

## The Link between Test Scores and Vocabulary

Have you ever missed a question on a test when you *actually knew the answer*? Questions containing certain terms (e.g., formulate) often confuse students, resulting in wrong responses - even when the skills being evaluated were mastered. One way to avoid confusion, and improve students' performances, is by building vocabulary.

Larry Bell refers to certain words as "power verbs" because they enable students to think more critically. He contends that students, particularly those considered "at-risk" (or "at-promise" as he prefers), are better able to demonstrate what they know when systematically taught the meaning of these common "test" words:

*Trace	*Evaluate	*Support	*Compare
*Analyze	*Formulate	*Explain	*Contrast
*Infer	*Describe	*Summarize	*Predict

Students learn to substitute their own key words/phrases for these twelve terms to better recall their meaning. Examples include when a student associates "Rate" with Evaluate and "Read between the lines" for Infer. Using the twelve powerful words in daily conversation, such as during meals and car trips, helps students retain these critical terms.

An expanded vocabulary reduces confusion on tests, improves comprehension and test scores, and perhaps most importantly, levels the playing field for all students.

Reference: [12 Powerful Words That Increase Test Scores and Help Close the Achievement Gap](#) by Larry I. Bell

