

Revised Edition

under· resourced learners

8

**strategies to boost
student achievement**

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Under-Resourced Learners: 8 Strategies to Boost Student
Achievement. Revised Edition.

Ruby K. Payne

220 pages

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Introduction

The purpose of *Under-Resourced Learners: 8 Strategies to Boost Student Achievement* is to provide practical tools to educators to address the needs of under-resourced learners.

The first book I wrote, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*, looked at resources as they related to the three economic classes: poverty, middle class, and wealth. Since that time, many individuals have said to me, “I know students who have so many things, but they aren’t doing well in school.” In this book I elaborate on that frame of reference and say that students can be resourced or under-resourced, regardless of money.

Under-Resourced Learners is intended to give some tangible tools to individuals who teach students in schools of the United States. UNICEF (an arm of the United Nations) uses resources as a measurement to determine stability, and it is legitimate. In the UNICEF report “An Overview of Child Well-Being in Rich Countries,” the concept of resources is used to identify well-being. I would note that “under-resourced” is terminology directly from the United Nations and is a way to talk about students who don’t have access to a number of the resources necessary for school success.

At the end of each chapter I present a series of practical steps you can take in relation to the strategies outlined in that chapter. You may wish to integrate them with techniques and strategies already working for you and your colleagues.

This book does not presume that schools can fix everything, so the focus necessarily is on the resources that can be developed in schools.

In the UNICEF report “Child Poverty in Perspective,” the concept of resources is used to identify well-being. In the report, the European Union offers this definition of poverty: “The poor are those whose resources (material, cultural, and social) are so limited as to exclude them from the minimum acceptable way of life in the Member States in which they live” (page 6).

In this revised edition you will now find an *Under-Resourced Learners* study guide in Appendix A, and in Appendix D there are PowerPoint slides to use in teacher training. A number of the training strategies (charts, diagrams, and forms) are referenced earlier in the text of the book.

Strategy 1

Assess Resources of Individual Students to Determine Interventions

*“When I did my resources self-assessment, I realized that money was not my only problem. I always knew money wasn’t going to solve all of my problems, but I thought it would solve most of the big ones. I realized that was not going to be true. It really hit me hard. I even had to step away from it for a few minutes because the reality of my situation hit me square in the face. It was one of those ‘aha’ moments—you know, the ones where you go ‘Aha, **that’s** why I’ve been doing that.’ It was great and scary and heartbreaking and exhilarating and everything all at one moment. It was one of the hardest things I had to do but definitely the most beneficial. I now try to do a self-assessment about every six months to see what progress I’ve made.”*

—Mary Gruza, Getting Ahead Graduate

“I’ve always believed that the Ruby Payne model explained why it was so important to examine the different resources that children and families have or don’t have. The model also suggests various ways you can embed other resources to help children be more successful.”

—Kelly Sharp, Sixth-Grade Language Arts/Social Studies Teacher

Why Look at Resources?

It isn't possible to educate well just by teaching the "group" and not knowing about the individual students in the classroom. Many students get identified as "at risk" when the issue is one of resources. When you know the resources of an individual, then you can determine the intervention(s) that will work best. Interventions that are successful work with the individual's strengths to enhance underdeveloped resources.

What Does It Mean to Be Under-Resourced? Is It a Personal Issue or a Situational Issue?

It is both. All individuals have an area or areas in their life where they would like to have more resources, i.e., more athletic abilities and better eyesight or be taller, shorter, smarter, quicker, etc.

For the purposes of this book, under-resourced is going to be defined as not having the resources to address a particular situation or negotiate a particular environment.

All resources are relative to the comparison group in which one finds oneself.

The good news is that resources can be developed—at any stage in life. *Under-Resourced Learners: 8 Strategies to Boost Student Achievement* is about how to do that.

For the purposes of this book, the following nine resources are going to be examined:

What Does It Look Like to Be Resourced? A Resourced Student Has Most or All of the Following Resources:

Financial

Having the money to purchase goods and services.

Language

Being able to speak and use formal register in writing and in speech.

Emotional

Being able to choose and control emotional responses, particularly to negative situations, without engaging in self-destructive behavior. This is an internal resource and shows itself through stamina, perseverance, and choices.

Mental

Having the mental abilities and acquired skills (reading, writing, computing) to deal with daily life.

Spiritual

Believing in divine purpose and guidance.

Physical

Having physical health and mobility.

Support Systems

Having friends, family, and backup resources available to access in times of need. These are external resources.

Relationships/Role Models

Having frequent access to adult(s) who are appropriate, who are nurturing to the child, and who do not engage in self-destructive behavior.

Knowledge of Hidden Rules

Knowing the unspoken cues and habits of a group.

Financial

▪ has the necessary school supplies	Yes	No
▪ has money for field trips	Yes	No
▪ has money for projects	Yes	No
▪ has food every evening and twice a day on weekends/holidays	Yes	No
▪ wears different clothing at least five days a week	Yes	No
▪ has more than one pair of shoes	Yes	No
▪ has a stable place to live (not a car, not a shelter, does not move every three months, is not moved from relative to relative)	Yes	No
▪ has own books	Yes	No
▪ has a place to study at home (includes good lighting and a table/desk)	Yes	No
▪ has had opportunities to participate in educational activities outside of school (e.g., museums, travel, camp)	Yes	No
▪ has access to transportation outside of school (e.g., subway, bus, household vehicle)	Yes	No

In the following true stories, what is the resource(s) available to the student? How could you intervene to develop additional resources and strengthen existing resources? Or is no intervention necessary?

- *A school had students in the fourth grade who were twins. One came to school one day and the other the next day. Everyone was convinced they were rotating days to take care of younger children. When it was finally investigated, the reality was that there was only one pair of shoes in the house. So they took turns wearing the shoes.*
- *A principal told me that when he was growing up, his family was so poor they only had one light bulb in the house. Each sibling got 15 minutes under the light to do homework every evening. If you didn't get your homework done in 15 minutes, then it didn't get finished at home because there was no light.*
- *One of the schools in the Houston area had to make a rule that parents could not come and feed the student's breakfast to themselves or a younger sibling. Parents were coming in to the school in the morning when students got free breakfast to feed themselves and another child.*
- *A young man I know in the United States has been to Europe four times, lived in Germany for three months, traveled to Australia and Tasmania, and has been to Mexico three times. He turned down a trip to China and Japan saying he had traveled enough. He had done all of this by the time he was 23 years old.*

Language

▪ can use the formal register of the language of the dominant culture	Yes	No
▪ can tell a story in chronological order	Yes	No
▪ can get to the point in a discussion	Yes	No
▪ can resolve a conflict using formal register	Yes	No
▪ can ask questions syntactically	Yes	No
▪ can write using formal organizational patterns for writing	Yes	No
▪ can use specific vocabulary in speech and writing	Yes	No
▪ can sort what is and is not important in nonfiction text	Yes	No
▪ can write a persuasive argument using support and logic	Yes	No

In the following true stories, what is the resource(s) available to the student? How could you intervene to develop additional resources and strengthen existing resources? Or is no intervention necessary?

- *A librarian was reading a story to a group of students about a young woman who was pretty, arrogant, and self-important. When she asked the students to tell her about the young woman, one of the boys said, "She thinks she's all that!" The librarian was upset with the student. Actually, he understood the character very well, but he could relay his understanding only in casual register.*
- *A student was in repeated trouble with the office for his behavior; the principal felt that the student was being evasive. Each time she would ask him for information, he would respond with one or two words: "It was nuthin'" or "I don't know." The principal was going to give strong consequences for the behavior, then learned it was simply about having very little vocabulary.*
- *One of the elementary schools in the Houston area has kindergarten students who have never seen a spoon and have no word for it.*