom is causing you to do less than your best, inform your teacher and make a suggestion if you have a better idea
- Work with your pair/share partner or your small learner group to identify better ways of setting up or administering the tests

### ***Systemic Strategies***

- Assess your classroom to determine if your performance could be improved by the different location, different classroom materials, or visual displays of learnings, etc.
- Anticipate “outside” distractions and assist your teacher in developing plans to reduce their impact

Notes:

## Activity 2: Testing Environments and Responsibilities

### Creating a Tactical Testing Plan

#### Step 1 - Preplanning Work

Questions to review as you use the next two weeks to design your Month Out, Week Out, and Active Testing Plans. Quickly review the following questions. This will help organize your thoughts before creating your tactical plans:

What is our biggest concern about this year's testing?

What assumptions do we have about this year's test?

What questions do we need answered about this year's test?

What do we know we need to address?

What are some of our strengths when it comes to test?

What are some of our largest obstacles to overcome when it comes to testing?

Which team members will be the biggest help planning the next two weeks?

Which team members will be the biggest help implementing the Month/Week/Active Testing Plans?



## Section 3 – Phases of the Testing Period

1. **Preparation – Three to four weeks before the test**
2. **Activating – One week before the test**
3. **Enabling – The testing window**
4. **Refocusing – The week after the test**

### Phase 1 – Preparation

#### Four weeks before the test

- **Master test awareness/Format mastery**
- **Practice test schedules, environment, and participation**
- **Build a positive assessment culture**
- **Engage students as part of the solution and not the problem**

#### Focus points

- **Build, market, and implement an optimal assessment environment**
- **Ensure attendance and best effort**
- **Identify and train/practice band aid strategies**
- **Focus on successful use of content**

#### Leadership

- Plan finalization, marketing, implementation, and monitoring
- Visibility– Affirming effort and success
- Dialogue with staff and students
- Distraction control
- Monitor cohort groups and support systems

#### Teachers

- Classroom culture development
- Effective long-term memory activation
- Effective calibrating work linked to assessments
- Test "wiseness" training
- Distraction control
- High-level engagement and "best effort" initiatives
- Optimum assessment behaviors and priorities

#### Students

- Engage in long-term memory and linking work
- Set and commit to short-term and cumulative assessment goals
- Identify "best effort" samples of work done this year
- Practice academic and assessment rituals and routines
- Engage in prep, awareness, and mastery work
- Communicate with adult "lightning rod" to share successes and concerns
- Monitor and celebrate with successful learning/assessment work and goal achievement
- Complete critical read, think, and write work daily
- Practice optimum assessment strategies, schedules, and personal work habits

## Phase 2 – Activating

### One week before the test

- Dress rehearsal for etiquette, assessment rituals and routines, schedules, and testing culture
- Final long term memory activation
- Optimum behavior observation with immediate corrective feedback
- Final planning for student and teacher distribution for test administration

### Focus points

- Activate long term memory
- Get commitment to best effort
- Fine tune motivation and test awareness
- Master test schedule, optimum behaviors, and etiquette
- Ensure that all plans work and are consistently implemented

### Leadership

- Visible support for student and teacher effort and commitment
- Periodic checks for “Test Awareness”
- Last environmental and compliance classroom audits
- Conversations with staff/students: “What have we forgotten”

### Teachers

- Long term memory work
- Linking learnings to assessment
- Mastery of test procedures/strategies
- “Test Awareness”
- Goal reinforcement
- Motivation/effort check
- Shaping work using long term memory
- Immediate feedback and revision for work that is not proficient
- Band aid practice

### Students

- Commitment to endurance – high-level engagement over time
- Goal review and status analysis
- Tests of mastery of test procedures/strategies
- Optimum etiquette, behavior, and effort practice
- Self-check motivation/effort
- Multiple opportunities to link old and new learnings to assessments
- Immediate feedback and revision for work that is not proficient
- Band aid practice

## Phase 3 – Enabling

### The Test Week(s)

- Perfect attendance
- Best effort
- Affirmation for effort and successes made so far
- Adult contact/encouragement

### Focus points

- Perfect/prompt attendance
- Optimum effort/performance
- Enduring the task
- “Brain management”

### Leadership

- Attendance management
- Entry/exit rituals
- Schedule management
- Environment control
  - Physical environment
  - Emotional environment
- Placement control – teacher/student grouping
- Pre/post activities

### Teachers

- Attendance management
- Entry/exit rituals
- “Brain management”
- Environment control
  - Physical environment
  - Emotional/social environments
- Ongoing affirmation of effort and commitment
- Transition activities

### Students

- Reflect on test effort in reflective tool
- Discuss what they found difficult with testing/setting/instructions
- Create personal growth plan for summer

## Phase 4 – Refocusing

### The week after the test

- Effort/success recognition with multiple examples
- Congratulations on achievements of staff and students
- Transition to EOY

### Focus points

- Recognition of test effort AND of tasks remaining
- Reestablish effective work rhythm
- Establish EOY goals
- Establish EOY accountability

### Leadership

- Data analysis/debrief students and staff
- “What worked” analysis and begin planning for next year
- Effort and achievement recognition/program
- Transition to the rest of the year—from FCAT to EOY Performance (EOY Accountability Plan)
- Goal Setting “How far do we have to go before June?”
- Planning for next year – Staffing, schedule, PD, summer, and opening of school plans

### Teachers

- Debrief students and celebrate successes
- Affirm work, effort, and engagement
- Reestablish effective student work
- Set EOY work goals
- Begin transition activities

### Students

- Continued high-level engagement
- Participate in post-test debriefing activity
- Commitment to EOY work and successful transition
- Initial identification and planning for summer interest and academic activities

## Activity 3 - Optional Working Lunch - Testing Plan Activity

### Creating a Tactical Testing Plan

#### Step 2 – Organize your testing strategies by testing environments

On the next three pages, there are templates to organize your priorities and strategies for you plan for one month out from testing, one week out, and your plan for administering the test. You can use the band aids and longer-term strategies from Section 2 – Testing Environments and Priorities or you can create your own.

A month before the start of testing		
Testing Environment	Band aids or strategic priorities	Role (L/T/S)
Academic		
Emotional		
Social		
Physical		

Notes:

**A week before the start of testing**

Testing Environment	Band aids or strategic priorities	Role (L/T/S)
Academic		
Emotional		
Social		
Physical		

**Notes:**

**During Active Testing**

<b>Tactical Testing Plan</b>		
Testing Environment	Band aids or strategic priorities	Role (L/T/S)
Academic		
Emotional		
Social		
Physical		

**Notes:**

# Appendix – Academic Leadership Reference Materials

## Testing Period Planning/Evaluating Worksheet

The following tool can be used the week after testing to capture what went well, detail what did not go so well, and brainstorm ideas for what needs to be done to close out this year, what needs to happen over the summer to open next year, and the plan to get students where they need to be by next year’s test.

### Part 1

Testing Period Evaluation Questions	Notes
School developed a plan for the Testing Period that identified leadership, teacher, and student priorities.	
The plan was checked against the “enablers” worksheet, and all critical enablers were provided for implementation, data collection, and data analysis.	
The school plan was translated by all staff into personal action plans, and leadership developed a shared sense of urgency and 100% buy-in for the test prep plan.	
Students and teachers were redistributed to obtain optimum learning and performance from all students.	
School leaders and coaches monitored student work closely in the periods preceding the test and met regularly to deal with issues identified.	
Critical elements of the school plan were practiced during the month before the test to ensure consensus implementation.	
Plans included strategies to control and optimize the physical, academic, and emotional environments to optimize performance.	
Data was collected on pre-test, testing, and post-test implementation and impact on students, teachers, grade levels, and student cohort groups.	
The leadership team met daily to assess implementation and impact and develop ad hoc plans for significant issue areas.	
The testing plan includes rituals and routines that have been practiced by all leaders, teachers, and students.	
The implementation and impact of critical activities were analyzed daily to assess the effect/goal relationship.	
Leadership, coaches, and “lightning rod” teachers met daily with their target students to encourage, motivate, and support.	
During the Testing Period, schedules were modified to enable teachers and coaches to address significant student performance concerns.	
Attendance, student distribution, and scheduling plans were implemented by all staff and achieved their desired results.	
Our final estimates of individual student performance, specific cell scores, and final school grades were very close to our actual scores.	
The testing plan provides for a smooth transition to EOY activities for all staff and students.	



## Part 2

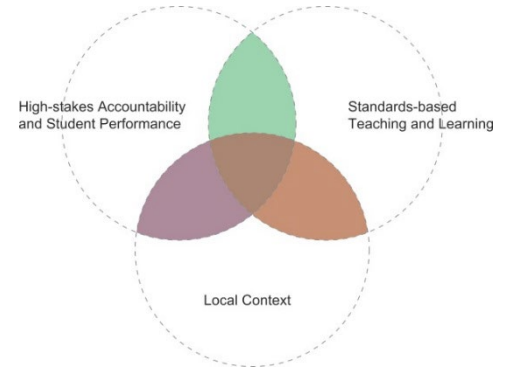
Please answer the following questions:

- What was successful about this year's testing plans?
- Where there any areas of testing that need attention for next year's planning?
- Based on how testing went, are there any things that need to be addressed before the end of the year?
- Based on how testing went, what do we need to do (or plan over the summer) to ensure school opens effectively next school year?
- What is our "plan to plan" for next year's month out, week out, and active testing plans?
- Any other notes we want to capture about this year's test or any other ideas about summer, the opening of school or next year's test?

# School Improvement Framework

## 1. High Stakes Accountability & Standards-based Teaching and Learning

The state lays out the parameters of high stakes accountability by identifying the standards, student performance expectations (the testing blueprint), the accountability metrics and sanctions, and codifies various other matters. Districts and schools must then take all these inputs and develop a teachable curriculum complete with student work that aligns with the performance expectations laid out by the state. What must take place in the nexus of these two circles can be described as a cycle of unit/lesson development, monitoring of student progress, formative assessment that is aligned with the state tests and evaluation, and refinement.



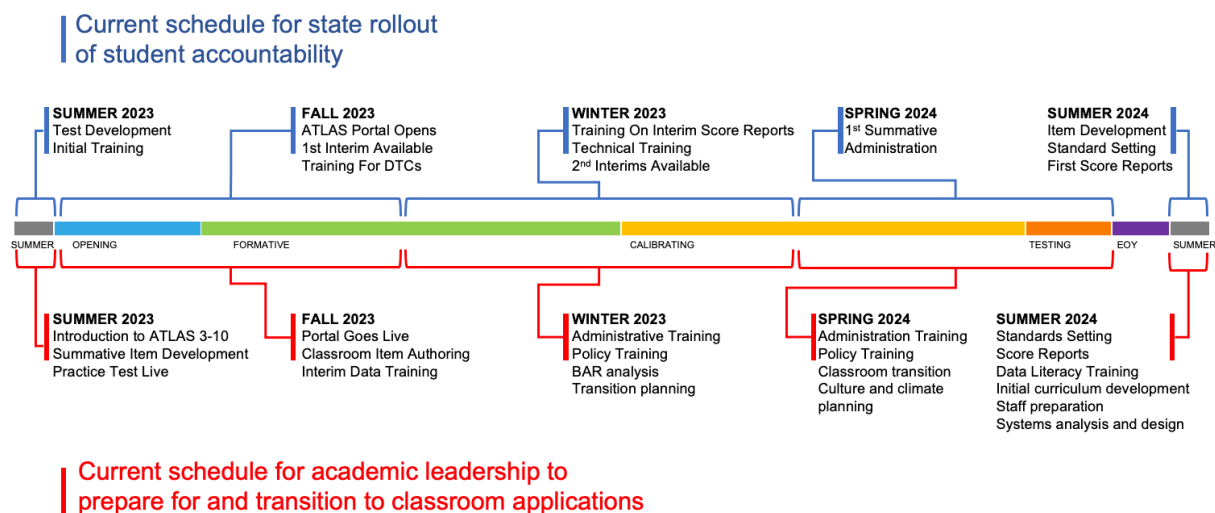
## 2. Standards-based Teaching & Learning and Local Context

It takes time, money, and expertise to do the work in bullet #1. Smaller districts are fiscally constrained and may lack the resources and staff capacity to approach the task comprehensively. Larger districts may have more resources to draw on but still must create the time and effectively manage the development process. The job is the same in both types of districts and schools: make sure that the curriculum is aligned, the lessons are developed and taught, and that the work the students do is productive. All that must be done with what and who we have either on-hand or can get from outside sources.

## 3. Local Context & High Stakes Accountability

What the LEARNS Act is doing in part is transforming Arkansas from a state of school systems to a state system of schools. Districts and schools are currently in the initial stages of this transformation. Their relationship with the state is evolving as the state rolls out the various inputs that districts must use to do the work of Linkage #2. Also, key components of accountability are yet to be determined. The work in this linkage is mostly communication and coordination at this time.

## 2023 – 24 Timelines for Change



## How Students Learn – Long Term Memory

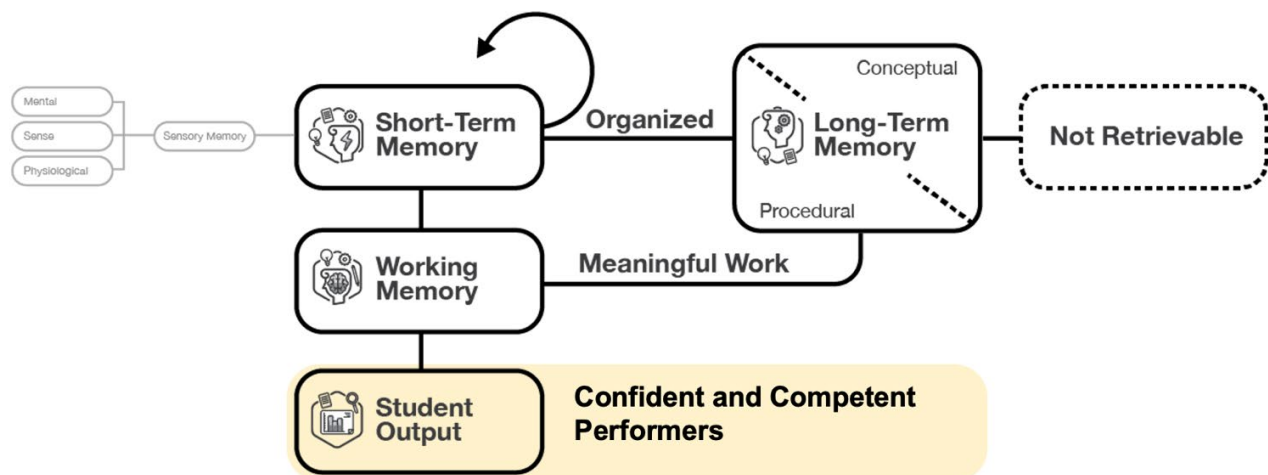
Educators face several problems in building workable long-term memory:

- There are many types of long-term memory: emotional memory, episode memory, personal memory, etc. For example, many students – especially younger students – tie their learnings to the teacher. When the teacher is present, they remember their learnings. When the teacher is not present, they don't.
- Only two long-term memories are tested: the conceptual memory where we store concepts, relationships, visuals, etc., and the procedural memory where we remember how to perform tasks or procedures that were part of our learning set.
- Getting information stored in long-term memory is not the only issue. The information must be independently usable in real world or assessment situations that are not tied directly to the class. This requires that students do some work with the learning that creates meaning for that learning. Teachers can't create meaning for students, but they can provide work that will help students create meaning. Meaningful work usually involves the student's use of learning in a thinking activity or a real-world application.

If we get students to attend, acquire, organize, and create meaning, we have created effective learners. When the goal is that all students will be successful, this learning sequence (or one like it) must be the core of every curriculum. If educators want students to be successful learners, they must teach to “successful learning” as well as deliver content.

Another piece of conventional wisdom that can be problematic is the assumption made by teachers and unfortunately by state assessment scores that if a student misses a question, that student did not know the content. This is more “wisdom that has to be discarded.”

Effective learners may or may not be effective performers. Teachers must understand that delivering content and building proficient learners is only a part of their task. Unfortunately, students can learn effectively and still perform poorly on assessments. Students can learn and know and still perform poorly. This is a reality that teachers in some schools have had a hard time accepting.



## The 5 Legged Model - Quick Reference



	Why It Is Important	A Problem Causes
<b>Leg 1: Knowledge</b>	State assessments establish expectations for all students. To meet these expectations, each student must own the learnings (concepts, tasks, thinking) required. This vocabulary must not only be known but must be operational.	If critical learnings are not known or are not operational, students cannot perform the required tasks. This knowledge base must be congruent with the task for students to reach their potential. Alternative languages and level experiences can produce a gap between potential and performance.
<b>Leg 2: Attitude</b>	Students must know the learnings required and be willing to perform the necessary tasks, investing their best effort on every part of the assessment. The expectation is that every answer or product represents the student's personal best effort.	Poor attitude usually causes a student to learn and perform below potential. It leads to several problems: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low motivation</li> <li>• Attention problems</li> <li>• Inefficient use of time</li> <li>• Behavior or socialization issues</li> <li>• Loss of concentration</li> <li>• Attendance problems or tardiness</li> <li>• Intentionally not giving their best effort</li> </ul>
<b>Leg 3: Perceptions</b>	Most state assessments embed perceptions (time, space, distance, etc.). Two perceptions required but not related to standards expectations are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perception of proficiency: Knowing what constitutes good work and how to produce it.</li> <li>• Perception of efficacy: The belief, "I can work successfully at the level required."</li> </ul> Students must know what good work is and believe they can produce it, or they will not demonstrate their full potential.	Students operate in a comfort zone built by experience as a learner. If a student believes shoddy work or inadequate effort is good enough, he or she will work at that level on any assessment.  If the student believes she or he cannot do the work required, she or he will be correct. Lack of belief in self produces anxiety and can negatively impact attitude.
<b>Leg 4: Thinking</b>	Mature thinking patterns and critical reading, writing, and thinking are required on every question of a state test.	Immature thinkers, impulsive responders, and attention-deficit students regularly misread questions, leave tasks unfinished, and produce products that lack depth and integrity.
<b>Leg 5: Experience</b>	Almost all students need two sets of experiences. They must have work experience that forms the five supporting legs, and they must have experience working successfully at the level of the assessment. They must have formative and calibrating experiences, where differentiation and accommodation become critical.	If the student lacks the appropriate experience, she or he can know the content but be unprepared to work at the required levels.

## Effective Practices for Student Work

Effective work in the Testing Period may include effective learning and calibrating work that needs to expand the student work experience. Students need to be highly engaged in activities that prepare them to use learnings in a variety of assessment situations.

Directed Strategy	Definition	Impact on Student Potential
<b>Linking work</b>	Linking work provides students with an opportunity to examine their class work and identify, in terms of testing and standards, expectations of why they're doing that work.	Linking work validates the work students do in class and makes it more meaningful in terms of their learning. If used regularly, it also builds access to long-term memory centers and provides opportunities to use information from long-term memory to answer questions and solve problems. It also gives the teachers a chance to link critical reading, critical thinking, and purposeful writing to both the learning and performing processes.
<b>Focusing work</b>	Focusing work is student work experiences to provide work that expands the students' ability to focus on the work at hand and stay engaged over time. Many teachers use centering work for initial relaxation and focus followed by the use of focusing strategies that enable the students to get engaged and stay engaged in work.	Focus is a critical issue for younger students. Getting focused, maintaining focus, and staying engaged in lengthy tasks is required on state assessments, but attention issues and prioritizing issues can cause younger students to become distracted, lose focus, and lose the integrity of their thinking and answering process. Focusing work and focusing strategies provide an adult strategy set for students who are not yet adults, and these strategies can enable them to perform beyond their maturation level.
<b>Test wiseness work</b>	Test wiseness work is essential; however, test preparation is still a bad word in some districts. And yet students, especially students below 10th grade, can struggle when they are in unfamiliar settings. If the format or the venue or the duration pulls them out of their comfort zone, they can perform well below their potential and miss questions when they know the content. Teaching the students to attack tests intentionally and with strategies can build their confidence, encourage them to take risks, and eliminate format, venue, and duration as potential disqualifiers.	<p>Students who have test strategies in hand are more apt to overcome test anxiety, approach unfamiliar test items with confidence, take risks in generating an answer, and have an accurate view of their performance on assessment.</p> <p>Students with test wiseness will frequently outscore students who own more content and would go into the test cold, relying on memory to carry them through the assessment.</p>

<p><b>Task analysis</b></p>	<p>Task analysis is a type of work that was used extensively in the 1980s and early 90s. In this work, identifying the task(s) required for proficiency was half of the assignment. Students identified first what they had to do, then developed a plan to make sure all of the work was done and finally completed. The research that led to this work was fundamental to the development of the four-column method.</p> <p>Students who can task analyze are more intentional test takers and miss fewer questions because they make an impulsive but incorrect response. This impulsiveness is one of the characteristics of students until well into the high school curricula. Developing a thinking ritual to identify the tasks that are actually being asked for causes students to be more intentional and more effective test takers.</p>	<p>Impulsivity is a major problem with immature students. Giving them an adult thinking strategy – identify what it is you actually have to do – makes them more thoughtful and more accurate test takers. They are more likely to use embedded clues or prompts, identify the real answer required for a test, and exhibit confidence when they know at least some of the content or task set required by the question.</p>
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During the Testing Period, we look for different types of work in each phase of the period. Linking work and task analysis work are critical in the preparation phase. In the activating phase, focusing work takes priority. The debriefing and transitioning work become priorities in the post-test period.

**Step 1** – Introduction to a strategy or approach with teacher modeling and collective use

**Step 2** – Student use with direction or alerts provided by the teacher

**Step 3** – Student use in collaborative peer-group monitoring

**Step 4** – Peer-group feedback and rubric-based shaping feedback

**Step 4** – Independent use with teacher monitoring, peer-group feedback, and rubric- based shaping feedback

**Step 5** – Independent use with rubric-based self-assessment and revision to proficiency with peer review on proficiency

**Step 6** – Independent identification of critical learnings and independent development of personalized strategies

## Ineffective Practices for Student Work

Ineffective Work	What It Is	Impact on Students
Purposeless work	Work that is not perceived as valuable by students. They do not relate to what they need to learn or what they're expected to do.	If students don't understand the purpose of work, the learning can be acquired but will frequently be non-retrievable because it is not perceived as priority or relevant learning.
Work that is at an inappropriate level or uses an inappropriate format	Off-level work and off-level formats are frequently used for students who are perceived to be off-level to "help them" be successful.	Off-level work and formats cause students to develop perceptions, work habits, and comfort zones that will prevent them from working at the levels required by an assessment at the level of expectation.
Fun stuff	Teachers are frequently reluctant to introduce new learnings just before, during, and just after the test. Many times, they look for activities that are relaxing and/or "fun."	<p>These activities absorb time and many times, engage the students, but they do not move the students towards success.</p> <p>Many times, they distract the students from the business at hand, which is reaching their potential on the test. The cost in losing focus, losing time, and missing ineffective work can be significant.</p>
Assessments that include formats and venues that are not a part of the expected standards	If teachers use alternative assessments, particularly those included with textbooks, they may deprive their students of shaping practice with the types of questions they'll run into on a state test.	It is critical that students master all the formats, genre, and venues they will face on state national assessments. Without this practice, they can know content, but because they aren't fluent with answering the different types of questions, working in a particular venue, or working for as long as the question may require, they can miss the question. This gives a false read of student performance and depending on the number of students involved can have a major impact on the overall school score.