

# Solution Tree | Press

## **Poor Students, Richer Teaching: Mindsets That Raise Student Achievement**

*By Eric Jensen*

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### **Study Guide**

This study guide is a companion to the book *Poor Students, Richer Teaching: Mindsets That Raise Student Achievement* by Eric Jensen. *Poor Students, Richer Teaching* details the different mindsets teachers need to adopt in order to prepare their students to graduate college or career ready, regardless of financial status.

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**

### **The New Normal**

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1. What role does the shrinking of the middle class play in the increase of household poverty in the United States?
2. What four primary types of experiences are likely to impact the brains of children from poverty, and how might these experiences affect the way these children perform in school?
3. Why is it a toxic attitude to assume that a poorly behaved young student cannot to change his or her behavior?
4. Describe the scoring system used in education to decide a winning classroom strategy and how this system is measured.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Secrets of the Positivity Mindset**

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1. In what ways can factors like immigration and racism lead to higher levels of student stress, and how can teachers respond to this stress using new strategies in the classroom?
2. List some common attitudes teachers have that suggest negative mindsets regarding students from low-income households and neighborhoods. Why are these attitudes problematic?
3. What does having a positivity mindset say about someone?
4. What are some compelling arguments for raising the positivity level in a classroom?
5. Jensen describes two neurotransmitters, dopamine and serotonin, as being linked with positive moods, high levels of effort, and improved memory and attention. What are some ways in which teachers can raise their students' production of dopamine and serotonin?

## **Chapter 3**

### **Boost Optimism and Hope**

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1. What is the difference between optimism and hope?
2. What four strategies does Jensen recommend for fostering optimism and hope? How can teachers implement these strategies in their classrooms?
3. How do word nutrients work? How can a teacher use more positive language and prompt his or her students to do the same?
4. Why does having a power minute carry value, and what can teachers have students share during this time?
5. Describe the five best areas to target relationships in a school.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Build Positive Attitudes**

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1. How can teachers help students build their emotional bank accounts? What good tips should teachers keep in mind when asking students to share their gratitude?
2. Describe the steps of the Magic Three strategy. How might this strategy help get a situation of conflict under control?
3. What are some skills teachers can teach their students so they take responsibility for their actions and commit to a positive mindset?
4. What skills should students learn in order to improve their self-regulation?

## **Chapter 5**

### **Foster Control, Choice, and Relevancy**

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1. What two primary behavioral responses may students have to chronic stressors? Describe a situation in which you saw a student display one of these behaviors.
2. Define *behavioral immunization*, and describe how it can be used in a classroom.
3. How can teachers use the choice filter to improve students' learning and saving of information?
4. What are the 3Ms that students can discuss with their teachers for self-assessment purposes?

## **Chapter 6**

### **Change the Emotional Set Point**

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1. Define *emotional set point*.
2. What are the three types of happiness, and how does one's brain respond to each type?
3. What are the two ways to change students' emotional set points?
4. In what ways can teachers do relevant things over time to change students' emotional set points in a positive way? Describe a situation in which you could use one of these techniques for your instruction's purposes.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Lock in the Positivity Mindset**

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1. How does fifth-grade teacher Josalyn Tresvant establish relevance in her classroom to help students thrive?
2. How can a teacher change his or her own narrative as the first step to changing the narrative of his or her students?
3. Why can constantly keeping one's choices in mind improve one's mindset?
4. What three things must a teacher's decision to develop a positivity mindset in himself or herself and students include?

## **Chapter 8**

### **Secrets of the Enrichment Mindset**

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1. Why is it dangerous to make instant assumptions about students' learning capabilities based on how they look, act, or dress?
2. What does having an enrichment mindset say about someone?
3. What variables can play a part in leading to failure? How can we use our understanding of these variables to push past setbacks?
4. What does Harold Skeels's research suggest about students' abilities to change when given positive reinforcement and enriched learning on a daily basis?
5. In what three neurocognitive systems do students of low socioeconomic status primarily have differences that their peers?

## **Chapter 9**

### **Manage the Cognitive Load**

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1. What are some physical activities teachers can use to keep their students active, and why does this help manage students' cognitive loads?
2. What methods can teachers use to maintain an emotionally and physically safe classroom atmosphere?
3. What is chunking, and how can teachers use it to help students better process new information?
4. What does retrieval practice look like in a classroom?

## **Chapter 10**

### **Develop Better Thinking Skills**

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1. What two rules should teachers have in place when teaching reasoning as a thinking skill?
2. List some effective tools for optimal reasoning.
3. What are the seven steps to defining a problem and honing students' reasoning skills to aid in decision making?
4. Describe the five steps to forming an effective argument.
5. What four question formats can prompt deeper thinking and reasoning in students? For each format, write a question that fits the format and is appropriate for your classroom's content.

## **Chapter 11**

### **Enhance Study Skills and Vocabulary**

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1. For what reasons is research on study skills complicated?
2. Of the top study process achievement boosters that teachers can use with their students, which of these do you use the most frequently and the least frequently in class? In what ways do you think you need to help enhance your students' study skills based on these boosters?
3. List the seven study steps of mathematics problem solving for secondary students.
4. What are Marzano's six research-based steps to direct vocabulary instruction?

## **Chapter 12**

### **Build Better Memory**

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1. Why is memory building an important skill for students to work on?
2. Describe four strategies that teachers can use to build students' long-term memory skills.
3. What sort of information does short-term memory store, and why is this useful?
4. What ten steps build short-term memory in students over time?

## **Chapter 13**

### **Lock in the Enrichment Mindset**

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1. How does the enrichment mindset split from the idea that some children are simply not fated to succeed?
2. What phrase does Jensen recommend that teachers repeat to themselves to keep the enrichment mindset at the forefront of their attention?
3. What must a teacher do when he or she decides to grow the enrichment mindset in his or her students?
4. What does it mean for a student to have a growth mindset?

## **Chapter 14**

### **Secrets of the Graduation Mindset**

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1. What does having a graduation mindset say about someone?
2. List the five major building blocks of a high-performing school.
3. List the five core practices of a high-performing school. Why are these practices important, and which of these practices is your strongest and your weakest?
4. What are some strategies that high-performing schools can use to make sure their students graduate college or career ready? Give your own examples of how teachers and administrators can help implement these strategies in their schools.

## **Chapter 15**

### **Support Alternative Solutions**

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1. What are some of the major benefits of having strong arts programs in schools, and what is an additional benefit you would add to this list?
2. List the five factors that that arts involvement can impact to positively influence the way students think.
3. How can you incorporate areas of the arts, such as music and drama, into your everyday teaching?
4. In what ways can improved motor skills translate into improved academic skills?
5. How does physical activity influence the way students perform in classes such as mathematics?

## **Chapter 16**

### **Prepare for College and Careers**

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1. What are some strategies used by high-performing schools to increase their students' levels of college and career readiness? Which of these strategies could your school better implement, and how could your school accomplish this implementation?
2. What are students' three biggest needs, and how can career and technical education programs help schools meet these needs and thereby increase students' productivity?
3. Describe three ways in which a school can work to implement successful career and technical education programs.
4. What does it mean for a student to be college or career ready?

## **Chapter 17**

### **Lock in the Graduation Mindset**

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1. What sort of filter does the graduation mindset remind teachers to use in their work?
2. Jensen emphasizes that a person can choose not what happens to him or her but how he or she responds to these things. How does this idea tie in with his points about the importance of the graduation mindset?
3. What can teachers do on a daily basis to continually work according to the graduation mindset?
4. How does the graduation mindset fit in with the sense of community fostered between students and their teacher?