Test Writing For Improvement In Learning

**Objective.**

1. Use test writing to help kids do better on tests.

**Material List**

1. A list of the objectives you want to cover for each student.
2. Some transparencies or they can input their work into a computer and show it using a projector. (need computer for every two students to do this) Transparencies are easier.
3. Transparency pens
4. Copies of some easy released test items. Some with art as options.

**Procedure**

Procedure for the teacher   
Show the students a few test items. State released items are good - discuss how each matches the state specific objective. This is not the same thing as the state reporting category. Some items should have art as answer choices.

Procedure for the student

1. Write a question that will "prove" a student understands the objective if he/she answers it correctly. Be prepared to tell me how this "proves" that the objective is met. Art is helpful. It can be part of the question or it can be answers.   
2. Tell why each wrong answer is wrong.   
3. After the teacher approves your question, put it on transparency (computer). You will be showing the class, so be careful with your spelling and neatness.   
4. Present the question to the class. Do not show the answer. Ask the class what the answer is.   
(Teacher - Probe when kids pick the wrong answer. What makes you think that? They may have misconceptions or there may be more than one correct or justifiable answer. You can score the student work while they present - less grading and this acts as a review for the class at the same time. Even if the question is wrong or has poor wording you can turn this into a positive asking, "What would be a better answer, what would be a better way to say this or how would it be asked on the state test."

Students will not do well the first time they try writing, so this is an activity you have to do several times for them to "get it."

Turn testing into an US against THEM game. We can beat the nasty test writers. This can give the class a sense of purpose, beyond, know this because I say so or know this so you can get a good grade. This is especially effective with disadvantaged kids. Basically the US against THEM is their reality. Your students are trying to figure out what is in the test writers head (that would be me). I am trying to figure out what kind of mistakes kids make and put these down as incorrect answers.

**Extensions/Additional Comments**

Kids may work in pairs, the first time they write test questions, but at some point they need to work on their own.

BE SURE to use at least some of the test items on your formal test. Kids like to see their work used. You will hear, " I wrote that one." This is good. They may actually remember the answer to that one. This provides great incentive for kids to write good test items, good test items require lots of understanding on the part of the writer. This is especially important for disadvantaged kids.

I always give lots of support as they are writing, giving suggestions, hints and checking to see if they have one and only one correct answer. This way, every kid can be successful.

**Assessment**

The assessment is done while the students present their test items.