

# Solution Tree | Press

## **EMPOWER Your Students: Tools to Inspire a Meaningful School**

### **Experience, Grades 6–12**

*By Lauren Porosoff and Jonathan Weinstein*

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### **Study Guide**

This study guide is a companion to part II of the book *EMPOWER Your Students: Tools to Inspire a Meaningful School Experience, Grades 6–12* by Lauren Porosoff and Jonathan Weinstein. *EMPOWER Your Students* shares strategies that grades 6–12 teachers can use to make learning a source of meaning for students and empower students and themselves to act in a values-consistent way.

This guide for part II of *EMPOWER Your Students* 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 8**

**Empowering Dialogue: How to Activate Student Values Through  
One-on-One Conversations**

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1. According to Kirk Strosahl and his colleagues, what three questions do conversations about whether a behavior is working boil down to?
2. Consider a case in which a student asked you to help assess the workability of his or her behavior. What judging response and what savior response would have applied to this situation? How could you have responded to engender a productive conversation with this student?
3. What questions can teachers ask their students to help them understand their behaviors in light of their values?
4. In your own words, define *sustain talk* and *change talk*, and provide an example of each. Which of these better motivates students to act according to their values, and why is this the case?

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5. Think of a difficult conversation about change you've had with a student. How could you have adapted generic questions in figure 8.2 (page 141) to help that student assess his or her behaviors and make changes?

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**Chapter 9**

**Empowering Partnerships: How to Involve Parents in Helping  
Students Enact Their Values**

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1. What should all school-to-home communications and letters—no matter their purpose—do?
2. Why is EMPOWER work probably quite different from what students and their parents expect of a class? Describe what students in a subject you teach will expect and what they will actually gain from EMPOWER work.
3. What two agendas do parents commonly have when they contact teachers?
4. How can teachers reframe a conversation with one of their student's parents so that the conversation becomes empowering?
5. In what ways do teachers often defensively react when they face parents who attack them? How can teachers respond compassionately when they face a difficult situation with a parent?

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**Chapter 10**

**Empowering Collaborations: How to Center Student Values in**

**Discussions With Colleagues**

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1. Do teachers complain about students at your school's team meetings? If so, why do you think they complain to their colleagues? What questions should collaborative teams start team meetings with in order to have more productive meetings?
2. Provide examples of contexts and factors that can influence students' behavior. Describe a case in which a student behaved poorly and the context and factors that may have led to this behavior. How can recognizing the context in which a behavior occurs help teachers?
3. Why should collaborative team meetings sometimes focus on successful student actions, not just unsuccessful ones?
4. Describe what you believe to be the qualities of a successful student, and ask other teachers to do the same. How do your understandings of successful student behaviors differ, and how do these differences expand your own interpretation of success?
5. How do a problem-solving narrative and a values narrative differ?

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**Chapter 11**

**Empowering Curriculum: How to Incorporate Student Values Into  
Your Course Content**

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1. What purposes does seventh-grade English teacher Ruby’s original short story unit serve, and what else does the unit enable students to do as Ruby changes it over the years? What do you learn from Ruby’s tactics that you can apply in your classroom?
2. How does seventh-grade mathematics teacher Mila encourage her students to use the algebra they learn in class to help make decisions in their lives? What do you learn from Mila’s tactics that you can apply in your classroom?
3. How does varsity baseball coach Mike build up his team’s baseball skills and their value as players and team members? What do you learn from Mike’s tactics that you can apply in your classroom?
4. In what ways can art teachers help students incorporate their values into their artistic endeavors?
5. In what ways can teachers support students as they clarify their values and make choices consistent with those values?

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**Chapter 12**

**Empowering Inquiry: How to Assess the Impact of Helping Students**

**Pursue Their Values**

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1. In your own words, define the process of *action research*.
2. What kinds of data show the impact of EMPOWER work, and what do these data measure?
3. What kinds of exit slip formats exist, and what do these kinds of exit slips prompt students to do? Which of these exit slips do you use or would you consider using, and why is this the case? What can regularly using exit slips reveal to teachers?
4. Describe the differences between single-case research studies and multiple-baseline research studies and the differing purposes these forms of research design and their resulting data serve.
5. What suggestions does Steven Hayes offer for building patterns of values-consistent action?

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**Chapter 13**

**Empowering Yourself: How to Bring Your Own Values to Your Work**

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1. How should teachers relate to students in EMPOWER work? How should everyone participate in an EMPOWER environment, and what attitude should people have in EMPOWER work?
2. Think of a time when something wonderful happened at school, and write out the qualities of this magical moment and people’s feelings surrounding it. How can you bring the qualities of action that contributed to that magical moment to your work?
3. Think of an education buzzword you often hear at school, and come up with a yoga pose that corresponds with that buzzword. What purpose does turning an education buzzword into a yoga pose and imagining a yoga instructor suggesting the pose serve?
4. Describe the last time you told yourself you are bad in some way. Write an introductory statement for an essay about this bad quality, as described on page 207. What can a statement such as this help you notice about yourself?



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5. Why does practicing mindfulness help people keep their commitments? In what way do you currently practice mindfulness, or what mindfulness practice would you consider trying? Why are you attracted to this mindfulness practice in particular?