

Hope for the Hopeless

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Going through the twelve years of school before college, money was always on my mind. I knew that the only way that I would get out of the same situation that I was raised in is through a college education that would set me up with a good job that paid enough that my future kids would not have to worry about whether they would get dinner. I know that my mom worked as hard as she could to make ends meet after her and my dad divorced. She worked three jobs at one point to keep everything “normal” for the five of us kids, but it was always there- the knowledge that things in my family were not always fiscally stable. My dad tried to help out as much as he could, but we still went without somethings. There were days that there was no electricity or internet to do homework with so I would have to go to the public library but those were usually the same days that money was just too tight to drive 20 minutes out of the way for only an hour of homework time. Even now, there are times that I have to help out with bills at home but I do not mind because I know how many sacrifices have been made to get me to this point.

I am not the only student of poverty to decide that college is the best step to escape the Matthew effect of poverty. In fact, according to Catherine Gerwitz of Education Weed, “[low income students] are going to college in greater numbers than ever...” This is great news that students are trying to better themselves, only the quote does not end there. Gerwitz continues, “...but only a small fraction are leaving with degrees.” The reason for this could be the inequalities of coursework and resources for the lower SES students. The students that are classified as being in the lowest level of the fiscal totem pole have fewer opportunities to take higher level courses and may not

even have adequate counseling opportunities in high school to prepare these students for the next steps in their education (Gerwetz.)

“Undermatching” is a term that will oftentimes apply to high school seniors who do not view themselves as “college bound”. This term means that students who are capable of achieving academically do not apply for elite colleges or colleges in general because they do not believe that they will be successful (Harris.) There has to be a solution. Someone has to tell these students that there is more to life than just being complacent in poverty, there is an escape. Teachers who inspire hope and build relationships are the solutions that will help encourage students to break the cycle of poverty.

Students who live in impoverished situations typically are without a number of resources, including hope. Hope previously was thought of as a magical aspect of life of which its results cannot be measured but studies have shown that having a “habit of hope” is not magic and its results have a noticeable impact on the student. A habit of hope looks like a student who, “[coordinates] habits of persistence, resourcefulness, and courage so they reinforce one another to keep us actively invested in the activity of hope.” These students with habits of hope do not give up and works towards growth so that they reach their goals, not just daily goals but long-term goals as well (Shade.)

Students who live in poverty have more pressing issues to worry about than if they have habits of hope but it is the teacher’s job to try to encourage hope anyway. Initially, the teacher is going to have to hope by himself or by herself, but through sharing the hope that a teacher has with the impoverished student, hopefully the student will gain his or her own motivation to achieve more than what it looks like is laid out in road ahead.

Hope is oftentimes not thought of as a resource but I believe that it is a real disservice to overlook hope in the classroom. Without hope, students will not have any short-term aspirations and they will especially not have any long-term aspirations. It is a real shame that poverty-stricken students are usually the ones without any hope because these students are usually the ones with the most dedication and will often be the hardest workers because that is the way that these students live. In some cases, the only way that these students live their day to day lives is through hard work and determination to make it to the next day. The classroom teacher should utilize these engrained attributes to help inspire hope in each student.

Hope is one of the keys to breaking free of poverty but the hope is fueled through strong relationships, statistics say that nine out of ten students who escape poverty attribute the motivating factor to a strong personal relationship. The average school day in America is about seven hours, that leaves seventeen hours left of the day. An elementary school student should be sleeping around ten hours, that means that six hours of the day are left for socializing with family, assuming that the parents are home during these times. The majority of the time that students interact with adults is at school, why would a teacher not try to build relationships with their students if there is this much contact throughout the day?

An Edutopia quote goes as follows, “we need to tell those who have lost hope that we will hold that hope in our hearts for you until you are ready to believe it for yourself.” (Curwin.) This quote shows how relationships and inspiring hope go hand in hand, building a relationship with a student starts by showing that the teacher only has the best intentions for the students and by showing that there is hope before there is a

relationship. The relationship that should be developed between teacher and student is a vital resource for student success, especially with students living in poverty. The teacher needs to be there to show that through everything, there will always be someone in that student's corner. If there is no one in a student's corner the student will be more likely to undermatch themselves and will never reach their full potential.

Teachers cannot end poverty nationwide, but they can help to end it in the lives of individual students. Small and inexpensive things that teachers can do in their classrooms will change lives, things as small as letting a student know that there is hope or building a relationship between teacher and student will lift some students out of the poverty cycle. When a student walks into a classroom, it is likely that the smile or the uplifting comment that the teacher says could be the only positive interaction that the student has had all day and it could change that student's whole mindset. Teaching children of poverty is important work and it can change the lives of students, short term and long term.

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	Essay has a proper title page which includes the following:
✓	• Title: <i>Important Work: Teaching Children of Poverty</i>
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✓	The title of the essay also appears on the top of the first page of the essay text.
✓	Essay contains a minimum of two current research references.
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✓	Essay is double-spaced, using 12 point Arial font, and one inch margins.
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