

Supporting an Anxious Child in the Classroom

Providing Emotional Support

- Encourage the student to use self-calming or anxiety-reducing techniques.
- Allow the student to have a self-calming object or family pictures on hand.
- Build in “call home” breaks (for students with separation anxiety).
- Let the student seek help from a designated staff member with mental health expertise when feeling anxious ie SET support.

Classroom Setup, Schedules and Routines

- Provide classroom seating where the student is most comfortable (near a door, near the front of the room, near the teacher or a friend).
- Let the student sit near the back of the room or by an exit during assemblies.
- Assign the student a designated buddy for lunchtime, recess, and/or hallways.
- Allow preferential grouping for trips so the student is with a teacher or friends.
- Provide a “movement break” to let the student walk down the hallway, get a drink, or leave the classroom when needed.
- Create a plan for catching up after an absence or illness (for example, excusing missed homework or having a known time frame for making up work).
- Give advance notice of planned substitute teachers or other changes in routine.
- Give the student notice and extra time before upcoming transitions, like before recess and lunch, and rehearse transitions in a private or low-stress environment.

Giving Instructions and Assignments

- Clearly state and/or write down classroom expectations and consequences.
- Break down assignments into smaller chunks.
- Check in frequently for understanding and “emotional temperature.”

- Provide a signal before calling on the student and a signal for the student to opt out of answering.
- Offer written instructions in addition to spoken directions.
- Exempt the student from reading aloud or demonstrating work in front of the class.
- Let the student present projects to the teacher instead of to the entire class.

Introducing New Concepts/Lessons

- Give extended time on tests and/or separate test-taking space to reduce performance anxiety.
- Allow use of word banks, cheat sheets, or fact cards for tests (for students who freeze or “go blank” during in-class tests).
- Set time limits for homework or reduce the amount of homework.
- Assure that work not completed in that time won’t count against the student.
- Provide class notes via email or a school portal for the student to preview.
- Give notice of upcoming tests (no “pop quizzes”).

Taken From **The Everything’s Parents Guide to Special Education** *Amanda Morin*