

# Solution Tree | Press

## **Launching and Consolidating Unstoppable Learning**

*By Alexander McNeece*

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### **Study Guide**

This study guide is a companion to the book *Launching and Consolidating Unstoppable Learning* by Alexander McNeece. *Launching and Consolidating Unstoppable Learning* examines what engaging classroom instruction looks like for five common types of student mindsets and expands upon the systems thinking approach, which Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey establish in their book *Unstoppable Learning: Seven Essential Elements to Unleash Student Potential*.

This guide is arranged by chapter, enabling readers to either work their way through the entire book or focus on the specific topics addressed in a particular chapter. It can be used by individuals, small groups, or an entire team to identify key points, raise questions for consideration, assess conditions in a particular school or district, and suggest steps that might be taken to promote a healthy school culture.

We thank you for your interest in this book, and we hope this guide is a useful tool in your efforts to create a healthy culture in your school or district.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Student Engagement**

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1. Define *engagement*. How does engagement differ from motivation? Why is student engagement a valuable tool for predicting academic performance?
2. How do the three dimensions of the cognitive, affective, and behavioral model interconnect? Which element provides the easiest way to gauge engagement? Why is this the case?
3. What are the three things the Self-Determination Theory claims all humans seek? How do these elements apply to the classroom?
4. Consider Figure 1.3: Engagement and Complexity Rubric (page 20). Why do teachers try to replicate some of the elements of games in their lessons? Why do game-based lessons result in low levels of learning? How do you know if you have achieved mission status?
5. In your own words, describe *hook* and *context*. How do the hook and context of Teacher A differ from those of Teacher B? Which lesson creates a more engaged class?

## **Chapter 2**

### **The Agitator Mindset**

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1. List some of the characteristics of the agitator mindset. What are the two reasons an agitator mindset may form? Describe each.
2. What is the most important thing educators can do to engage struggling students? Why is feeling autonomy especially significant for students with agitator mindsets? How can educators help these students develop the competence to succeed?
3. What is the first step teachers need to take when launching learning? Why is it important to use what you identify in a positive way? What are some activities and strategies teachers can use to combat students' disillusionment with school?
4. Why does Teacher B's lesson have a stronger impact on the agitator mindset? How does Teacher B create an opportunity for emotional relatedness and autonomy in her lesson?
5. What is *metacognition*? Describe the three strategies that can aid students in developing metacognition.

## **Chapter 3**

### **The Retreater Mindset**

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1. Why are students with the retreater mindset described as quiet dropouts? Why should teachers use empathy to try to understand these students' perspectives?
2. What are two reasons for why students may retreat? When can students begin thinking they are missing specific skills?
3. What is one of the strongest strategies educators can employ to help build competence for students with the retreater mindset? Why is this the case?
4. In what ways have you tried to get to know your students? Do you apply the information you learn about your students into your lessons?
5. Why are open-ended questions one of the best ways to launch retreater mindsets, and how do they create autonomy and competence? How can you use journals to check for student understanding and engagement?

## **Chapter 4**

### **The Probationer Mindset**

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1. Where do students with the probationer mindset fall in the engagement mindset continuum? What are some characteristics that can help you identify students with this mindset? List the two reasons for why students may adopt a probationer mindset.
2. Describe *if-then rewards* and *now-that rewards*. What are the benefits and repercussions of these two types of extrinsic rewards? Is one more effective in helping students with the probationer mindset?
3. What is the educator's first objective when trying to reach students with probationer mindsets? Reflect on one of your lessons. How might you anticipate and communicate common student errors when launching this lesson?
4. How does Teacher A launch her lesson? How does Teacher B? Explain why Teacher B's launch is more effective in supporting students with probationer mindsets.
5. Why is active collaborative learning the key to helping those with probationer mindsets succeed? What are some of the active collaborative strategies you use in your classroom?

## **Chapter 5**

### **The Aficionado Mindset**

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1. Consider the account of Aaliyah at the beginning of the chapter. How does she epitomize the aficionado mindset?
2. Define *ego orientation*. What does it mean to be system motivated instead of learning motivated?
3. List the eight levels of participation. Which level has the highest amount of student participation? Which level has the lowest amount of student participation? At which level does true participation begin?
4. In what ways does launching learning with lesson and assessment rubric planning help students with aficionado mindsets? How might you have your students look beyond extrinsic rewards and encourage intrinsic engagement?
5. Why is project-based learning successful in engaging students with aficionado mindsets? What are the two key elements for project-based learning?

## **Chapter 6**

### **The Academician Mindset**

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1. How does the academician mindset differ from the aficionado mindset? List some of the characteristics of the academician mindset.
2. Define *flow* in your own words. Describe an instance when you experienced flow.
3. What is the most critical need for students with the academician mindset? Why is competence the element of least concern for academician mindsets? How can you foster relatedness in students with this mindset?
4. Describe the theory of cognitive dissonance. What are the three things people do when they receive information contrary to their current thinking? In what ways does exposing students to information contrary to their beliefs benefit their learning?
5. What are the key elements of Socratic seminars? List a couple open-ended topics or questions that you could use to prompt the start of a Socratic seminar.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Engagement Culture Schoolwide**

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1. Why are educators generally resistant to adopting new practices and strategies? What mindset do most educators identify with? How does this mindset affect their behavior and way of thinking?
2. List the six steps of the School-Improvement Process. What are the two steps educators can use to develop a culture invested in student learning?
3. Why is collective responsibility important for academic growth? When does collective responsibility occur?
4. In what ways do engaged parents benefit student learning? How does your school currently encourage parent engagement on the school community front?
5. What steps can administrators take to ensure their teachers are implementing the best instructional strategies?