CLASSROOM STRATEGIES

Eric Jensen · February 4, 2014

Promoting Positive Classroom Behaviors for Students in Poverty Elementary

Lezley Lewis, Ph.D. & Amanda Oelkers

WHAT: The challenge of working with students from poverty is not for the faint of heart. Aggression and passive behaviors are manifestations of the stress students living in poverty are faced with daily. It takes willingness and the capacity to view traditional, discipline behaviors as opportunities to teach new behavior and create a new reality. For students in poverty, a different reality creates a new way of being thus paving the way to a different future and outcome. In Jensen's book, Engaging Students with Poverty in Mind, aggressive students that attended classes on appropriate coping skills and stress relieving techniques evidence a decrease in hostility. Providing explicit instruction and modeling of coping skills and stress relieving are critical to promoting peace in the classroom and creating a new reality for students greatest in need.

HOW: Following are examples of proactive teacher modeling by Amanda Oelkers with prompts that promote positive, brain-based behaviors.

- Begin with a check of students' feelings. Example: The teacher says, "Show me with your face how you feel?" The teacher models the appropriate feeling with their face.
- Use visualization to connect to a previous positive memory to change the state of the student. Example: The teacher says, "Close your eyes and think of a time that you felt happy." The students can share their memories to further extend the feeling of happiness.
- Use locations in the classroom to associate specific states of being. Example: The teacher observes two students not interacting well. The teacher states, "John and Mark are not remembering how friends get along with each other. They will work at the "Peace" table today and that will help them remember how to be a friend."
- Use realia, music or props to create auditory prompts that deescalate behaviors. Example: The teacher observes negative classroom behaviors escalating and uses a Tibetan Song Bowl to engage the students. The teacher states, "Listen to the tone until you cannot hear it anymore."

Being proactive and promoting new, authentic ways to respond changes the brain and creates a new reality.

EVIDENCE:

Jensen E. (2013). Engaging Students with Poverty in Mind Practical Strategies for Raising Achievement. Alexandria, Virginia, ASCD.

Hawn Foundation (2011). The Mind Up Curriculum Brain-Focused Strategies for Learning and Living. New York, New York, Scholastic.

Got Brain Breaks? K-5

Erik B. Smith

What? Knowing that the mind, body, and brain all influence each other, it is advantageous for all educa-

tors to incorporate purposeful exercise to positively modulate learning states, elevate moods, and solidify learning by enhancing the body's ability to produce impactful learning chemicals. For instance, brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF) is considered to be Miracle-Gro for the brain and has been found to be present in the hippocampus, which is a vital area associated with memory and learning. Moreover, neurotransmitters, such as dopamine and norepinephrine, can be elevated through aerobic exercise, which, in turn, can influence a student's self-self efficacy.

How? Begin by creating a set list of physical movements for students to choose from, such as sprints, jumping jacks, sequenced runs involving touching different objects or stopping to perform a specific exercise. I have created names for different activities, such as the Triple G (walk, sprint, skip), Yellow Brick Road, or Jokers Wild. Incorporating novelty, predictability/routines, and variety, into daily brain-breaks is crucial for enhancing student buy in. Be prepared to model various activities to ensure that all movements support the desired effects. Look to use a timer (Start/End time goal is 15 minutes), give positive feedback/encouragement, and conclude activity with a fun game, such as freeze tag or war.

Jensen, E. (2008) *Brain Based Learning*. (2nd ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
Kagan, S. (2014) *Brain-Friendly Teaching.* San Clemente, CA: Kagan Publishing
Ratey, J. (2008) *Spark.* New York: Hachette Book Group USA.

Active Reading with Textbooks (Part 1)
Upper Elementary to Adult

Lezley Lewis, Ph.D.

WHAT: The textbook is too often relied upon as the sole resource of instruction for the classroom teacher. While an essential resource in the classroom, the textbook can never take the place of a vibrant and engaging teacher. On those occasions when the textbook is used as a tool for instruction, understanding how to structure the information for text reading is critical. In Strategies that Work: Teaching Comprehension for Understanding and Engagement, Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis provide strategies for active reading with textbooks.

HOW:

1. Be selective. Read smaller sections of text more carefully.
2. Read selections in class so the teacher can guide.
3. Preview the chapter-notice the features, visuals, headings, subheadings, etc…
4. Pre-teach new vocabulary and unfamiliar concepts.
5. Slow down the rate of reading.
6. Use a variety of comprehension strategies to construct meaning, including activating background knowledge, questioning, determining importance, and synthesizing information.

When teachers incorporate strategies for active reading, the text comes a vital part of the learning experience.

EVIDENCE: Harvey, S. and Goudvis, A. (2007). Strategies that Work: Teaching Comprehension for Understanding and Engagement. Portland, Maine, Stenhouse Publishers.

Active Reading with Textbooks (Part 2)
Upper Elementary to Adult

Lezley Lewis, Ph.D.

WHAT: The textbook is too often relied upon as the sole resource of instruction for the classroom teacher. While an essential resource in the classroom, the textbook can never take the place of a vibrant and engaging teacher. On those occasions when the textbook is used as a tool for instruction, understanding how to structure the information for text reading is critical. In Strategies that Work: Teaching Comprehension for Understanding and Engagement, Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis provide strategies for active reading with textbooks.

HOW:

1. Merge thinking with the information by stopping, thinking, and reacting to the section.
2. Code the text with sticky notes to hold thinking.

3. Take notes on “think sheets”—two or three—column forms and graphic organizers to demonstrate thinking.

4. Paraphrase the information.

5. Become familiar with and use the index to get information quickly.

When teachers incorporate strategies for active reading, the text comes a vital part of the learning experience.

EVIDENCE: Harvey, S. and Goudvis, A. (2007). Strategies that Work: Teaching Comprehension for Understanding and Engagement. Portland, Maine, Stenhouse Publishers.

Active Reading with Textbooks (Part 3)
Upper Elementary to Adult

Lezley Lewis, Ph.D.

WHAT: The textbook is too often relied upon as the sole resource of instruction for the classroom teacher. While an essential resource in the classroom, the textbook can never take the place of a vibrant and engaging teacher. On those occasions when the textbook is used as a tool for instruction, understanding how to structure the information for text reading is critical. In Strategies that Work: Teaching Comprehension for Understanding and Engagement, Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis provide strategies for active reading with textbooks.

HOW:

1. Turn and talk about the information.

2. Read and respond to the textbook with a partner.

3. Discuss sections of a chapter in small groups.

4. Use the jigsaw strategy to read and share sections, reporting information.

5. Take on different roles and perspectives and share with the group.

When teachers incorporate strategies for active reading, the text comes a vital part of the learning experience.

EVIDENCE: Harvey, S. and Goudvis, A. (2007). Strategies that Work: Teaching Comprehension for Understanding and Engagement. Portland, Maine, Stenhouse Publishers.

Connecting Learning & ELLs
Upper Elementary to Adult

Lezley Lewis, Ph.D.

WHAT: Connecting learning to students’ lives and interests draws students into the learning experience. Knowing a student’s interests and life story can be a daunting task for a teacher but a critical one for building the teacher-student relationship. For the English language learner, understanding their culture, roots and idiosyncrasies creates the space for the teacher to build relevant and connected learning.

HOW: Connecting curriculum units with current events and culturally relevant topics from a student’s country of origin opens dialogue and scaffolds cognitive learning. Example: As the United States celebrates national leaders through national holidays recognizing their work and contributions (i.e., Martin Luther King, Cesar Chavez), examination of the work and contributions of leaders from the student’s country of origin becomes an opportunity to deepen learning. Examining the work and contributions of the leaders from the student’s country of origin as it relates to the concepts being taught connects the student to the classroom instruction and makes learning relevant.

EVIDENCE: Zacarian, D. (2011) Transforming Schools for English Learners: A Comprehensive Framework for School Leaders. Thousand Oaks, CA, Corwin Press.

Language Skills Integration & ELLs
PK-Adult

Lezley Lewis, Ph.D.

WHAT: The language skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening are complex and interrelated. Op-

portunity to practice each skill in an integrated and meaningful way is imperative for the cognitive and language development of English language learners.

HOW: Teachers ensure that each language skill is given time and opportunity for practice through answering three instructional questions:

1. Are hands-on materials or manipulatives provided for students to practice language and new content knowledge?

Example: The teacher incorporates visuals, models, labeling, drawing, authentic realia to demonstrate the concept being taught.

2. Do the activities provided in class provide opportunity for students to apply content and language knowledge in the classroom?

Example: The teacher incorporates class discussion, peer sharing, and cooperative learning structures to promote language skills practice around the concept.

3. Are language skills integrated in the classroom activities?

Example: The teacher integrates activities for reading, writing, listening and speaking. Students listen to text, read text, write about the new content learning and then discuss or share the new vocabulary associated with the content learning.

When new content learning is presented, time to make application and connections with previous learning is critical for English language learners. To ensure mastery of the new content learning, full integration of all the language skills is best practice.

EVIDENCE: Echevarria, J., Vogt, M., & Short, D. (2004) Making Content Comprehensible for English Language Learners, The SIOP Model. Boston, MA, Allyn and Bacon

Improve Memory with a Self-Quiz
PK-Adult

Bryan Harris, Ed.D.

What: We all want our student to do well on tests and assessments. We want them to remember key information and transfer their knowledge into other parts of their lives. Why is it then, that so many of them seem to forget information so quickly? Well, one reason may be our reliance on passive review strategies. Think about how often we ask our students to do things like review vocabulary, read a page from a handout, or generically “study” their notes. The problem with these types of review strategies is that they are passive. They actually require very little cognitive processing. Even if you can get your kids to “review their work”, the entire process is fairly passive. A better approach is have students conduct self quiz.

How: A self quiz can take many forms. Flash cards, partner quizzes, writing, and elaborating on one’s knowledge are all ways that a student can conduct a self quiz. One researcher described the process of a self-quiz as “self enlightening” – that is, the process of thinking about knowledge and status helps to uncover possibly faulty assumptions. Self quizzes require that students actually think about and process information rather than just reviewing or looking over their work. A self quiz – one in which they are required to think about, process, discuss, or explain their thinking requires the brain to retrieve and process the information. A review, on the other hand, only requires that students recognize key ideas. There is a world of cognitive difference between recognizing and retrieving.

Evidence: Roediger & Karpicke (2006). Test Enhanced Learning: Taking Memory Tests Improves Long-term Memory. Psychological Science, 17, 249-255.

Using Video Captions to Improve Memory
Grades: PK-Adult

Bryan Harris, Ed.D.

What: Can one simple trick increase student comprehension and long-term memory? Seem too good to be true? Through his work with Native American college students at San Francisco State University, Robert Keith Collins found that simply switching on video captions when watching educational videos made a big difference for students. Collins described the improvement in students’ grades, comprehen-

sion, and engagement as “significant”. He said, “Turning on captions seems to enable students to focus on specific information.”

How: While the initial study found results with Native American college students, might students of all ages and backgrounds also benefit from video captions? Give it a try – conduct some action research in your own setting. Turn on the video captions the next time your students watch an educational video.

Evidence: Collins, R.K. (2013) Using Captions to Reduce Barriers to Native American Student Success. Retrieved from http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2013/10/131011135355.htm

Increase Student Effort with a Compliment and a Smile Grades: PK-Adult

Bryan Harris, Ed.D.

What: As teachers, we know it is important to give praise, feedback, and encouragement to students. However, could a genuine compliment combined with a smile actually increase student performance? It seems that might be the case.

Japanese researchers have found evidence that people actually perform better after they have received a compliment. They conducted a study with adults who were tasked with repeating a finger exercise (following a sequence on a keyboard) and found that those who received compliments during the exercise outperformed those who did not. The striatum, a brain structure implicated in reward response was activated when participants received a compliment.

The lead researcher, Professor Sadato, said this. “To the brain, receiving a compliment is as much a social reward as being rewarded money. We’ve been able to find scientific proof that a person performs better when they receive a social reward (a compliment) after completing an exercise.” In addition, there is evidence that a simple smile can get other people to trust you more (Mehu et al, 2007).

When students trust you, they are more likely to cooperate and put forth effort.

How: When giving feedback and direction to students regarding their work or their effort, make sure to compliment them on specific aspects or features of their efforts that you find most valuable. It is essential, of course, that compliments be specific and genuine. Compliments and smiles communicate to students that we care about them as individuals and that we know specific things about them. Compliments and smiles, it turns out, are more than “just being nice” to students. They can actually help to boost performance.

Evidence: Sho K. Sugawara, et al., Social Rewards Enhance Offline Improvements in Motor Skill. PLoS ONE, 2012: 7 (11): e48174 DOI:10.1371/journal.pone.0048174

Using Powerful Images to Focus Student Conversations Grades: PK-college and adult

Bryan Harris, Ed.D.

What: A Powerful Image is a picture that evokes an emotional response. Powerful Images differ from typical pictures because they evoke an immediate, sometimes strong reaction. Sometimes the response is “wow”, sometimes its “I can’t believe that” and sometimes students quietly reflect on the content of the image. Powerful Images help to focus student conversations by providing them with something external on which to focus their conversations. This is preferable, particularly for many struggling students, because it takes the stress away from the interpersonal interactions of a conversation and places the focus on something external. During conversations, students are asked to reference what they see in the image.

How: When planning a lesson, do a web image search using key terms from the objective. For example, if you are teaching about ideas related to the impact of Nazi occupation of Eastern Europe during WWII, do a web search for some key terms. You’ll be amazed at some of the images you’ll find. Be cautious, of course, because not all images (although they may be historically accurate) are appropriate for students. Then, using the images you find plan specific questions to ask of students related to the images and the objective.

Evidence: John Medina, in his book Brain Rules, outlines how powerful the brain’s visual processing system is. He explains the power of something researchers have known for years – the pictorial superiority

effect (PSE). This research explains the old adage that a picture is worth 1000 words.

FQR- Preparing for Great Literature Discussions (Upper Elementary)

Cid Schumpert

What? Fact, Question, Response or FQR is a great way for students to consolidate their learning, make emotional connections, and get ready to discuss a literary selection.

How? After reading a literary selection, ask students to divide a page into three columns labeled fact, question, response. Students write facts or for fiction events in the fact column. In the question column, students write questions they have or what they are wondering about the selection. The response column allows students to express their personal reaction to the reading.

Next: The next day in class ask students to share their FQR's. The students enjoy answering their classmates' questions and commenting on their responses. The strategy also helps build a culture of respectful consideration of others' thoughts and ideas.

Evidence: Harvey, S. & Goudvis, A. (2007). Strategies That Work: Teaching Comprehension for Understanding and Engagement. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.

MOVEMENT AND INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS K THROUGH 12

Patricia Bentolila, MSc.
FAMILY COUNSELOR

LOOK FOR SOMEONE IN THIS GROUP THAT…

WHAT: A dynamic activity that requires students to stand up, move around and interact. If a teacher has to choose between saying something and letting students experience, to get to the knowledge, go for the second alternative. In this strategy the teacher can adapt the content to make it appropriate for different ages.

HOW: make a chart with different things that students will have to go and ask for answers from classmates. Every time they get an answer, the classmates can either put a finger print (younger), sign the space or write the answer (older). For younger students make it simple, and a smaller chart (6 by 6 squares), and adapt it in content and quantity (more squares, 10 by 10) for older students.

Example: If you want to teach about geographic concepts and countries, the chart may look similar to: (change subject according to your needs)

Look for someone in this class that… one square says: has been at a desert, next square says, has traveled to Europe, another square, has swam in a river, has escalated a volcano… and so on.

Instruct the students to go around, find the person that matches, and according to age and your petition either, finger print, sign, or write their comment in the space.

You can add: let them tell you about their experience.

This is an excellent opportunity for students to share knowledge, experiences, and socialize. Follow with letting them choose one area they would like to find more about. They will be ready to investigate, read, write or make a Project about it.

EVIDENCE: Active learning strategies accelerate understanding, recall, meaning and add enjoyment. Current brain research has suggested that new learning and physical learning may be linked. Through PET scans, scientist have realized that activity in the cerebellum is increased during both physical movement and/or novelty or new learning. There's also evidence that when the emotions are engaged, the brain releases chemicals that mark the event and signal its importance, allowing for better recall and facilitates learning.

Sources:
Mel Silberman, Active Learning, Pfeiffer and Co.
Eric Jensen, Sizzle and Substance, Presenting with the Brain in Mind.
Terence Parry and Gayle Gregory, Designing Brain Compatible Learning

MANAGE STATE, BUILD UP CONCENTRATION (6TH-12TH GRADE):

Patricia Bentolila
FAMILY COUNSELOR

Get everyone into a big circle. One volunteer goes to the middle. He turns to one of the participants in the circle and points to one part of his body, but says " this is my _____and claims a different part of the body".

For example: pointing to his nose, says this is my foot. The participant in front of him, must answer the opposite. Example: pointing to his foot, says: this is my nose. The participant that fails to answer the opposite becomes the middle person.

Variation: One person in the circle starts, turns to the person to his right, and keeps going. Those who fail to answer the opposite must move to the end of the circle. (next to the person who started).

It is an excellent excersice to improve attention, concentration and fun which also busts dopamine to get students in a positive state. If you want to add content for discussion, I use it to adress the issue of being congruent between what you say and what you do. Actions should match speech.

I´ve been using this strategy for quite a long time and made variations, and different applications. I cannot recall it´s source, sorry for that. I would love to hear how you implemented it and the results.

MANAGE STUDENT STATES (K-Adult):

Eric Jensen

What? Create arousal and strong learning states to optimize learning. Instead of simply noticing that a student readiness "state" is a poor one, purposely change it to influence the upcoming learning.

How? You can use a quick relevancy connection ("This will help you finish this part of the assignment in half the time"), novelty approach (use of competition or music), partner tie-in ("You can only do as well as you help your partner to also succeed), connect to long-term goals ("This helps you get more ready for that college you're interested in") "buy-in" ("This doubles as homework and classwork") or other state arouser (like a quick energizer).

Evidence…
Foxe JJ, Simpson GV, Ahlfors SP, Saron CD. (2005) Biasing the brain's Attentional set: I. cue driven deployments of intersensory selective attention. Exp Brain Res., 166, 370-92.

Chesebro, Joseph L. & McCloskey, James C. (2001, January). The relationship of teacher clarity and immediacy with student state receiver apprehension, affect, and cognitive learning. Communication Education, 50, 59-68.

BUMP UP QUALITY FEEDBACK (K-ADULT)

Eric Jensen

WHAT? Our brain's neural networks are actually "assembled and connected" by life experiences. To get smarter, we prune away unused connections and foster newer, more relevant ones. This experience requires an enormous amount of quality experiential feedback. School is 800-900 hours a year and that means we need hundreds and hundreds moments of micro feedback to sculpt the brain.

HOW? Examples include 1) peer editing (with a specific rubric), 2) competition (which usually rewards speed of processing as well as accuracy), pre-quizzes (to asses prior knowledge), discussion (to assess what you know compared with your peers) and asking Qs and creating quizzes to use in class. More quality feedback strengthens learning and it is also one the top motivators.

Hattie, J.A. & Timperley, H. (2007). The power of feedback. Review of Educational Research, 77, 81-112.

Welcome. This is the place to find and list specific (context dependent) strategies that others can use.

Here are the simple guidelines for posting:

1. List the title
2. List who this is for (Pre-K, K-5, Seconday, K-Adult, etc.)
3. Put your name underneath the title
4. List the strategy in 100 words or less and list an example in 100 words or less
5. Add the full reference or citation (if you don't have one, wait until you find one before listing since our readers want to know whether this is research based, or you just made it up)
6. The article on posted on this page is an example using the template.

When you have your article ready, click here to email it to us for publication.

By Eric Jensen

Eric Jensen is a former teacher with a real love of learning. He grew up in San Diego and attended public schools. While his academic background is in English and human development, he has a real love of educational neuroscience. For over 20 years, he has been connecting the research with practical classroom applications.

Eric Jensen's Brain-Based Learning:

Eric Jensen's brain-based learning approach focuses on practical strategies linking brain research to student achievement. Brain-based learning is all about smarter, more purposeful teaching that can reach a greater number of students. It's not any one single thing you do. It's more about the on-going, purposeful aggregate of environment, instruction and curriculum strategies that makes it all work.

About Jensen Learning

Jensen Learning integrates cutting-edge neuroscience with practical, user-friendly classroom strategies, to overcome challenging teaching environments such as poverty, AD/HD... helping you create a high performance school environment.

Jensen Learning®
Practical Teaching with the Brain in Mind
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