



12 Keys for Engaging at-Risk Students

Bruce J. Stewart

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12 Keys for Engaging At-Risk Students is a unique blend of story telling, practical advice for teachers, and most importantly it celebrates the power of making connections and believing in students. The book is divided into twelve chapters, the 12 Keys — that facilitated high engagement and student achievement at Traner Middle School in Reno, Nevada. Teachers, administrators, and counselors will be inspired by the message of hope in each chapter, and appreciate the achievement of students through a curriculum that emphasizes critical thinking.

Student success is facilitated by teachers who practice a simple philosophy as stated by author Bruce J. Stewart, “teachers have an ethical imperative to connect with all students in the classroom. . . and by making connections with all students, we as teachers are ready and willing to teach those students who need us the most.”

12 Keys for Engaging at-Risk Students Details

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From Reader Review 12 Keys for Engaging at-Risk Students for online ebook

Kathryn says

I am a teacher in rural Appalachia. I work with a large number of students who are labeled "At-Risk" as a result of low socio economic status (among other risk factors). I was very excited to receive this book. I realized that my student population would be different in terms of racial make up and geographical culture, but I felt that perhaps Mr. Stewart would have some advice that might be worth reading. As I read through this book, I enjoyed reading the many personal teaching antidotes that Mr. Stewart shared. It was evident that he is passionate about his students and their education. Unfortunately, there was not much to the book beyond the memories. The personal stories were very rarely tied back to a core philosophy. There was little to tie all the threads together into one cohesive approach.

I found many repetitive thoughts and statements within the same case study. I found awkwardly worded sentences that made the prose difficult to follow. The content flipped from one student to the next with very little to tie each situation back to a common theme. I appreciated the summary at the end of each chapter, but I would hardly call that advice innovative. These are basic concepts that are taught in any worthy College of Education.

I very much wanted to like this book, but I am not sure if it is a tome to which I will continuously refer after the initial reading. I was disappointed.

Nadine says

7-12 education students, especially English teachers, will appreciate the content of this book, perfect for methods courses or for beginning teachers. Charts at the end of each chapter point out the teacher attributes discussed along with discussion questions. If I were still teaching I would use this book with student teachers prescriptively to read the chapter about a problem he or she is having. The title bothers me a bit as the content is appropriate to all, not just at-risk students. I received a copy for review from Goodreads First Reads.

Susan Peek says

Anyone and everyone who works with children should read this book. Anyone and everyone who works with impoverished, disturbed, minority, or neglected children MUST read this book! I wish I could give a copy to every educator across America!

The author, Bruce Stewart, writes of his experiences and the teaching tactics he developed during his years of teaching English at Traner Middle School in Reno, Nevada. Many of his students came from poverty-stricken, single-parent, dysfunctional, troubled, and even abusive family situations. Some had mothers who were prostitutes. Others lived with grandparents, or bounced around from relative to relative, never knowing day to day whom they would be flicked off to next. Some kids in his English class were literally homeless, living in cheap motel rooms, their only meals provided by the school cafeteria. The atmosphere at Traner was charged with racial problems and deep cultural prejudices between many students. As is easy to imagine, Mr. Stewart dealt daily with rebellious, apathetic, angry, embittered kids, those who were instantly

labeled as trouble-makers the minute they set foot through the school's doors. The type of kids that would make most teachers throw up their hands in despair and march straight to the principal's office demanding expulsion. But not so Mr. Stewart . . .

He gave these kids his all. He accepted each one of them, and cared, and met them at whatever level they came to him at. He developed strategies and techniques to engage them, to inspire them, to push them to limits they didn't know they could achieve. These are the "12 Keys" he shares with others in this amazing book.

It's written in a relaxed, conversational style, making me feel like I was sitting in the teachers' lounge with him over a pot of coffee (I love those type of books!) -- yet at the same time, Mr. Stewart's prose is very hard hitting. He is throwing down the gauntlet, challenging every teacher (and parent, grandparent, social worker, everyone involved in any way with education) to not give up on these kids. To see beyond their rough and rebellious exterior. To reach out to them, unreachable as they may seem. Basically, it's a call to heroism. His stories will make you cry, make you cheer, and certainly make you view at-risk children in a whole new way.

I received this book for free as a Goodreads First Read Giveaway, but I promise that is not why I am giving it five stars! This truly is a powerful, thought-provoking, and very inspiring book that will stick with me for a long time. If only every teacher in America was as dedicated and passionate as Mr. Stewart. I cannot recommend it highly enough to any educator who really cares and wants to make a difference. I'll be lending this book to every teacher I know!

Melissa says

~Disclaimer: I received this book for free in a giveaway~

Biggest issue with the book: it didn't provide an action plan or a real clear solution.

This issue is complicated, but the title implies the book will give you 12 steps or things to try. But really what the book does is point out the every situation is different and give examples of solutions that the author found worked. It was great to see the thought process behind the choices, but that isn't what I thought this book would offer.

I don't know. I just didn't get anything out of it that I didn't already know. And I've only worked with foster kids and low income kids for 7 years and I know this stuff. So, it doesn't seem like it was offering something super insightful to me.

If you are new to working with kids this may help?

Donald Sharpe says

As an educator, I really enjoyed the book. I could really identify with the stories and the teaching situations in this book. This book forced me to be self reflective about my teaching methods and philosophy. I highly recommend this book for teachers and also for readers who are seeking some insight on students from

poverty.

Ms. Reader says

I received this book for free from Goodreads First Reads in exchange for an honest review...

I work with at-risk youth and even though this is based more along the lines of engaging with a student and helping them academically (I care for them at a Mental Health Facility, not in a school setting), this book benefitted me greatly. It had some helpful and bright ideas, information, and advice that anyone can benefit from. The book was well-written, well put together, organized, and very clear cut and understandable.

Nancy says

I received this book through Goodreads First Reads. Although I am not a teacher, two of my daughters are, and I thought it would be interesting reading, and it was. The information in it, such as treating each student with dignity, is basic and true, but I would think most of it would be taught in the education classes in college. There are interesting antidotes related, but there is too much repetition throughout. My main pause about the book, however, is that it is not punctuated. It was hard to grasp the meaning of some sentences without reading them several times and thinking, "Oh, a comma goes there . . . so it means--" Not cool for an English professor!

Andrew says

12 Keys for Engaging At-Risk Students includes important ideas but offers nothing to experienced educators other than some potential inspiration. I could see this book being used in college education classes or for first-year teachers. However, good teachers with a few years under their belts (hopefully) figure out these common-sense ideas for themselves.

The writing is so bad that it makes it difficult to believe it's written by an English teacher. The book is full of lousy word usage, cliches, redundancies, and spelling and grammar mechanics errors.

Mr. Stewart, if you're writing another book and want to hire an editor, I will work for cheap.

I received this book for free through Goodreads First Reads Giveaways.

Patricia Ann says

This is from my daughter, special ed/physically handicapped teacher. She would give the book five stars.

"Through the author's reminiscences of special-needs students and his ability to differentiate his instruction, he is able to reach the reader. Mr. Stewart's skill at teaching critical thinking through passion and creativity, lead the reader to believe in themselves in any aspect of employment.

A recurring theme throughout the book is 'success breeds confidence and confidence breeds success'. The life experiences the author shares are detailed and easy to follow. Included in each section is a chart of activities

or lessons learned and a question/answer forum for use in independent study or a group.

I found 12 Keys for Engaging At-Risk Students motivating and informative. Many of the techniques employed by Mr. Stewart can be utilized with students in a classroom, in a work-assistance area, as an instructor, or even as a parent."

O.k, now my review that gave it 3 stars: The writing style was like a Development Day for teachers, generated enthusiasm, set up goals for teachers, and had questions that would stimulate thinking. I agree with daughter's advocacy of the book for other work situations and for parents. However, I found errors in structure and cohesiveness. Sometimes, other words needed to be used: e.g. p. 196 # 2. Instead of "Explain to the parent ", tell the parent that you are calling... #3"Explain the behavior...." really struck me as odd and "DESCRIBE the behavior...." resonates more with the goals of the book and chapter. Sometimes I wanted to use an editing pen to take out extraneous material that didn't fit in to the chapter. The book would be well used in an undergraduate class or a teacher development class with small discussion groups. It's certainly worth the modest price.

Caitlin says

Nothing Bruce J. Stewart writes about is revolutionary. His "keys" for engaging students center on respecting students' dignity and implementing a rigorous curriculum. The way Stewart makes his points, however, is what makes this book interesting to read. He uses personal stories and anecdotes to introduce his tips and demonstrate the implications of his methods on students' lives. Unfortunately, the book becomes a repetitive with the same stories being told and "keys" already being discussed being introduced in new chapters as a new "key." I do not think there are twelve ideas present in the book as the title suggests. Overall, I think this book would be an excellent read for someone just entering the teaching field. It could even be used as a textbook in a practicum class.

I received this book as part of the GoodReads First Read program. This does not influence my review at all.

Jess says

I received this book from FirstReads, and was excited to see what Stewart had to say about At-Risk students. I have previously taught middle school in a private school and worked in a Title 1 elementary school, so I didn't have experience with his exact target demographic, but many of his suggestions are best practices for ALL teachers. This book was, by far, the most engaging book I've read about the specific challenges of education students in poverty, but I struggled with suggestions that are out of the realm of possibility for most educators. I don't have the ability to change the curriculum or dress code at my school; they are both district-wide policies. I try to connect with all of my students, but there are a handful who just refuse, no matter how hard I try. Stewart doesn't seem to have this problem, making his "I never had students misbehave" insinuations seem self-righteous. I would have much rather heard about HOW he connected with some of his students than to hear repeatedly that his students never went to the office. It's for these small reasons that I rated this book as a 3. It's a good read for educators, though, and one I will pass on to colleagues.

Heathersbookreview says

I won this a while ago in a GR giveaway, and now that I have entered the education field I have referenced this book many times. My student teaching placement was in a high poverty and crime area and a lot of students were extremely disengaged from the school process. Being able to engage all students is the goal, and it is wonderful to reference reads such as this. My hat is off to Bruce!:)

Emily-Jane Orford says

Teaching without passion, without creativity, and without critical thinking is really not teaching. We cannot reduce all teaching to specific skill sets and activities, without believing our karma as an interested and interesting human being truly makes a significant difference. (p. 91)

Only twelve keys? That's what this book suggests. However, the author, Bruce J. Stewart, has provided interested educators with more than just twelve keys. Why is that? Primarily because, the astute and caring teacher looks at each student individually, assesses their needs, their strengths and their weaknesses, and works with that student to achieve the best that he/she possibly can be.

Take, for example, Josh, a difficult student with an attitude that was somewhat prompted by educators berating him for his looks, how he wore his clothes, how he projected himself. When he entered Mr. Stewart's classroom, he was bound and determined to put yet another teacher to the test. And he did. Mr. Stewart, however, was expecting the test. Instead of responding in kind, this teacher worked around and with this troubled student. As Mr. Stewart explained, My objective with students whose behaviors needed adjustment was to implement behavior plans for students to change their behavior, rather than to stifle them. Josh, as a result of his errant behavior, had been discarded by many teachers. Providing structure and a relevant curriculum which engaged Josh, allowed him to improve his behavior and contribute to the class in a positive manner. (p. 74)

12 Keys for Engaging At-Risk Students is a treatise of examples and logical advice and solutions to engage difficult and troubled students, to make them feel that, yes they can do things, learn things and yes, they did have the potential to learn. As Mr. Stewart points out, that is the underlying principle of teaching, to inspire and to teach. This is an excellent resource for teachers and educators everywhere. 12 Keys for Engaging At-Risk Students is highly recommended by: Emily-Jane Hills Orford, Allbooks Reviews.

Abby says

This book is one that everyone can benefit from reading. It covers a variety of situations that came up over the years while the Author was teaching. Each of those really makes the reader reflect on how they would and could handle a similar situation. There are also discussion questions at the end of the chapters to help you think further. Throughout, we are reminded to always be respectful and welcoming of others, and that a smile can go a long way. I received a free copy of this book to review from Goodreads First Reads.

Ashley says

I won this book as a part of goodread's giveaways. This book was very helpful for me in my profession. Not only does this book do a good job discussing ways in dealing with at-risk youth in poverty, but the same

principles can be applied to those who work with at-risk adults, as many of the same coping and life skills juveniles fail to learn are the same as adults. I implemented many of these keys in my cognitive behavioral group therapy classes for offenders and have found it's much easier to control the group and see those difficult students really flourish. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to read this book!!
