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Poor Students, Rich Teaching: Mindsets for Change

By Eric Jensen

Study Guide

This study guide is a companion to the book *Poor Students, Rich Teaching: Mindsets for Change* by Eric Jensen. *Poor Students, Rich Teaching* offers examples of clear, research-based tools that educators can use to equip all their students, regardless of circumstance, with the skills they'll need to graduate college or career ready.

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

Why Should You Care About Poverty?

1. How does Eric Jensen define *poverty*? How does this differ from how schools commonly think of poverty?
2. In what ways does the United States propagate biased social and economic policies?
3. What important areas of advancement will experience greater losses as the poverty levels in a country rise?
4. How can poverty impact the body and the brain's stress levels? How does this relate to homeostasis, hypervigilance, hyporesponsiveness, and allostasis?
5. List three reading issues that frequently go underaddressed with poor students.

Chapter 2

Why Should You Embrace Change?

1. What is the purpose of a flexibility waiver, and how does the Elementary and Secondary Education Act grant these waivers to districts?
2. What beliefs must teachers have in their abilities and their students' abilities in order to bring about powerful change in their classrooms?
3. List the new, nuanced classroom mindsets that teachers should embrace.
4. What scoring system determines which classroom intervention strategies are most effective? How does this scoring system work?

Chapter 3

Secrets of the Relational Mindset

1. What comments characterize the thinking of teachers who struggle with relationships?
What questions do teachers with relational mindsets ask?
2. According to the Commission on Children at Risk, why is building connections among students and teachers vital?
3. In what ways do relationships influence engagement in the classroom?
4. What questions should teachers ask themselves every day if they want to continually build relationships with their students?

Chapter 4

Personalize the Learning

1. How can a teacher create a culture of personalization in class from day one?
2. Which of the name-learning strategies listed in this chapter have you used in the past, and which strategy would you most consider using in the future? Why does this strategy stand out to you?
3. Describe how the Me Bag activity works. What would you put in your own Me Bag? Why would you include these items and share them with your students?
4. How can providing a three-minute slice of a teacher's life promote the relational mindset? What three things does this slice of life model for students?
5. Why can students benefit from you, as the teacher, posting a personal goal and sharing your microsteps and setbacks toward reaching your goal? What is a personal goal of yours that you would share with students?

Chapter 5

Connect Everyone for Success

1. Define the *fifty-fifty rule*.
2. Why can the experience of walking backward down a crowded staircase represent what it's like to have a strong peer network in place?
3. Why does social time work well for elementary students and for secondary students?
4. What five basic partner steps can students take to rehearse conflict resolution?

Chapter 6

Show Empathy

1. How is sympathy different from empathy?
2. What five tools can teachers use to make sure they respond to students with empathy?
3. If a student is late for class, how should the teacher respond?
4. What tools can teachers use to fast-track their relationships with students?
5. Briefly describe the three strategies that teachers can use to show their students that they care about them.

Chapter 7

Lock in the Relational Mindset

1. Why did teachers who built relationships and teachers who did not build relationships have different impressions of the author as a student?
2. Define *narrative* in the context of the relational mindset. Why should teachers produce daily narratives?
3. Why does all meaningful change begin with a mirror? What questions should teachers ask themselves in order to work toward lasting change?
4. What three relational factors must teachers bear in mind to develop quality relationships with students?

Chapter 8

Secrets of the Achievement Mindset

1. Why did showing videos of soccer player Lionel Messi to students in a high-poverty school get the students in the achievement mindset?
2. What should teachers avoid saying when students fail? Why are these expressions detrimental?
3. List the seventeen invisible motivators that can act as tipping points for student energy and effort.
4. Define *stereotype threat*. How can teachers prevent stereotype threats?
5. What labels should teachers drop from their vocabulary? Why should they abandon these labels?

Chapter 9

Set Gutsy Goals

1. What four factors influence whether a student makes the choice to work hard?
2. Define *gutsy goals*. Write a gutsy goal that you would set for your class.
3. What characterizes the mastery process? What must teachers say in the mastery process?
4. Why can setting low goals that students can reach with little effort cause harm?
5. Why is it important to have classroom celebrations?

Chapter 10

Have the Right Attitude

1. What two scientific discoveries highlight the power of modeling the achievement mindset? How did research on monkeys' brains lead to one of these discoveries?
2. What does the *transmission of affect* mean?
3. Briefly describe some strategies that teachers can use to model high-achievement thinking for their students.
4. Consider the sample statements that teachers can make to illustrate connections between students' goals for themselves and what they do in class. Based on your classroom experiences, what connecting thoughts would you add to this list?

Chapter 11

Give Fabulous Feedback

1. What does formative feedback measure?
2. What danger can arise from teaching without ongoing formative assessment? What five benchmarks does formative assessment need to meet for it to align with quality standards?
3. Through the 3M process, what three essential questions can students answer?
4. What does the acronym *MIC* stand for, and what can MIC feedback uncover about students?
5. Briefly describe each of the four feedback strategies teachers can use to get feedback from students.

Chapter 12

Persist With Grit

1. How is grit different from self-control?
2. Briefly describe the ten well-researched ways to develop grit listed in this chapter.
3. What can teachers do to help students regain their grittiness?
4. What three steps can students take to cope with grit breakdowns on their own?

Chapter 13

Lock in the Achievement Mindset

1. According to the Economic Policy Institute, how do the hours that poor adults spend working compare to the hours worked by wealthier adults?
2. What two choices do teachers have if their students have remained unmotivated for years?
3. Which of the mindset narratives do you have? Why do you think that this is your current mindset narrative?
4. What features should a decision to grow students in a more self-confident mindset include?

Chapter 14

Secrets of the Rich Classroom Climate Mindset

1. Why did the author work harder for two specific middle school teachers than he did for any other teachers when he was a student?
2. What is the relationship between *climate* and *culture*? Why shouldn't people use these terms interchangeably?
3. What makes a rich classroom climate mindset different from a more random classroom climate mindset?
4. Through what strategies and values have teachers promoted rich classroom climate mindsets that encourage students, many of whom have grown up in poverty, to perform highly?

Chapter 15

Engage Voice and Vision

1. What three elements do classrooms need to address to make students feel engaged and respected in class?
2. Define *cultural relevance*. What four questions should teachers ask themselves in order to determine how to present classroom content as relevant to students' experience?
3. What is student voice, and what does having a voice in class help students to strengthen? In what ways can teachers inspire student voice?
4. How does middle school teacher Katy Lyons inspire her students to build connections with history so they realize that history is never finished?
5. Through what steps can a teacher uncover a student's vision?

Chapter 16

Set Safe Classroom Norms

1. When a classroom feels safe, what will students do? What will they do when they do not feel safe in class?
2. What classroom norms can teachers enforce in order to ensure that students feel emotionally safe in class?
3. As teachers obtain answers from students, what should they focus on finding out?
4. List your own examples of passionate, positive words you could use in your feedback to students.
5. Define *cool rules*.

Chapter 17

Foster Academic Optimism

1. What does it mean to have a classroom climate of academic optimism?
2. In your own words, define a *pedagogy of confidence*. Why does Yvette Jackson say that class climates need a pedagogy of confidence?
3. What barriers often prevent poor students from reaching the academic achievement they would otherwise have the ability to reach if they were in a better economic situation?
4. In what five ways can teachers promote academically positive mindsets in real classrooms?
5. Why should teachers frequently use the words *we* and *us* when they talk to their students?

Chapter 18

Lock in the Rich Classroom Climate Mindset

1. How would you describe your class climate? What aspects of your class climate may hinder students' academic performance?
2. How would you fill in the blanks in the following phrase provided in this chapter?: "I, _____, am committing to developing the rich classroom climate mindset in my students every single day. I will begin with one of the strategies mentioned, which is _____ I will continue this until I have mastery and it's automatic. At that point, I'll learn something new to foster student success."
3. What special classroom qualities did the author witness the first time he saw a teacher fostering a remarkable instructional climate?
4. What is the number-one influencer over the classroom climate?

Chapter 19

Secrets of the Engagement Mindset

1. What comments portray a struggling teacher's mindset, and what comments portray a teacher's engagement mindset?
2. In what ways should learning engage students and inspire them?
3. Why do secondary and upper-elementary students say they feel bored in class most of the time? What is the primary reason for student dropouts?
4. What positive states typify high-performing classrooms, and what negative states do low-performing classrooms perpetuate?

Chapter 20

Engage for Maintenance and Stress

1. What has epigenetics discovered about the relationship between genetic and environmental factors? What do *epigenetic changes* refer to?
2. Through what two filters do people typically generate stress? How can teachers teach students to manage their own stress?
3. Describe the three quick K–12 activities that students can do to regulate their stress using their bodies.
4. Which of the stress and behavior management activities in this chapter do you think would most benefit your students, and which would you use to manage your own stress? Why do these techniques stand out to you?

Chapter 21

Engage for Setup and Buy-In

1. Why does buy-in need to be present for every learning activity? How does buy-in guarantee that the next task will be more effective than the last one?
2. Name the two types of classroom learning.
3. Why does compliance learning invite reteaching?
4. What does it mean for a student to be in a state of arousal? How can a teacher build up to student arousal at the beginning of a lesson?
5. What does a whole-class question-and-answer session require? What kinds of questions can teachers use to get the whole-class session started?

Chapter 22

Engage to Build Community

1. How is a classroom ritual, or routine, different from any other classroom activity? What five criteria must class rituals meet in order for them to work?
2. Consider the priceless classroom routines detailed in this chapter. Which of these routines do you think would most benefit your classroom, and why is that the case?
3. What four comprehension-fostering strategies can students learn about from reciprocal teaching?
4. Why are micro goals important? In your classroom, how do you set and celebrate reaching micro goals? How do you think you could improve upon your celebration tactics or your timing of classroom celebrations?

Chapter 23

Lock in the Engagement Mindset

1. Why did Eric Jensen embrace the engagement mindset?
2. In your own words, what does *relentless engagement* mean?
3. What three things does the engagement mindset say?
4. How would you fill in the blanks in the following phrase provided in this chapter?: “I, _____, am committing to building the engagement mindset in my students every single day. I will begin with one of the strategies mentioned, which is _____. I will continue this until I have mastery and it’s automatic. At that point, I’ll learn something new to foster student success.”