

Teaching Children of Poverty

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Growing up in a single parent household poverty was there, but we never spoke about it. When I was little I had the “picture perfect” family. But once my parents got a divorce that all changed. I no longer was getting the huge Christmas gifts I once got before and no longer going on fun luxuries vacations with my family. My mother who I lived with began working while prior to my parents’ divorce she was a stay at home mom. Therefore when I got home from school I always had a snack waiting for me, help with my homework, and quality time with my mom. Once my parents divorced my mother and I moved around a lot I can count up to 7 times in one given year. My mother was not at home with me as often she always had been prior to the divorce. Although we did not spend as much time together she always had a great attitude and tried to come to any event that was going on at school for me. My mother went through a lot to try and maintain the lifestyle we had before, but I know it had to be tough working so much and not getting to enjoy life. It was tough for me not seeing my mother at all during the week and on the weekends having to stay away because she was working. Living through those experiences only gives me a small glimpse of what children of poverty experience on the daily. I went from being a “middle class” student with access to plenty of help at home, tons of experiences, to a student from a broken family with not as much access to help.

Teaching children of poverty can be a very challenging, but rewarding job. Children in poverty go to school among others that are in the same financial situation as them and vice versa. But as us future educators get out into the field of teaching education we should always keep a few things in mind of children with poverty. First, we as teachers may know a lot about our students, but we may not know what they face on

a daily bases at home. Many of my teachers in elementary school were familiar with my mother because of how involved she was in the school. She may have worked one to two jobs during the years, but she never missed a school event. Although my mother was still very active in my schooling some parents do not have access to get to the school event. As future teachers we need to try and think about all the possible reasons parents are not involved in their children's school other than "they do not care". As future teachers we need to encourage students that they can be and do anything they want to in this world, where they are now in life does not define where they can end up. Because some kids may never have an adult tell them this especially if they do not see their parents much. As future teachers we also need to make sure we always put diversity in our classroom so all of our students can actively engage in new activities.

Teachers sometimes spend more time with their students than their own parents spend with them. We teachers may think we know what is going on while our students are at home, but do we really? We do not know if all of our students get dinner every night, have their parents to read with them, and if they even have a bed to sleep in. This day and time some parents have to work multiple jobs to keep a roof over their families head. So in reality we do not know the "real" situations of all our students we do not know what they go through and face on a daily basis. Therefore, as we begin to go out in the career field as being a teacher we need to think about what our students go through before they get to school.

Encouraging children of poverty is a key essential into being a great teacher. Cynthia Johnson (2013) states, "Hope lies in what educators do between the first and the last bell of each school day to equip children with the necessary skills to catch up,

move forward, and succeed in the 21st century”. If our students do not have the motivation and support at home, we teachers are the only ones to give it to them. The students cannot help that they are not living in financially stable homes; therefore, it is important for us to always remain positive with education and leading students in the right directions as responsible citizens. We have to show our best interest in the students even when they come to our class below grade level. Encourage them show them that they will make it out and succeed by the end of the school year.

Diversity in the classroom is an essential tool when teaching children of poverty. Children have a slight habit of always wanting to do group work with their friends. I know as a future educator once I get to know my students I will have them do group work, but I will choose the groups. I want to make sure everyone is involved and sometimes that can be a challenging task, but if all teachers try and work on this I feel like all students will feel included and have a more positive attitude about school work. Diversity in the classroom may seem like a challenge because of the different races, genders, learning styles, and ethnical backgrounds, but in reality a diverse classroom is the best. Matthew Lynch states, “Teaching students about multicultural role models also serves as an effective method for demonstrating that people of all genders, ethnicities, and appearances can have a positive influence on the world and deserve to be respected and emulated” (Lynch, 2012). Having a diverse classroom allows students to bring different heritages, personalities, and experiences to the class. This allows the teacher to show the student’s diversity is okay and it helps show how people are different in their own way.

As a past student I reflect on how well my teachers dealt with parents that were not involved, how my teachers encourages us, and how they put diversity in our classrooms. Coming from a single parent household my teachers were there for me. Without all of my teachers showing me the way and encouraging me I would not be where I am today. I cannot wait until I become a teacher. Inspiring students to be and learn the best they can really gets me excited for my future.

References

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