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# Introduction

In today's society there is much concern about test scores. Teachers, parents, and community leaders are concerned about how their students or children perform on state and other standardized tests. There is much speculation about what educators can do to address this concern. Often monetary grants for tutoring, literacy programs, and other educational supports are proposed as options, yet many educators, teachers, and parents agree that this concern needs to be addressed at the most basic level—as it relates to the teaching and learning process.

*How to Raise Test Scores* illustrates proven instructional strategies that get results. Teachers can support and prepare their students for test taking, as well as for academic and lifelong success, by incorporating the techniques outlined in this booklet. These methods help students become more familiar with, have more knowledge about, and be better prepared, not only for taking tests, but for living life. If a teacher can help students improve their communication skills, learn how to mediate their thinking strategies, and understand the best way to attack a question, positive results will be evidenced through increased test scores. These and other important techniques are outlined in the pages that follow, along with suggestions for further reading regarding each of the strategies. Teachers can implement some of these strategies immediately and others over time to see student test scores rise.

*How to Raise Test Scores* is developed in the structure of an acronym (see Figure 1). Every letter in the phrase “Test Scores” represents the first letter of a

# TEST

**T**each *for* the test, not *to* the test  
Approach instruction as assessment; teach for conceptual understandings and life skills (what students know and are able to do); use big ideas; and stress transfer, application, and performance through a multiple intelligences approach. (Perkins and Salomon; Gardner; Eisner; Noller; Parnes and Biondi)

**E**xpect the best; accept no less  
Set high expectations; use grade level or developmentally appropriate materials for all; enhance skill building with enrichment and acceleration as needed; use standards and benchmarks. (TESA-Kerman; Caine and Caine; Rowe)

**S**tructure with cooperative learning  
Use small group interactions to foster student-to-student dialogue and articulation; help students to hear what they and others are saying as they put ideas into their own words. (Johnson and Johnson; Kagan; Bellanca and Fogarty; Goleman; Joyce)

**T**each test-taking strategies explicitly  
Demonstrate techniques for true/false, multiple choice, and essay questions; show how to outline or web ideas for quick reference and what students can do if they don't know the answers. Use metacognitive reflections to anchor learning. (Ogle; Brown)

Figure 1

# SCORES

- S** **tress prelearning strategies**  
Emphasize prelearning strategies that tap into prior knowledge and background experience; create fertile mindsets for learning. (Wolfe; Sylwester; Caine & Caine; Anderson et al.)
- C** **hunk the material for deep understanding**  
Cluster ideas together into chunks that make sense; foster connection-making and personal understanding of information; promote transfer through patterns and meaning. (Wolfe; Sylwester)
- O** **rganize with graphics**  
Utilize graphic organizers to make student thinking visible; adapt advanced organizers as ways to gather information or as methods for reviewing material. (Ausubel; Lyman & McTighe; Gardner)
- R** **eflect through mediation**  
Foster reflective thinking and take time to make sense of things by mediating the learning with questions, logs, think-aloud partner dialogues, and other reflective tools. (Feuerstein; Whimbey & Lockhead)
- E** **xpress ideas with mnemonic devices and visual cues**  
Teach memory devices to aid in learning; use acronyms, rhymes, and other sound-alike devices; use visualization techniques of color, action, and exaggeration as well as metaphors to trigger short-term memory and to internalize for long-term retrieval. (Lorayne; Lucas; Joyce & Showers; Wolfe; Walberg)
- S** **EEK student choices in learning situations**  
Allow freedom of choice within a given structure; capitalize on student interest and self-selection opportunities; create personally relevant learning; build in self-assessments and evaluation. (Sylwester; Goleman; Stepien & Gallagher; Stiggins)

Figure 1 (continued)

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different technique that educators can use to raise test scores. For example, the “s” in “Test” represents the method “Structure with Cooperative Learning.” Teachers can then read about why structuring with cooperative learning is beneficial to test taking and how they can use it in their classroom to raise test scores. Each letter of the phrase has a strategy, providing teachers with ten different strategies to implement to increase test scores. These methods teach students how to best utilize their intelligences and cognitive and cooperative skills to accomplish classroom tasks, to improve test-taking results, and to achieve lifelong endeavors.