

Important Work: Teaching Children of Poverty

Jacqueline Michelle Hancock
Undergraduate Student
P.O. Box 64
Ruby, SC 29741
(704) 465-9340
Jhancock3330@g.fmarion.edu
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It is important to think about challenges associated with service as instructional leaders in high poverty settings. Under resourced learners need to be considered when planning instruction. Poverty affects education because it involves so much more than just lack of income, such as a lack of resources, and various physical, mental and emotional needs associated with poverty. As an undergraduate student in elementary education and a child of poverty, it is important for me to examine the hardships students acquire so that I may better benefit the student's education. School climate, resources, and the skills we teach children of poverty are of great importance.

As a child of poverty, I know some of the struggles children encounter. When I was a child, my father owned his own business hauling sawdust on a tractor trailer truck. Arson was committed at his sawdust pile, which meant a loss of his business and all the income for our small family of myself, my dad, my mom, and my younger brother for a short while. While my dad gained employment elsewhere, he never fully recovered from the loss of the kind of income he made with his own business and the family quickly took a turn for the worse as far as income was concerned. My dad also ran a small farm of one hundred acres for my grandfather and the amount of money it took to keep the heavy equipment necessary for that took much from the family, even with my mom obtaining a job at a textile mill.

With my mom working, my brother and I had to wake up and dress while it was still dark out. I was exhausted by the end of the school day. Mom would take us to a day care at our school, and I felt like I lived there. Our school had a day care room before and after school; we were there most of the day. A majority of the money my mom made paid for that. I remember we received welfare food and that I was embarrassed by it. We only had new clothes at the beginning of the next season if we had grown out of the ones we had. We were not like some kids that received new clothing for picture day. We made too much to receive a check from the government. Of course, all the money my dad had to help with the farm like payments for the combine, loader, tractors, trailers, plows, bailers, etc. for his dad was not considered, and my dad would not let the farm go.

There was an extreme time of stress for my family, which meant we were not always the happiest kids with all the fussing we heard at home. School was a place that we could get away from the money problems that caused fussing at home between our parents and at us kids for what seemed like everything we did. Teachers should keep in mind that students may be going through so many different things at home. Some students go through unspeakable hardships, and educators should make their classroom environment inviting and a place all kids want to be. My situation was not as bad as many at home, but it was still important for me to have a good experience at school. Many schools do not have a good school climate, which affects their achievement. Studies show that school climate variables, like a less supportive teaching environment, less

positive relationships with administrators, and more centralized decision making with teachers not playing that big of a role “could undermine effective teaching and thus limit learning for low-income children” (Stipek).

One of the struggles my brother and I had with school was a lack of resources. We did not own a computer or encyclopedias that were tools for research for school projects and papers. We were not able to type homework reports unless we had a way to the public library, which was a fifteen-minute drive from our rural home and closed around the time my mother was able to clock out from work. It was a struggle for us to complete many homework assignments. In the article “End Homework Now,” by Kralovec and Buell, it states that “homework reinforces the social inequalities inherent in the unequal distribution of educational resources in the United States.” So, not only did we not have the resources needed at our homes because of poverty, but the school systems for children of poverty may not have resources that others in an upper-class level neighborhood may have. It was also stated that many “students have family responsibilities, parents who work at night, and no educational resources in their homes” (Kralovec and Buell). Recognizing these types of hardships students encounter is important for educators when thinking about what, if anything, to assign for homework.

According to “Teaching Practices in Kindergarten and First Grade: Different Strokes for Different Folks, by Deborah Stipek, teachers in schools serving a large population of low-income children were expected to “stress basic skills more than higher-order thinking or social skills and to implement less

constructivist and more didactic teaching.” This does children of poverty a great injustice. Children of poverty deserve the same opportunities in education as children that come from families with money. It is also said that there is evidence that children from economically disadvantaged families achieve at a lower level (Stipek). Being a student of education, I ask myself if the reason the children achieve at a lower level has to do with the expectations the teachers give their students. If educators do not teach their students higher-order thinking skills, they are not able to take the knowledge they learned and apply that knowledge when it is test time.

The reason I have discussed many of my personal hardships living with poverty is to explain how having excellent teachers helped my brother and I excel in school, which does not always happen in cases such as ours. We both had loving teachers that built special relationships with us as individuals. We looked forward to being at school because it was a happy place where we were able to learn all kinds of things. Our school had a good climate where teachers and administrators worked together. When we did not have resources, we did have teachers that were able to help us get books and information we needed for projects. I also always felt like I was pushed to learn more than just what was required of me for testing and these high expectations set forth for me helped me to become a good student and to take pride that I could succeed in school despite my hardships. It is important that educators do everything they can to ensure all students of poverty are considered and accommodated for the greater good of the student, teacher, class, and schools.

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	Essay has a proper title page which includes the following:
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