

# How 12 Powerful Verbs Can Change the Mindset of the Teacher and Student

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## **Background That Led to Your Team's Inquiry:**

Through our data collection of Level 3, we discovered that Indicator 3.2 was an area that teachers in our building believed to be vital. The 12 Powerful Verbs stood out as a way to begin our journey of creating a guaranteed and viable curriculum for our school community. Therefore, the purpose of our action research was to work with our staff on developing definitions for the 12 Powerful Verbs in order to give our students one less hurdle when working towards mastery of standards across subject areas.

## **Statement of Your Team's Wondering:**

With this purpose, we wondered, how can we work to ensure a guaranteed and viable curriculum in our building?

## **Methods/Procedures:**

To gain insight into our wondering, we took the information that was given to us through our data collection of Level 3. Through this data collection, we found that Indicator 3.2 was an area that teachers in our building felt that we could grow together. At first, our IPLI team discussed the idea of prioritizing standards, as we had just had our meeting with Dr. Warrick and found this information to be very powerful. However, we decided that exploring Larry Bell's 12 Powerful Verbs would be an effective starting point towards our goal of eventually prioritizing standards, since these verbs are used throughout Indiana's College and Career Readiness Standards. If we could do this together, we would take these verbs out of the equation in terms of students learning the standards. Understanding these terms would be one less hurdle for our students, and would help us in the long run with diving deeper to prioritize the standards.

Our presentation to the staff started with explaining that the data showed we had a need as a staff to focus on curriculum. We explained the Twelve Powerful Verbs and that in defining these, we would need to come up with short, kid-friendly definitions. We went to work. We placed chart paper around the library, each labeled with one of Larry Bell's Twelve Powerful Verbs. Teachers worked with their grade teams to give multiple definitions for each verb. Teachers recorded these on post-its and attached their definitions to the coordinating verbs.

Our IPLI team met after the staff meeting to look for commonalities listed for each of the 12 verbs. We met on two separate occasions. Based on staff feedback, we were able to give definitions for eight of the verbs, and planned to ask the staff about the remaining four verbs that did not have clear, common, definitions. Overall, we felt that our first staff meeting had been a success, as we were able to define most of the verbs based on feedback from staff. We created a presentation for the staff containing each verb and the common kid friendly definition or definitions (for the verbs that were not clearly defined from our first meeting) to share out at our next staff meeting.

At the next weekly staff meeting, we began our presentation by reviewing the process that led us to this point. Then proceeded to the eight verbs that had common definitions, knowing that the remaining four would require staff input and discussions. Right out of the gate our staff had strong philosophical ideas and reasonings for the proposed definitions of the words even after we previously asked their opinions about each word. Meaningful discussions about each verb and its corresponding definition was exciting because we knew the staff was committed. We ended up going through each verb (much to our surprise) again and voting with a “thumbs up” to make sure that as a staff, we were all in agreement. This was very unexpected because we had went through all of these definitions and felt we had given each staff member a voice. We knew then that the discussion was a product of our staff’s investment.

After our staff had agreed upon all definitions for the 12 Powerful Verbs, we discussed our action plan: Contest for the design of the signs. Our goal was to have common signs throughout the building (in halls and classrooms) so students would be able to use them as visual.

Introduce a word-a-week

This would be our Power Word of the Week - The word, along with kid-friendly definitions would be introduced on the announcements at the beginning of each week and used/defined in the classroom. Our kid friendly signs would be displayed in the hallways and in the classrooms and would be produced by our district print shop.

### **Stating Your Team’s Learning and Supporting it with Data:**

As a result of analyzing our data, two important things we learned include: 1) Brookview has a student centered culture and 2) Teachers are committed to improving and ensuring a guaranteed and viable curriculum.

Brookview has a student centered culture can be observed by the quick buy-in from the staff to define academic words for students in friendly terms. After explaining the quote we heard from Dr. Warrick’s presentation - teach less learn more - and how it made the IPLI team feel; the Brookview staff agreed that students needed to hear common language starting in kindergarten.

Brookview teachers are committed to improving and ensuring a guaranteed and viable curriculum is a critical facet of our research. Evidence that supports this statement is the strong philosophical discussions our staff had when finalizing our definitions of Larry Bell’s 12 Powerful Verbs.

### **Providing Concluding Thoughts:**

The journey during the course of exploring and expounding on our wondering has been one full of celebrations, challenges, and enlightenment. When we began our journey we were adamant that we wanted to do something that would truly impact our school and not just complete a project. As we reflect back over the course of our time together and the work we completed we are very pleased to produce something that will impact our culture and students for years to come. We are excited about how this will change the conversations and vocabulary use within our school and we are optimistic that this intentionality will produce improved confidence and understanding of our students when they encounter this vocabulary throughout school and testing situations.

## **References:**

Larry Bell. (n.d.). Retrieved June 10, 2017, from <https://www.larry-bell.com/>

Phil Warrick. (n.d.). Retrieved January 23, 2017, from Phil Warrick IPLI Presentation