

The Learning Compass - Vol 1 - Issue 11

**Let's
Explore
This
Together**



One moment in time should not define a student's entire academic future.

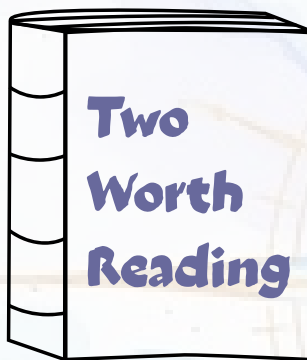
Every year, thousands of students sit a single high-stakes examination on a single day, and that one sitting determines what comes next: the stream they study, the college they consider, and the future they imagine. We rarely stop to question how reasonable this is. We rarely ask whether a student who arrived unwell, anxious, or simply underprepared on that particular morning is truly being measured or whether we are, in fact, measuring the circumstance rather than the capability.

The evidence from cognitive science and educational psychology is unambiguous: a single assessment event is an unreliable measure of what a student genuinely knows. Test anxiety alone, a well-documented involuntary physiological and psychological response, can substantially impair their performance, irrespective of actual preparation. Add to this the reality that students learn at different paces, that life events do not pause for examination schedules, and that some students, athletes, those managing health conditions, and those from under-resourced households face structural disadvantages that a second opportunity begins to redress. A single written test cannot, by itself, evaluate a student's intellectual worth.

The case for offering students more than one opportunity to demonstrate their learning is not a case for lowering standards. It is a case for taking learning seriously. When students know they have a second chance, they shift from survival mode to learning mode: the panic-driven cramming of the night before gives way to a more genuine engagement with the material. Research confirms that students who experience retake opportunities develop stronger critical thinking, deeper knowledge retention, and more resilient academic identities, which are qualities of greater value than a single score.

India's Central Board of Secondary Education has, in 2026, recognised this. They introduced two sittings for the Class 10 board examination. How can other boards take this approach forward without additional/exorbitant costs? The question for educational principals, leaders and teachers is what kind of culture schools build around it. There are different ways to approach this, but all hinge on the singular admission that assessment should help us know what a student is capable of. Can this approach be adopted at all grade levels? A second opportunity is only meaningful if the first one is taken seriously, if preparation is genuine and if the decision to resit is guided by honest reflection rather than habit or routine. Schools/institutions that invest in that culture, where assessment is understood as a tool for learning, will find that two or more chances produce not just better scores but better learners.

A student's potential is not a snapshot. It is a story. And stories deserve more than one chapter.



1. Research Spotlight: The Impact of an Exam Retake Policy on Student Anxiety, Academic Performance, and Long-Term Learning Outcomes

This study examines how well-designed retake policies in high schools reduce test anxiety and deepen learning. The key finding: students given a second opportunity are more likely to develop a growth mindset, demonstrate stronger long-term retention, and arrive at higher education better equipped for academic challenge. For school leaders, it offers a practical framework for implementing retake systems that raise standards rather than dilute them.

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

The Impact of Exam Retake Policy on student anxiety, performance & long time learning

ANXIETY LEVELS



STUDENT OUTCOMES WITH RETAKE ACCESS



"Students given a second opportunity are more likely to develop a growth mindset, demonstrate stronger long-term retention, and arrive at higher education better equipped."

2. Perspective to Consider: **Retention following Two-Stage Collaborative Exams Depends on Timing and Student Performance**

This research was an experimental study that focused on collaborative testing. This study indicates that two-stage collaborative exams can improve retention of course content up to 23 days after the exam and, when looking at specific student performance categories, that both low-performing and mid-performing students benefit from it.



Three to Try

Try This Tomorrow: Normalise the 'First-Attempt Debrief'



After any significant test or assessment, build a structured ten-minute debrief into the following session. Ask students three questions: What did I know well? What did I misunderstand? What would I do differently? This habit, applied consistently throughout the year, trains students to treat assessments as diagnostic tools rather than verdicts.

Actively facilitate student agency



Give multiple options/variations for internal assessment so that our students are prepared for assessments. If internal assessments are one-time events with little follow-up on mistakes, a second exam opportunity alone will not change outcomes. What truly matters is how feedback is used and how students learn from their attempts.

Tool / Resource: A 'Second Attempt' Decision Guide for Students and Families



Schools can support students and families by co-constructing a simple one-page guide after the first exam results. The guide can ask a few key questions: Was the result lower than the student's usual performance? Is there sufficient time and readiness to prepare again? Such a structured reflection helps students decide calmly whether a second attempt is beneficial, preventing rushed or anxiety-driven decisions.

On My Radar



1. Do educators truly understand the difference between STEM, AI and computational thinking?



2. Cars and houses have clear quality standards. Do schools have anything that parents can measure?



3. Is screen time the real issue?



4. Teacher professional standards and how teachers are viewing them.

What is one change your school has made or is considering in response to the two-examination system? Hit reply and share; the most thoughtful responses will be featured in our next issue.

Elevating Education to Excellence for Impact,

H. Anand

Chief Education Officer



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