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The Effects of Poverty Academically and Behaviorally on Students in Urban Communities

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THE EFFECTS OF POVERTY ACADEMICALLY AND BEHAVIORALLY

ON STUDENTS IN URBAN COMMUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

One of the biggest travesties that is present globally across all nations is poverty. Despite being the wealthiest country in the world, "in 2015 there were 43.1 million people in poverty." (Proctor, Bernadette D. 2015). Additionally, millions more struggle just to survive on a monthly basis with and/or without public assistance. Sadly, this large number of Americans includes school aged children that are suffering from the devastation of the poverty. Children are the future of our nation. Thus, it is critical that all children receive a proper education for them to be a positive member of society across the country. "Poverty reduces a child's readiness for school because it leads to poor physical health and motor skills, diminishes a child's ability to concentrate and remember information, and reduces attentiveness, curiosity and motivation" (Childfund.org, 2013). Aside from devastation various communities in the United States due to poverty, the effects are now negatively impacting the future of our students in our educational system. Often times the obstacles presented by poverty and education include a lack of resources (at home and school), parental assistance on classwork at home, high mobility and lack of preparation at a young age. However, poverty plays a lot of different roles based on the type of socio-economic environment a specific student is born into or raised in. For example, poverty will present numerous challenges living in an urban setting compared to a child living in a rural area. Students that are living in an inner-city, low socioeconomic neighborhood will face more hardships regarding their education due to lack of resources, behaviors in/outside of school, and the negative temptations that a large population of them face on a daily basis. This thesis reviews various types of both past and current literature regarding the effects of poverty has on education for students living in low income urban neighborhoods. The questions conducting the review

examine the pivotal role poverty plays on education throughout all grade levels. Next, the effects and challenges that a child born and/or raised in will endure on a daily basis inside and outside of school. Lastly, the obstacles students and schools face in impoverished neighborhoods to deliver proper education to have a successful academic achievement outcome. Results from the review of literature found that due to the effects from living in poverty, children failing academically are a manifestation of their socio-economic environment. Additionally, students, teachers, and schools are at a discrete disadvantage in education compared to their counterparts living in higher socio-economic, rural communities. The United States policy on education as a nation and local level as well as school districts, and teachers are all vital to providing disadvantaged children the opportunity for academic achievement.

The thesis author uses data from literature, interviews, and personal experiences to provide the different effects of poverty on academics and behavior. Furthermore, the author provides feedback on how educators can enhance classroom engagement, provide resources to help eliminate delinquency and show students living in poverty the benefits of retaining an education.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Personal Story

In December of 2013, while conducting the first in home visit for a student that had recently transitioned into our school due to academic and behavioral discrepancies. Accompanied by one of our school Social Workers and Mental Health Practitioners, we arrived into a complex of Section 8 housing and was greeted first by the new student then his mother. The student was waiting for the bus outside in blistering twenty-degree temperatures with nothing on but a t-shirt and shorts. When our MHP asked him where his jacket was, his mother implied that she did not currently have enough money to buy winter clothing for the family because times were difficult and was even suffering from a shortage of food for the entire family. She explained to us that the free and reduced lunch plans the school district offered was a lifesaver due to not having anything at home for the kids to eat. As the mother finished up getting her fourth child ready and out the door for school, she began to explain to us about her son's conflicts taking place at his previous school that has now put him in a position where he had to transfer schools mid school year. He was failing academically because he did not have the tools at home to successfully complete his homework and turn it in on-time.

Additionally, her son started hanging around some older neighborhood peers that were involved in some gang related issues which lead him to get into some physical confrontations causing him to be dismissed from school several times. The mother of our new student told us she felt helpless towards her struggling child and the path to failure for him felt like it was unavoidable. As we concluded our emotional meeting, the three of us were about ready to leave when our Social Worker made comment about how the effects of living in poverty puts all

children at a deficiency and it is truly a travesty. Despite a small sample size, our new student was a perfect example of what life was like for the now more than "15 million children in the United States, 21% of all children live in families with incomes below the federal poverty threshold." (National Center for Children in Poverty, 2015).

This thesis writer has observed that living in poverty is represented differently for every child based on their demographics. For example: A family living in poverty in an urban versus a rural community, or on a broader perspective, life is different for a disadvantaged child living in Chicago than it is Los Angeles which is different from poor communities in New York City and so on. However, experiencing this type of lifestyle first hand taught this writer that one correlation all these children share is despite the community, poverty has strong negative effects on education and academic achievement that are inevitable to avoid.

Impact of Poverty

Poverty is one of the most persistent devastating epidemics present in urban communities across the world. Poverty The effects from the poverty travesty now affects 51% of public schools, grades K-12 students in the United States. (National Center for Children in Poverty, 2015). Families who populate highly impoverished neighborhoods are challenged with an abundant amount of deficiencies within to get their essential needs for living on a daily basis. Lack of job availability are causing higher unemployment rates within the community, resources being scarce, and overwhelming pressure to find a way to find a way to contribute to family wellbeing cause a rise in mental health to surface. Thus, correlating to poor decision making by putting family members into a desperate state-of-mind to eliminate deficiencies in getting their needs met. Eventually, this turns into a pattern of generational poverty being passed down from

era to another. Thus, turning neighborhoods decimated by poverty into a trap for children to make it out of successfully. Education can be the one light of hope in a tunnel of darkness that potentially leads our youth from living in poverty for the rest of their lives. However, the effects of poverty on education and academic achievement are demoralizing. The most strenuous challenge for unprivileged children to endure academic achievement is that there is just not just a single factor for them to overcome. The effects of poverty on education present numerous challenges and negative influences for students to subdue every day to enhance their academic achievement.

Thesis Questions

Therefore, this thesis will research pursue research that will attempt to provide answers to the following questions. Historically, the academic track record for students living in poverty is not good (Jensen, 2013). The negative effects of poverty that children endure from living in impoverished, urban communities have an inevitable presence on academics and the students' ability to obtain a successful education. When analyzing the various effects that poverty has on academic achievement, student behavior, and schools it is vital to ask the following questions: Why are students living in poverty disengaged more than ever from classroom academics and school in general? What role does the delinquency and the juvenile justice system play in a student's overall ability to obtain an education? What are the past and current United States Department of Education policies at the federal (nationwide), state (individual state) and local (specific city or school district) on improving education for disadvantaged children? Is it the responsibility of the school district or teachers to mitigate the effects of poverty on their students? Research has shown there is not one individual factor, but more a group of correlating

factors that bring forth the negative effect's poverty has on education. For example: if a student does not enjoy school or is disengaged from the class, the probability dropping out or becoming delinquent drastically increases. Then, the process for a student to get readmitted into school after dropping out or getting locked up becomes a long, challenging road that does not see a high success rate. However, the effects of poverty also have a lot of teammates making a lot easier for low income children to lose interest in education.

Definition of Terms

Generational Poverty - Generational poverty is one of the components of the poverty cycle. Generational poverty represents families who have lived in poverty for at least two generations and are born in poverty (grandparents-parents-kids). Additionally, those who are included in the generational poverty do not have the tools or resources to move out of their current situation.

Achievement Gap - The achievement gap, also known as the opportunity gap and learning gap is refers to any disparity in academic performance or educational attainment between two groups of students. Usually these two groups of students are higher socioeconomic status and low socioeconomic status (poverty).

Student/Academic Engagement - In terms of education, engagement measures the degree of attention, involvement, curiosity, interest, optimism and passion that an individual or groups of students show during classroom instruction. Additionally, engagement is the level of motivation students have to learn and progress forward in their education.

Interventions - Interventions used in education are strategies used to teach a new skill, enhance fluency in a specific skill or encouraging a child to apply an existing skill to new situations. Another type of type of intervention used for often times while working with students living in

poverty is behavioral interventions. Behavioral interventions are strategies are used for students with behavioral conflicts with themselves acting out, classmates and/or with educators. Often times, teachers will meet with other teachers or paraprofessionals, social workers or administrators to see what kind of plan has previously been used or if a new one is needed. A lot of times this is a trial and error situation where educators will attempt a few different interventions until they find which one works best. Behavioral interventions are more likely a process of eliminating inappropriate behavior. Individually, the teacher or the group of staff will then collaborate to come up with a Behavioral Intervention Plan. The Behavioral Intervention Plan is known as a BIP.

Delinquency - The term delinquency has many different components to it. It can be used to represent crime activity, education etc. In this thesis paper, delinquency refers to any type of conduct that is out of the accord with what is acceptable in any given setting. Furthermore, in most cases delinquency often times refers to minors turning the age of 18 or younger. Juvenile delinquency refers to any crime committed or participation in illegal activity. In the worst-case scenario, the participation in illegal activity will have an outcome of being introduced in the juvenile justice system.

Title 1 School (ESEA) - In education "Title 1" is a part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Title 1 schools populate the highest number of students from low-income families. The ESEA is implemented for schools to receive extra financial assistance in order to ensure students are receiving a quality education. Additionally, Title 1 schools are provided extra funding to provide a fair, equal and significant opportunity to obtain an education.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Research Sources

To locate the literature for this thesis, publications from the time period of 1988 to 2018 was used as the platform for research. With the foundation in place, research for the thesis was conducted using searches of Educators Reference Complete, EBSCO, Educational Journals, ERIC, JSTOR, McGill Journal of Education, National Foundation of Education Research, Review of Educational Research and The Educational Digest. Additionally, author Eric Jensen's' books "*Teaching with Poverty in Mind*" and *"Engaging Students with Poverty in Mind"* were used to collect, analyze and apply data to this thesis. Information retained from this group of sources was condensed down based off reviewing anecdotal studies articles performed by credible sources studies focusing on academic achievement, classroom engagement and classroom behavior found in journals and books that emphasized on poverty, a majority of which was in an urban school setting. Some of the more beneficial key terms used in the resources during the research process included "classroom engagement," "the effects of poverty on education," "why are students interested in learning?" "tools for keeping students engaged in the classroom," "teaching, recognizing and understanding our audience," "student's disengagement," "engaging in students living in poverty," "what students want from their school teachers and schools" "repercussions/outcomes of student disengagement," "students sense of belonging at school and in the classroom." A vast amount of research used for this chapter took place at the Bethel University Library for personal research as well with the Research Assistant in the library. Lastly, face to face interviews were conducted with educators, social workers, principals and school board members from various schools across the Minneapolis and St. Paul area. The

foundation of this section in Chapter II focuses on one of the vital effects of poverty and academic success, classroom engagement. In this specific part of the chapter, an overview of discussing what is classroom engagement followed up with how an increasing number of students' living in poverty are becoming more disengaged from academics, classmates and teachers at an increasing rate. Initially, the overview, data and reasoning will be presented with a literature review and conclude with various forms of data.

Juvenile Justice System/Juvenile Detention Center/Delinquency

In reference to the United States correctional system, the term delinquency represents anyone seventeen years or younger who has or had a recurrence of committing crimes or offenses that eventual will lead them into Juvenile Detention (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council 154). Locally, in Minnesota youth under the age of eighteen whom have had been involved in a criminal have a potential of two different outcomes for their illegal action. Following outcome of a court decision, due to the high number of occupants, the result in being found guilty will either require the child to be sent to a Juvenile Detention Center for short term offenses or sent to a correctional facility for pending or long-term discipline. For example, in St. Paul if a minor is found guilty for an offense that requires usually six months or less they will be sent to the Juvenile Detention Center or more harsher convictions are sent to Boys Totem Town. Furthermore, if a child commits a crime and requires capital punishment, worst case scenario will send them straight into adult prison if they are close to the age of eighteen. Within the last two years, over half of the juvenile lockdown facilities in the state of Minnesota have closed, forcing these young criminals into correctional facilities that are already maximum occupation. According to The W. Haywood Burns Institute for Justice and Equity, in 2015 over 2 million

children under the age of 18 were arrested and just over 47,000 of those were locked up for longer than a one-year sentence" (Campaign for Youth Justice, 2016).

Additionally, in 2016 due to the amount of maximum capacity juvenile detention centers "...200,000 youth go directly to adult prison for short term sentencing, while 95,000 are placed they're for long term" (Campaign for Youth Justice, 2016). The repercussions for juvenile delinquency can have strenuous enduring effects on a young person's ability for academic achievement. Despite the students being incarcerated in one of the various sites of corrections, and they do still have the ability to receive an education and are required to attend group settings forms of schooling. The downfall is because of the setting, lack of teachers and large amounts of students, the schooling they are receiving often times puts them back a grade or two in comparison to regular students. In addition to the actual schooling inside juvenile detention centers being detrimental to the overall academic success by their occupants, another vital factor is the barrier student's face in the transition from a correctional facility back into public schooling.

In an interview discussing this issue with former Journeys Secondary School and new Central High School Social Worker Shauna Weist explained: "One of the biggest reasons we are finding as the cause to a high academic failure rate amongst current or former students that have been involved in the criminal justice system is their transition back into the public-school system. First off, it is not a smooth transition. Often times, students will either start on half days, which provides more opportunity to become a repeat offender. Next, another route in the through a long-term facility into a short-term facility and finally back into public schooling. This is the most difficult because now they are being shuffled into three or more different environments in a

small period of time. Also, they do not have the choice of the public school they are able to return to. In most cases, they will return to a school within the same district they initially were in, but different school. This sets the children up again for becoming in recurring offender or behavioral discipline leading to suspension because they do not get along with students at their new school. For example, if the new school is located in a different part of the urban community, it could be populated by rival gang members or other students they could have had possible run ins in life while growing up. If the students receive a suspension do to behavior or criminal actions, we see our likeliness of dropping out highly increase."

Literature about the correlation between juvenile delinquency populated by children living in poverty and academic achievement has been very one sided with the overall opinion about it being detrimental to their educational outcome. One of the biggest challenges for youth living in poverty is that the margin of error is so small for committing offenses in neighborhoods plagued with criminal activity. In the United States children are being locked up for at a higher rate for small, petty acts of crime at a higher rate than any point in the history of the justice system (The Campaign for Youth Justice, 2015)

In a 2015 study on the youth crime rate, The Campaign for Youth Study found that "90 percent of the crimes committed by children in poverty are non-violent offenses. Additionally, 17% of the youth in the United States is African American and 35% are locked up in some type of juvenile correction facility" (p. 13)**.** Other pieces of literature that will be explored in this chapter discussed the issues of increased dropout rates, racial inequality for disciplinary issues involving suspension rates in urban schools, and the barriers decreasing the opportunity for educational retainment for delinquent children from low income neighborhoods.

One of the most overlooked components contributing to the lack of achievement in education for children living in poverty often times does not involve any type of academics, but more so, actions in the community leading to an outcome of juvenile delinquency. However, there is not one specific factor or combination of factors as the cause for childhood delinquency. For children living in impoverished neighborhoods, author Eric Jensen believes that "it is a manifestation deriving from the relationship between the youth and their urban neighborhoods." (Jensen p. 35) Within these communities' variety of temptations and activities taking place on a daily basis which are seen as more acceptable and appropriate which are seen as unlawful and delinquent by those living outside the poverty spectrum. Children living in low income communities tend to be raised in a family where education has no value. The parents or guardians often times do not have an education nor press it onto their child to retrieve one which will lead to a product of their society. Often times, members of these low-income communities do not have education and have found themselves involved in the criminal justice system as a repetitive offender. Furthermore, the child could have a close relative, usually brother or father incarcerated during their time in school.

In an interview with Journeys Secondary School Principal Dan Wolff, he had this to say about the topic: "I have been the Principal for students who come from very high and low socioeconomic status and one of the key differences is the environment from which they come from. Children living in poverty are growing up often times with a single parent with a friend or relative in prison. When we are growing up, we all look up to someone whether it is a professional athlete, musician or our mother and father as someone we want to be like when we grow and be like in life. So, these children look up to the heroes of their environment for

example: their relative in prison, the neighborhood drug dealer or gang members. Often times these children are growing up with no strong parental figure in their life that holds them accountable for their actions and lets them run around recklessly until sadly they are caught which is usually by an authority figure. Children living in poverty face temptations for wanting to make money and provide for their family or to be socially accepted that children outside of these communities do not face the challenge of someone to tell them no or what is or isn't acceptable."

In addition to Mr. Wolff's interview, we further discussed the role of parents even pushing their kids to participate in criminal activity to help provide for their struggling families. Earlier, the point of resources and employment being scarce alternating decision making. The idea of doing whatever, however possible to make money comes to surface. This is where the temptations that are present in urban communities comes into play. On a daily basis, children living in poverty are challenged with the temptations that are presented by friends, relatives or other adults in the community to enhance their social acceptance and rank. These temptations include the peer pressure of joining the neighborhood gang, using or selling drugs, committing crimes etc. All of which are a factor to tardiness, dropping out of school and delinquency. However, what educators and society sees as repercussions for their actions, children in poverty who commit these crimes see as heroism and somewhat of an important figure in their community for being locked up with no remorse, but praise for their wrongdoing. During my time working in education in the inner city, I have often been told by my current and former students that what education is going to do for them because they can make more money on the streets. Additionally, some of the students even enjoy being in juvenile detention systems or

prison because coming from a household with zero structure and being locked up provides them structure and three meals a day, something that is not guaranteed while living at home. This is why we see such a high number of recurring offenders because after being in delinquency, once released they cannot handle they freedom and need a foundation and structure.

Thesis Writer Observations

The effects from living in poverty are symptoms of a lifestyle that is literally impossible for many of us to relate to. Despite working with students for the last six years that come from extremely harsh impoverished neighborhoods, it will never be understood by this writer what it is like to go days without food, power, and proper clothing. So, it is our duty as educators to invest as much time as it takes to properly assist and provide for the students in hopes for providing a path to a better life.

One of these moments came in an interview with now a former student this past school year as he successfully transitioned from Journeys onto Johnson High School. For privacy matters, a different name will be used to represent the student in this following section. Eric came from the East Side of Saint Paul which is one of the lowest socioeconomic communities in the Twin Cities. He and his four siblings were living on government assistance while being raised by his single mother. Sadly, he never met his father and has one brother that is currently in prison and only gets to see him a few times in a year. Eric is a sixteen-year-old student with the mindset of a middle-aged man and was required to grow up very quickly to help raise his family. He will keep it very real in any conversation you have and is a delightful young man that has been dealt a bad hand in life. Additionally, he has been very supportive in acquiring the masters work and has always been willing to volunteer whenever assistance was required during the

Master's Degree process. In the previous paragraph the discussion on how the outcome of children is a manifestation for the neighborhoods for which they are raised him. In the interview, it was asked of Eric, what he feels are the effects of living in poverty and the role of the juvenile justice? Eric described what those influences and effects are in the following:

"Growing up in poor neighborhoods and on the streets isn't a choice for us, it is a way of life. When people ask why we act a certain way or do what we do, it's because we have no other choice. We don't have the money to join sports teams or to go outside of our area and have the experiences. One of the best gifts you give to your students every year is brand new basketballs because, then asked why don't you go to the park and hoop? That's not even the issue, the issues are we don't have the money for a basketball. Furthermore, all of the rims on our hoops in the inner city are being removed because neighbors are complaining about supposedly drug dealing or whatever is taking place at parks, so with no rims, people won't show up I guess? Another thing is parents. A lot of kids have parents teach them right from wrong, we don't have that with me and a lot of friends, we don't have curfews really and the last thing we want to do is be at home in our crazy apartment. As far as influences go, our actions and decisions are made by our influences. All of my friends are either in gangs or involved in some sort of trouble, but that is all we have to hang out with, not really by choice sometimes, but because it is the feeling of being accepted not be a loner. So, I hang out with them and that's what we do. Since my brother was had gang affiliations and now is locked up, he is seen as some sort of hero within the community and other associates of his pressure me to follow in his footsteps or take over his position to provide for the family by any means possible. Sure, we look up to professional athletes growing up, but their type of life seems so far impossible that we don't even attempt to imitate them, they

are like on a different level or something. So, our people we look up to are usually music artists or becoming a rapper or someone of high status in our neighborhood because that is who we can relate to. They live the same life and struggle as we do. So, they become our influences. Basically, in short if we see other kids like us singing about being in gangs or using drugs etc., that is what we want to do because we want to be just like them. Or another example, is we are told to respect our elders and a lot of older people in the hood influence to live a certain way or act a certain way because we don't have anyone else trying to show us any differently. These guys are legends in the hood and we want to be just like them. LeBron James for example is a God, these guys are the heroes and much more likely we can be like them compared to an NBA player. This life is just who we are and when we see people become successful that came from a hood just like ours with no education and made, it is a belief we can make it like them by doing the same thing they are."

Reflection of Eric's Interview

This is one of the most heartfelt, powerful and eye-opening conversations I've ever conducted with a student of mine during my time working in education. It is difficult to understand, but always been alert of the what took place in these neighborhoods and why they did it, but never was aware of the motive. This conversation with Eric provided me with a whole different perspective through their lenses of what life was like for them. This was the realist answer ever received from someone living in poverty that is not available in texts or online journals. After our interview, it was crucial to take some personal time to reflect and it has changed my teaching styles completely from that point forward. As Eric knows, I am forever grateful for our conversation and my time as his teacher. For that, the communication with him

and his mom throughout the rest of his time at Johnson to make sure he stays of the proper

trajectory to reach his ultimate goal of attending college.

One of those contributing factors to disadvantaged children losing interest in education is

the temptations that are present every day in impoverished neighborhoods. One way to eliminate

students giving into temptation is by keeping students engaged in the classroom and their

education. Various types of student engagement will be addressed in this paper as well as types

of strategies educators are implementing into their classroom. However, before any intervention

can be successful, it is vital for teachers to take the time in investing and learning about their

students. Children from a low-socioeconomic environment have different interests and motives

than kids in high socioeconomic communities so the interventions that work in one type of

school may not work for others.

Classroom Engagement

One of the biggest travesties and ongoing epidemics that are present in urban classrooms,

across all nations is poverty. Despite being the wealthiest country in the world, the "United

States has over 40 million Americans are currently living in poverty" (Duncan, Magnuson, Kalil,

A, & Ziol-Guest pg. 88). When it comes down to correlating poverty and education, a large

number of children presented with numerous difficult situations in and outside of the classroom.

One of these challenges is from the rise of student disengagement from both primary and

secondary schooling, especially in lower socio-economical and urban classroom settings. It is not

hard to understand why a large amount of literature has been composed in looking at the

connections between student involvement in a set of classroom activities and the positive

outcomes it can have on a students' academic success and positive peer interactions.

Understanding the term "student engagement" based on how it is defined throughout literature

can be defined as "participation in educationally effective practices, both inside and outside the

classroom, which leads to a range of measurable outcomes" (Kuh et al., 2007), and as "the extent

to which students are engaging in activities that higher education research has shown to be linked

with high-quality learning outcomes" (Krause and Coates, 2008, p. 493)**.** Additionally,

engagement or lack thereof by students in a classroom can be seen as a multi-dimensional

concept with an emphasis on three different areas: emotional, behavioral and cognitive.

> Behavioral engagement draws on the idea of participation; it includes
> involvement in academic in social or extracurricular activities and is
> considered crucial for achieving positive academic outcomes and preventing
> dropping out. Emotional or affective   engagement encompasses positive and
> negative reactions to teachers, classmates, academics and school and is
> presumed to create ties to an institution and influence willingness to do the work. Finally,
> cognitive engagement draws on the idea of investment; it incorporates thoughtfulness and
> willingness to exert the effort necessary to comprehend complex ideas and master
> difficult skills. (Krause & Coates, 2008, p. 493)

Understanding engagement goes further beyond classroom participation and school wide

activities. It requires a sense of feeling by the educator to understand the audience they are

working with and a sense for what is best for their students, specifically those of whom are living

in poverty. It is vital to remember while promoting engagement that all students have a different

set of interests that differ from one-another. Holding on to this mindset will eliminate any chance

of having a potential engaging activity from turning to student involvement. In connection to

engagement in education, Blumenfield, Fredericks and Paris created three different dimensions

to properly identify the types of student engagement.

• **<u>Behavioral engagement</u>**: focuses on participation in academics, social interaction, and co-

curricular activities (either classroom or school lead). This dimension focuses on students are

behaviorally engaged, presenting what would be the standard norm for that particular activity. Students will refrain from acting out inappropriately through any form of disruptive behavior.

• **<u>Emotional engagement</u>**: focuses on the extent and nature of reactions (both positive and negative) towards academics, peers and teachers on a daily basis. For example: students displaying positive emotional engagement would display interest, participation with enjoyment and show a sense of belonging through positive interactions. These traits of emotional engagement are also known as affective reactions.

• **<u>Cognitive engagement</u>:** Specifically looks at the students' level of investment in learning, not only in the classroom, but all in the gym, recess, in the library etc. Students who show signs of being invested in their academics would complete all of their tasks and seek more challenging obstacles for them to take on one their initial task is completed.

These three types of classroom-based engagement are unique, yet Behavioral, Emotional and Cognitive Engagement are all interrelated with one-another. In general, all three can be used as a tool for recognizing a students' level of engagement and on-task behavior. With the platform for engagement and on-task behavior is in place, this is where it is vital for an educator to begin to recognize the student population during the process of creating an engaging activity. Due to a difference in values and interest, the goal for a teacher creating activities to promote student engagement will be much different for a classroom populated with students from a low socioeconomic environment compared to a classroom filled with students with a higher socioeconomic background. It is important to recognize both positive and negative traits can be found in all three of the types of classroom engagement, especially while educating students living in poverty. Most often, a high percentage of the student population living in poverty will at

least possess one negative characteristic within the three types of student engagement. The mindset throughout the literature proposes the idea of student cooperation with the directions provided for an activity signals approval and is seen as productive. However, when those same directions are provided to students living in poverty are faced with a behavior full of oppositional challenge and backlash, the activity can be counterproductive. In order for an educator working with students in poverty to be successful with student engagement, it is vital for them to take the time to create an activity that is relatable material to their class as well how it is relevant and in cooperates participation by the entire group.

Engagement Interventions

View One

It can be very difficult, but creating an activity that is relatable to the classroom population to be very successful. The students populating the classroom all derive from low socioeconomic households and suffer tremendously from the negative effects of poverty. The One of the areas of academics the students substantially struggle in are mathematics. Specifically, adding and subtracting double- and triple-digit numbers, division, multiplication, and finding averages. Due to the lack of success in math, the students become very disengaged in class almost immediately after the lesson is attempting to be presented. To help reduce the disengagement increase the student's math skills in these separate areas of math, creating a lesson plan based around one activity all of the children have a big passion for, basketball. For example: if the class is working on averages, the teacher will pull up a basketball game from the previous night on YouTube and show a certain amount of the game, usually a quarter or entire half to the class. Each student will be assigned a specific team and stat such as field goal

percentage, turnovers, rebounds etc. Each student will observe the game, record all of the numbers needed in their specific stat and they will be in charge with coming up with the final statistics for each team in their given category. This is just one example of many but using this type of intervention by correlating math and basketball together has greatly increased not only student engagement, but their academic performance as well.

In other pieces of literature, researchers have pursued a much different approach to develop their own interpretation to all of the factors that make up student engagement. Schlechty, 2002 has a modern approach by creating a framework for engagement. The framework is built on his belief that engagement must be active. To have "active engagement to be successful, students must be attentive and as well as in attendance." Additionally, teachers must present students with an activity that they will be committed to as well relate or find value in (Schlechtly, 2002) Additionally, Schlechtly believes if the students are committed and find value in a task that it will correlate create an environment full of concentration, effort and enthusiasm. Schlechtly applied these characteristics to create a pyramid broken down into five different levels of engagement based on attention and commitment. The five different levels are broken down from bottom to top of the engagement pyramid below:

Level One: Rebellion- Rebellion refers to a student(s) who are completely disengaged from not only the given task but display diverted attention towards the goal of the task. Additionally, the student shows no commitment towards their given direction and will begin to disengage by disrupting their peers to get off task as well. Thus, any form of activities that require a specific goal to reach their outcome is very difficult to accomplish. As a result, the student fails to learn from the task.

Level Two: Retreatism-Retreatism represents the student that has no attention or commitment to the task. Often times, the student cannot find the task relatable to their own interests, making it seem irrelevant to them. During this phase, the student is not purposely disrupting others; more so lacks classroom participation and simply "checked out." Often times, the student will be distracted and emotionally withdrawn throughout the entirety of the activity. As a result, from retreatism, the student will learn very little or nothing at all from the task.

Level Three: Ritual Compliance-Ritual Compliance involves both low attention and low commitment where the task does not have a lot of meaning to the student. Unlike retreatism, the student does not completely check out from the task but completes the bare minimum amount of work necessary to avoid any form of confrontation with the teacher or peers. During the ritual compliance phase, the student will learn at a low level with an inability for any information to be retained over time.

Level Four: Strategic Compliance-Strategic Compliance can be very confusing because the student may show they are engaged by showing a high level of attention on a specific task, but low commitment to whatever they are involved in. Schlechty calls this "playing the game of school" where the student emphasizes more on getting good grades, parental approval, class rank etc. **(**Schlechtly 2002, p. 13). However, strategic compliance is not intrinsically rewarding, so the student will learn at a higher level without being able to retain any new information over time and cannot correlate over to a next task.

Level Five: Engagement- Engagement requires a student to have high attention and high commitment to a task or activity. During this phase, the student will completely buy in to the specific task due to a strong emphasis on intrinsic motivation by finding the topic meaningful,

relatable and challenging. As the task becomes more complex, the student will continue focus and seek out more possible challenges that they can take on. The goal of the student at this point focusses on completion and to get it done correctly. The student will learn at a much deeper level and have the ability to transfer their new learning over to another new context.

View Two

Eric Jensen, 2013, an educator and independent researcher, schools populated by low socioeconomic students has a history of having a bad track record of academic success. In the United States, if a student grows up living in poverty, the chances of a child graduating are substantially lower than those living in the middle and higher socio-economic class. Author Eric Jensen's research found that;

.... half of all poor students of color drop out of school and 70% percent of children who do not graduate high have spent at least one year living in poverty. In 2009, the dropout rate of students living in low-income families was about five times greater than the rate of students from high-income families: 7.4 percent versus 1.4% (Jensen, 2013, p. 1-2).

(Gorski, 2008) indicated that one of the most critical factors causing the wide gap in academic success is students living in poverty being disengaged from their place of learning. Specifically, in feedback, cooperative learning, project-based learning, and peer or teaching interactions... The causes for a lack of engagement and ideas what can be done to enhance academic success in low-socioeconomic schools is presented in Jensen's book *Engaging Students with Poverty In Mind*. Before distinguishing why students living in poverty have less engagement in the classroom, it is important to understand the core value system between low and middle-class families. Often times, these values are overlapped between these two socio-economic classes. For example: the value of education and the importance of hard work (Gosrki, 2008)**.** However, if people living in

poverty were similar cognitively, socially and emotionally to their counterparts in the middle class, the outcomes for students would be the same. Educators know from experience with these two groups of students, living in poverty are much lower in all three phases (cognitively, socially, and emotionally) than those children being raised in a middle-class household. Jensen validates this in his writing from a survey observing 81,000 students across the United States living in upper, middle and lower-class households to measure engagement levels. Specifically, the students who attend a Title 1 school and are eligible to receive free and reduced lunch consistently reported much lower levels of engagement than students not in a Title 1 school (Yazzie-Mintz, 2007).

While examining the data provided in the survey, Jensen (2013) found that there were seven vital differences for the cause if lower engagement between students attending Title 1 schools and those who did not. Jensen believes students living in poverty are strongly tied to a set of seven core engagement factors that play a pivotal role in the effect of their academic success. Jensen argues children living in poverty struggle with engagement due to seven reasons below:

1. Health and Nutrition: One teacher can control the least. Poor nutrition is linked to weak cognitive outcomes, depression, poor academic performance, less engagement and behavioral issues (Jensen, pgs. 9-11). Physical, emotional and mental health are three components to health and nutrition that have an impact on a student's level of engagement. Children born and raised in a low socio-economic environment have a higher risk of health issues at birth and throughout their entire childhood. Additionally, children living in poverty will be provided with a higher amount of unhealthy food or in a lot of cases, no food at all. Thus, when the child comes to class following a night or morning of with no food, he/she will have far

less energy and tired in class. Thus, causing them to be less engaged in classroom activities and a higher risk of poor behavioral choices.

2. <u>Vocabulary:</u> "Vocabulary building MUST form a key part of the enrichment experiences for students at school." (Jensen, p. 12) Children raised in low socioeconomic households generally have a lower vocabulary than those raised in a middle or upper-class family. Vocabulary has an influence on a student's learning, memory and cognition abilities. Students in low-income setting who possess a low knowledge of vocabulary will cause a deficit in the child's ability to understand what the teacher is communicating to them and will cause them from being disengaged from the rest of the class. Low socioeconomic students with a low vocabulary will put them at a much higher risk for academic failure in school.

3. <u>Effort and Energy:</u> "A student who is not putting in effort is essentially telling you that your teaching is not engaging." (Jensen, p. 13) One of the main reasons for a lack of effort in school from students with a low socioeconomic status is because their environment they grow up that lack's optimism. Often times, students living in poverty do not have the same support system from home compared to a child growing up in the middle or upper class due to a lack in value of education. Students will have the mindset of their parents didn't finish school why should they? Or how is any of this stuff we learn in school going to help me? This mindset will gradually over time cause the student to become more disengaged from the classroom.

4. <u>Mindset:</u> "Poverty is associated with lowered expectations about future outcomes." (Jensen, p. 13). A student's mindset in the classroom plays a pivotal role in their classroom interest and engagement levels. If the student is showing a lack of interest or does not understand how the material can help them, they will immediately become disengaged in the class. A student's attitude towards education can be a great factor in predicting what their academic

expectations will be. Students living in poverty are generally approached with low academic expectations. If this mindset is picked up on my students, most likely they'll simply just give up without trying.

     5. <u>Cognitive Capacity:</u> "Poverty affects the physical brain. In poor children's brains, the hippocampus-the critical structure for new learning and memory is smaller, with less volume." (Jensen, p. 5) Students living in poverty often have much lower academic achievement levels and higher behavioral risks than children in middle and upper class. School can be a lot more difficult for these children due to shorter attention spans, lack of memory capability, problems solving capabilities, quality of work etc. When a student has a lower cognitive ability, the outcomes usually are displayed by acting out and disruptive behavior.

     6. <u>Relationships:</u> "Developing strong teacher-student relationships helps counter the negative effects of inappropriate emotional responses and has profound effect on student engagement." (Jensen, p. 16) Relationships are one the most important of Eric Jensen's seven factors for student engagement. This ranges from the relationship the student has with their teacher, classmates, staff or anyone else involved in their day to day life at school. Often times, a student living in poverty will possess a lack of trust for those outside of their family and friend's groups. Additionally, disruptive relationships at home will create a greater mistrust by students in others. If the student does not trust a staff member, they'll be immediately triggered to become disengaged. Jensen found that students living in poverty have a greater risk to dropping out of school and academic failure increases over time due to an overexposure of relationship troubles starting taking place at home. Over time the relational adversity at home will transition into a lack of trust and relationships at school and the community.

7. Stress Level: "Acute and chronic stress can manifest itself at school as disruptive behavior, impulsivity, aggressiveness, detachment and hopelessness (Jensen pgs. 17-18). Students living in poverty encounter a lot of stresses from financial issues, living conditions, lack of food etc. Over time, the stress will build up causing the student to become distressed. When a student reaches a level of distress, the outcome in class will be displayed by numerous behavioral issues including: talking back to the teacher or classmates, opposition, anger assertiveness and disconnection. All of which will cause the student to be completely disengaged from the classroom activity, their peers and will put the student in a "leave me alone" phase.

Jensen believed the seven factors correlate with student engagement is strongly tied to low socioeconomic children. It is important to note, initially students living in poverty may not possess all of the seven factors at once, but overtime living in these types of conditions can lead to a greater possibility of one or more factors becoming present as the child becomes older. However, the most difficult component for educators is deciding which factors are relevant to their student population. Jensen provides a scale to assist educators in figuring out what factors are more significant than others for their specific students. He measures the connection between engagement and the seven factors as it relates to a specific student or classroom with his Effect Scale below:

Effect Size Scale

Under 0.00 = Negative Effect

0.00 -.20 = Marginal Effect

.20 - .40 = Positive Effect

.40 - .60 = Substantial Effect

.60 – 2.00 = Enormous Effect

To get the full effect of using the Effect Scale, Jensen presses on educators to understand that these seven factors of engagement are present everyday with students living in poverty versus students from a high socio-economic environment. Thus, putting them at a much greater disadvantage symptoms of poverty for which they have no control over. The goal of this scale is to be used as a tool for educators while observing their class and deciding which of the seven factors degree of impact in their student's lives on a day to day basis. When educators have the effect size of the seven factors measured, the relative size of an intervention needed to enhance student engagement will be easier to construct for enhancing classroom engagement.

Put together by in depth research, first hand experiences and classroom success, Author Eric Jensen's piece of literature looks at student engagement as the primary factor of academic success for children living in poverty. In Jensen's second book (2015) on the topic of working with disadvantaged students and how poverty plays a critical role in not only the day to day lives of children, but their academic success throughout their schooling. In comparison to the other credible authors who have written about this specific topic, Jensen provides a much more modern outlook on how student engagement is affected by students living in low socio-economic environments. Additionally, the author grew up in a low-income household which how allowed him to integrate his own personal experiences to what life is like for a child living in poverty and how their educational experience is much different than others. Those first-hand experiences and a large substantial amount of time spent in the classroom working with disadvantaged children has been given Jensen an advantage in credibility when discussing student engagement. Also, it has been the foundation for creating his seven different engagement factors that incorporate all of the different aspects in life that a child living in poverty face. Through personal experience with educating students living in poverty, the author of this paper has found Jensen's factors of

student engagement extremely accurate that a child feels the effects of at least one or more of the seven factors is evident daily in the outcome of their academic. Lastly, one very educating piece of Jensen's book is he provides numerous strategies and examples for various grade levels so educators can integrate them into their classroom. The different strategies Jensen uses will be further looked at later on in this paper. Jensen does a superior job of not only educating teachers on strategies for teaching students living in poverty but provides a vast amount of information on the background of disadvantaged students as well for educators to really get a better understanding of what life is like for these children on a more personal relationship.

View 3

A majority of literature studies related to disengagement of students living in poverty is centered on the concept of improving student learning and the overall classroom environment for which the children are in attendance. Author Hamish Coates believes that whether it is direct or indirect, creating a classroom that promotes student engagement is a vital component for improving learning and academic success. Additionally, this idea of engagement improving academic success should be fundamental for all educators stating:

The concept of student engagement is based on the constructivist assumption that learning is influenced by how an individual participates in educationally purposeful activities ... In essence, therefore, student engagement is concerned with the extent to which students are engaging in a range of educational activities that research has shown as likely to lead to high quality learning. (Coates, 2004, p. 26).

Using a two axis (social and academic) style of engagement to breakdown his four styles of engagement: Collaborative, Intense, Passive, and Independent.

Collaborative: "Students reporting a collaborative style of engagement tend to favor the social aspects of university life and work, as opposed to the more purely cognitive or individualistic forms of interaction ... High levels of general collaborative engagement reflect students feeling validated within their university communities, particularly by participating in broad beyond-class talent development activities and interacting with staff and other students" (Coates, 2007, p. 134).

Intense: "Students reporting an intense form of engagement are highly involved with their university study ... They tend to see teaching staff as approachable, and to see their learning environment as responsive, supportive and challenging" (Coates, 2007, pgs. 132-133).

Passive: "It is likely that students whose response styles indicate passive styles of engagement rarely participate in the only or general activities and conditions linked to productive learning" (Coates, 2007, p. 134).

Independent: "An independent style of engagement is characterized by a more academically and less socially orientated approach to study ... Students reporting an independent style of study sees themselves as participants in a supportive learning community. They see staff as being approachable, as responsive to student needs, and as encouraging and legitimating student reflection, and feedback. These students tend to be less likely, however, to work collaboratively with other students within or beyond class" (Coates, 2007, pgs. 133-134).

To enhance engagement from students with a low socio-economic status, educators must recognize that social skills and academics are equally predominant to one-another. Students living in poverty are influenced by their social environment just as much as their academic ability. At times, if the student is engaged in the subject and is required to answer a set of

questions in front of the entire class, he/she will respond with an incorrect answer due to their peer's response.

The thesis author has seen a lot of evidence in his own classroom. When the students are engaged in a specific subject, the thesis author will ask the student a question whom he is confident in knowing the correct answer. However, the student will purposely answer the question incorrectly, because their do not want their social status to change amongst their friends or to avoid showing up another classmate.

Reducing disengagement from the classroom requires educators to invest a lot of time learning about their hobbies and interests. Next, the process of constructing classrooms must take place by correlating student interest throughout the activity. Every child is so different that this idea must incorporate all of the student's interests to eliminate the possibility of leaving a child feeling left out. The goal for students of a low socioeconomic status is to initially work towards them participating in individual classroom engagement. Coates' individual type of engagement requires a solid balance between social and academic skills. Once that foundation of engagement style is established, it is vital to build on that success and move forward to collaborative, requiring students to increase their social skills while maintaining their academic abilities. When a set of students are required to work in a collaborative style of engagement, they both will not only enhance their confidence to participate in class but have a sense of belonging amongst their peers. Throughout his pieces of literature, Coates reiterates how his four styles of engagement for students living in poverty must be always be changed and used only on a short-term basis, stating "the styles of engagement refer to transient states rather than student traits or types. It is not supposed, for instance, that these are enduring qualities that are sustained within individuals over time or across contexts" (Coates, 2007, p. 132). If educators continually use the same

interventions over an extended period of time, the success rate for student engagement will eventually become stagnant.

The author of this thesis has seen first-hand in his classroom how interventions used for enhancing student engagement must remain transient. However, it depends on the present population of students during a specific class period (high functioning academic student vs. low functioning academic student). For example: one specific class period could have a group of students that learns better without changing daily routines and other class periods might have better academic outcomes by always having evolving classroom activities.

Hamish Coates is one of the pioneers in devoting a large amount of his research to student engagement and the effects it can have on academic success. However, one component that separates his literature from other authors is the location of where he has conducted his fieldwork. Coates has avoided orchestrating his research in one specific area to draw his variables. In fact, most of his experimentation has been done in Australia and other areas the world, including the United States. Coates' global perspective has made his collection of work on a lot more credible because his literature displays how student engagement differs from one country to the next. Additionally, how a countries places of education that are affected by poverty differ from one another. For example: Students in the United States living in poverty are affected in many different ways than students of a low socio-economic status in Australia. Thus, the effects of poverty will play a completely different role on student engagement and academic success depending on where a child is raised. This is especially evident in the social aspect of poverty. Coates found that students in the United States are affected a lot severely by their social life (gangs, home life, and juvenile justice) than anywhere else in the world. Furthermore, how a student's social life affects engagement in the classroom due their social life and relationship

with their peers or classmates. Despites Coates providing an immense amount of thoroughly research data about student engagement, one of his biggest upsides about his information is also one of the biggest downfalls to these pieces of literature. Coates uses data from various to make his analysis about student engagement. Often times, however he fails to distinguish between how his various types of student engagement (collaborative, intense, passive, and independent) is related to a specific environment. He fails to go in depth how one or more of these types of student engagement differs from a low socio-economic classroom in Australia or the United States and stays keeps his opinions very vague about how academic success is affected by it. This puts a lot more time and work on educators to decipher between the different types of student engagement works best for their classroom. Despite Coates touching on the social aspect, he fails to bring up any other components of poverty being a factor towards student disengagement and academic achievement. So, it made it difficult at times to figure what kind of environment and location he was specifically talking about throughout his literature pieces. Lastly, one thing that was not found in Coates' literature compared to others on student engagement was that he did not provide many strategies for educators on how to implement his four different types of classroom engagement into the classroom. One thing other pieces of literature offered educators a substantial amount of strategies or interventions to use in a classroom successfully increase student engagement.

View Four

In his pieces of literature, David Kuh provides three different definitions of student engagement that cover all aspects of education including: grade level, socio-economic status, and specific subjects being taught. Kuh's first two definitions are more of broad overview of student from his time teaching and researching student engagement. His third definition of student

engagement combines the previous two perspectives and how they correlate into one another. David Kuh's three different meanings to student engagement are listed below:

1. "Participation in effective practices through education done inside and outside the classroom leads to a range of measurable outcomes." (Kuh et al., 2007)

2. "The quality and effort students devote to educationally educational activities that contribute directly to the desired outcome." (Huh and Kuh, 2001, p. 3)

3. "The amount of time and effort devoted to activities that are empirically linked to desired outcomes in classrooms and what educators do to encourage students to participate in these activities.

Through personal research and observations while trying to enhance student engagement findings show David Kuh's third definition of to be relatable in the classroom. Specifically, students living in poverty and their engagement level for activities. Students with a low socioeconomic status have a very high tendency to be hesitant and timid when attempting to participate in activities inside and outside the classroom. During this time, behaviors often being displayed are often escalated and oppositional with a refusal to do any work unless an educator or fellow peer can motivate by encourage the student to participate. The overall academic success rate will vastly increase whether it is an individual student or the entire class, if an educator takes the time to encourage and push the student to engage in classroom activities.

Using results from the National Survey of Student Engagement as his platform for research, David Kuh has constructed seven different types of engagement centered around his idea that schools differ from one-another on how they engage with students by not always using mindful strategies.

The seven types of engagement are as follows:

1. Diverse:

2. Homogeneous and Interpersonally Cohesive:

3. Intellectually Stimulating

4. Interpersonally Supportive

5. High Tech, Low Tech

6. Academically Challenged and Supportive

7. Collaborative

For any type of classroom engagement to be successful, it starts with getting a student attempting or at least show a small interest in an activity. Kuh and Pike's seven styles of student engagement promote a classroom full of encouragement from the teacher as well as amongst the students. Additionally, to be successful in implementing at least one of seven types of engagement, the educator must have a positive and trustworthy relationship. If there is a lack of trust between the educator and classmates, the student will be unsuccessful at receiving any form of support for any participation to take place in an inside or outside the classroom activity. One last component to enhance classroom engagement comes into play when a teacher is creating an activity for their students, Kuh believes an educator must have the ability to conduct an exercise that may not be what is best for the class, but what is more beneficial for the individual student. Teachers must use the positive relationship they have with their students and seek out all common interests as well as differences they all share. If results show a few students being left out a majority interest, take the time to specialize a specific for the remaining students to avoid making them unimportant or different. It is more likely that when a student feels left out or

shows disinterest in an activity, the chances for continuous disengagement and negative peer interactions will only increase.

Educational Policies

The United States policies on education are created and implemented by the three different levels of government: federal, state, and local. The federal government specifically focuses on equality in access to education. The state government branch carries the most responsibility in determining educational policy. This is due to the passing to the 10th Amendment in the United States declaring that education is a function of individual states. Lastly, the local government are cities/towns responsible for creating policies that only affect the students and schools that make up the school district in that specific community. An example of local would is the St. Paul School District. In an interview with district board member representative Jeanelle Foster, she said "some of the broader main issues in St. Paul Public Schools is budgeting, bridging the gap of racial equality (lowering suspension rates for African American students) and closing the achievement gap." Whenever new policies are created in education, low income schools and children living in poverty are the ones who often suffer the most, mainly due to budgeting issues. Budgeting seems to be an issue that is always a revolving issue amongst low income school districts.

Literature surrounding the issue of how US educational policies created and implemented at all three levels of government affect education have been very one sided in agreeing that students living in poverty and low-income schools are harshly impacted the most. Often times policies on education have had a more negative affect on students living in poverty due budgeting issues because this is one issue that is inevitable for low-income schools. In his article Mathew Lynch (2016) explores state educational policies in extremely low poverty cities across

the United States as well as the effects those strategies have on low income schools and students. Additionally, he argues, "if states cannot fully fund public schools, especially in low income, urban communities, how can lawmakers expect the achievement gap to decrease and graduation rates do increase (p. 1)." As of 2018, around forty five percent of funding for public schools is required to be provided by the state. Lynch conducted a study in extreme poverty urban communities within the forty-eight inland states and found that "34 of 48 states are contributing less funding on a per student basis to low income schools in inner city school districts (p. 1)." Additionally, due to the lack of funding, low income urban school districts in higher populated cities have had to receive their money for basic needs from local and state money reserves. The outcomes due to lack of school funding provided by the state has caused students living in poverty to not only have scarce resources at home, but school as well. Lynch believed that the lack of school funding in his quote "...has caused an elimination of the middle class, leaving only the socioeconomic status gap between the upper and lower class to only increase (p. 2)." The results from Lynch's studies concluded that due to a lack of continual educational funding, especially in low income urban schools, how can lawmakers expect the achievement gap to decrease and graduation rates increase when resources for students cannot be provided. At the conclusion of each academic year, school districts are left asking will they have the proper amount of funding to get their basic needs met to provide a proper education for low income students.

NCLB Act

The next issue pertaining to US educational policies negatively affecting education for student living in poverty comes at the Federal level. Researchers have found that policies at the federal level of government being implemented into schools have stopped progressiveness in

enhancing the quality of education being provided to students attending low income schools in impoverished urban communities. Most recent the No Child Left Behind Act created by President George W. Bush in 2001. The No Child Left Behind Act was created to make provisions in curriculum to receive extra funding for educational assistance in Title 1 schools for disadvantaged students and to help improve their basic skills. In his article author David Hursh (2007) said, "the educational policy known as The No Child Left Behind Act focuses on education as the key solution to social and economic inequality, it diverts the public attention away from the real issues such as poverty, the achievement gap in education, low paying jobs, and healthcare, that need to be confronted if inequality is to be reduced (p. 296)."

The goal of the NCLBA ultimately failed over the fourteen-year existence in public education at its attempt to reduce the achievement gap and increase academic performance in Title 1 schools that was based on standardized testing scores. In 2004, Neill, Guisbond & Schaeffer put out a Fair Tests report called Failing Our Children, dissecting how the NCLB had an oppositional affect by actually leaving students in Title 1 schools behind. In their study of over twenty different Title 1 schools in major urban communities across the United States that "the law has pressed schools to narrow curriculum, teach to the test, and resort to deceptive and unethical ways to boost test scores. It has done so by defining student learning and school quality in the narrow terms of standardized exam results (p. 2)." Furthermore, their conclusion centered around the idea that a narrow-minded focus on a curriculum states were forced to put together in a small period of time without any accountability has the creators of educational policies, specifically the NCLB ignoring the real issues and consequences from the lasting effects of education on childhood poverty.

Professional Interview

This past spring of 2018, the thesis author conducted an interview with Jill Hanley, a current teacher at Journeys Secondary School, previously in the Burnsville and Minneapolis School District, on the topic of the effects of educational policies on students living in poverty being able to obtain academic success. Mrs. Hanley said the following:

"The No Child Left Behind Act was one of, if not the biggest policy reforms in the history of education. I was in the early stages of my teaching career at a Title 1 school and this type of policy intervention was unheard of and I remember staff a member asking themselves over and over, what is the state requiring us to do? Educational policymakers at the state and local level were left scrambling to create a curriculum based on standardized testing. Additionally, we found out we had to pass these standardized tests or else we were unable to receive extra funding for our Title 1 schools. We were not teachers anymore, we were robots that were ordered to directly to change our styles of teaching and focus teaching for the test was the common phrase. We brought in standardized testing specialists that focused on math and reading. In my opinion it brought out the worst in educators because they had so much pressure on them to make the students pass the standardized testing to receiving funding. Furthermore, it exploited cheating amongst students and staff; it was a very dark time for education because it was chaos due to how much emphasis was put on passing these tests on a daily basis. I was a new teacher in a Title 1 school and it had me even questioning at times my teaching ability because we weren't teaching the students anymore a solid curriculum. Our focus was math, reading and teaching for the tests causing students to get burnt out, lose

interest in school even more than they already had and in the long run a large reduction of academic performance."

The NCLB was reformed in 2015 under the President Obama's administration, however the poor results and impact on education by failing to improve academics in Title 1 schools and narrow the achievement gap are everlasting. One component of the NCLB that was somewhat positive was the awakening of the effect's poverty has on education. Sadly, educational policymakers were either not aware or ignored the fact poverty does have a significant negative effect on education in the United States which the policies and our system preserve. Author Sean Slade, (2016) in his article Poverty Affects Education and Our System Perpetuates he stated, "now we have established a system where those who are poor are more likely to stay poor exploiting the fact children in Title 1 schools that are underfunded, have limited resources and are extremely understaffed are up against the system (p. 1)."

Suspension Rates

Suspension appears to have few behavioral or academic benefits for suspended students. Furthermore, it does little to improve subsequent student behavior, and may even exacerbate students' anger or apathy. The suspension rate includes juvenile delinquency, the school to prison pipeline, and behavior within schools (Wisconsin Office of Children's' Mental Health, 2016). During the 2011-2012 school year in the United States nearly 7 million students across all grade levels were disciplined with either in school or out of school suspension. The number of out of school suspensions and expulsions has sustained growth, but the number of in school suspensions has slightly decreased. However, this is a result of zero tolerance policies that many school districts have implemented in their form of discipline that has resulted in administration eliminating the option of in-house suspensions, leaving the only option to be a student is sent

home for their actions (major or minor). Despite the astronomical number of high suspension rates, the most troubling factor of discipline is African American and economically disadvantaged students in urban communities are overrepresented and make up most of the population in suspension school date. Unfortunately, many students find school far more aversive, almost a victory rather than the punishment. In addition to the suspension, a vast majority of educational historians and credible authors have found the real consequence for discipline is how the effects trickle down from initially being removed from school to a downfall in academic achievement, the probability of a student in a low-income urban community committing a crime substantially increases.as well as the growth in dropout rates.

View One

Does suspension produce significant unintended consequences that harm the students it was intended to help? Using anecdotal research, this is the question authors States, Detrich and Keyworth examine in their article "School Suspension and Student Outcomes." The data used in their article examined research from 54 cases taken from 34 different studies. The study was created to look at the relationship between the outcomes of school suspensions on academic achievement and dropout rates across all grade levels. Specifically, with low income schools and disadvantaged children across the United States dating back to the 1980s. The case study included 7,000 students from over 100 schools. First, the authors looked at the relationship between suspensions and academic performance. Overall, the results showed a negative relationship between suspensions (in school and out of school) and academic performance. However, students who were disciplined with in-school suspensions did have a less negative effect than those without of school suspensions due to the resources and the ability to provide school work to those that were kept in house. For example, when a child in disciplined with in

school suspension, the teacher is still capable of providing classwork to keep a student on part of what is being instructed on a day to day basis. Additionally, the student disciplined with in school suspension has access to resources such as a staff member and the resources (books, internet) needed to complete their coursework. Often times, in school suspension is given as a form of discipline to students requiring less severe punishment and is allowed to return back to class either for completion of work or a small amount of time is served.

Next, when the authors examined the impact of suspension due to misconduct, they found a significant negative association between out of school suspension and dropout rates. Data from their research showed a 25 percent probability that a student will drop out of school after being disciplined with in school suspension. Furthermore, a student who receives out of school suspension both long term and short term have up to a 50 percent greater chance of dropping out of school due to discipline.

Throughout their anecdotal research, authors States, Detrich and Keyworth immediately point out that using meta-analysis cannot be considered the definitive answer on the effects of suspension as an educational tool, the techniques reviewed in the paper offer evidence for reconsidering suspension as a means for solving student conduct problems (Staites, Detrich, Keyworth, 2015, pgs. 1-2). The most common rationale for suspending students is to deter students from future infractions of school conduct rules. The authors conclude…

> "suspensions may in other ways negatively impact the very students who are at the greatest risk for failure in our schools, increasing the frequency of suspension and the number of students who drop out of the system. Educators currently have viable evidence-based conduct training and disciplinary options that are not associated with negative impacts on achievement and dropout rates. An example

of a well-researched alternative is Positive Behavior Intervention Supports

(PBIS), a school-wide framework designed to enhance academic and social

behavior outcomes for all students by emphasizing the use of data for informing

decisions about the selection, sustainable implementation, and progress

monitoring of evidence-based behavioral practices" (Staites, Detrich, Keyworth

2015, p. 2).

View Two

Increase in the achievement gap is heavily impacted by the lack of academic success

from disadvantaged students living in the inner city is a directly correlated to the continual rise of

suspension rates. This is the concept developed by author Denise-Marie Ordway in her article

Student Suspension from School: Impact on academic achievement by race. In her article,

Ordway argues the achievement gap is continuously growing because of the amount of time

students spend outside of the classroom due to suspension. The more time students spend away

from the classroom the probability of dropout, disengagement and criminal activity leading to

permanent removal from school all substantially increase. However, the increase in suspension

rates is not directly the fault of administrators and the individual schools implementing discipline

for misconduct. They are being tied down to the rules and policies created to increase academic

achievement and reduce suspension rates, especially students of color. Ordway states, "For

decades, educators and policymakers have been concerned about the gaps in academic

achievement that have long separated white children and minority children. Numerous efforts to

reform public education programs have been launched nationally and locally to try to boost

student achievement and reduce suspension rates to help youth of all races and ethnicities

perform at the same level." (Ordway, 2016 p. 2) The biggest problem with these reforms is that a

majority of the policies used to close the achievement gap and decrease suspension are being used as a blanket to cover an entire school district(s) and not each school individually.

The first reason that author argues is the cause of poor academic achievement is lack of instruction time and time spent out of the classroom as a result due to because of illness, absenteeism, tardiness or disciplinary actions such as suspensions or expulsions (Ordway, 2016 p. 2). In her research, Ordway found that chronic absenteeism disproportionately affects children from minority and low-income families and those with disabilities. Despite these different reasons being a major factor for student's mission instruction time, the biggest contributor for lack of academic achievement is the increase of suspension rates and the longevity of time removed from school, especially in schools that house low-income students in urban communities. When students are not in school, the risks of negative influences of impoverished neighborhoods come to surface. The author conducted a survey in low income schools across the states of Kentucky, Indiana and Ohio help create the data for the Kentucky Area School Discipline Study and school records to examine how suspension affected a sample of 16,248 students in grades 6 through 10 over a three-year period. Most of the students involved – 59 percent – were white while 25 percent were black and 10 percent were Latino. Four percent of students were Asian and 3 percent identified as being another race. The study found:

- Schools with larger concentrations of black students had higher rates of suspension.

- Black students and Latino students were more likely to be suspended than children from other racial groups.

- Students who had been suspended earned significantly lower scores in math and reading on end-of-year exams. Students with a propensity to be suspended did worse on the exam during the years they were suspended than during years they were not.

- Students who qualified for free or reduced-price lunches at school were more likely to be suspended than those who did not. Students who participated in special-education programs were more likely to be suspended. Students with two parents were less likely to be suspended than those with one parent or guardian.

- Even after controlling for socioeconomic status, special education and gender, black students were predicted to be almost three times more likely to be suspended than white students.

Similar to the previous author, Ordway cannot prove that the increase of suspensions and time spent out of a classroom is the sole cause of the decrease in academic achievement for disadvantaged students. However, the students within the study with the lowest academic performance in the classroom have been linked to the most time spent away from the classroom, in most cases due to suspension or long-term expulsion. At the conclusion of her study, Denise-Marie Ordway said if she were to re-conduct this study to prove the lack of academic performance is directly tied to the lack of instructional time, she would "aim to assess whether other acts of discipline are associated with reduced achievement. They also recommend trying to determine whether the suspension or the missed class time is what underlies the connection between suspension and achievement." (Ordway 2016 p. 4)

View Three

Starting in the early 1990's to current times, the use of suspension and expulsion rates as a form of discipline for public schools is higher than it has ever been in the history of education in the United States. In their article *The Punishment Gap: School Suspension and Racial Disparities in Achievement* which can be found in the Journal of Social Problems, authors Edward Morris and Brea Perry examine the factors causing ongoing increase of suspension rates for low income schools causing an increase of poor academic performance and dropout rates better known as what they call Exclusionary Punishment. Morris and Perry believe "Exclusionary discipline can weaken school bonds, which may actually increase the likelihood of further deviant behavior. Academically, school suspension has been correlated with low academic performance and higher risk of dropout." (Morris & Perry 2016 p. 70) Morris and Perry conducted anecdotal research on two different groups of about twenty students in a low-income school made up of disadvantaged children. One group consisted of students who have been suspended (in school, out of school short and long term) and the other group of students have not been suspended or spent time away from the classroom for any disciplinary reason. Academically, after two years, the suspended group was nearly five grade levels behind the non-suspended group, which suggests that suspension greatly impedes academic progress. Furthermore, after two years, a fourth of the students who have been suspended long term never returned to school and chose to drop out. It is important to note, during the research period all of the author's data was compiled from school discipline and test scores come directly from school records, eliminating any selection bias and social desirability effects that occur when students or parents report on their own behavior. For each student offense resulting in any disciplinary action (office referral, detention, suspension, expulsion, etc.), school personnel are required to

complete an electronic form containing information about the offense, all students involved, and any response by school officials. To sum up their research, the authors stated "Exclusionary discipline can weaken school bonds, which may actually increase the likelihood of further deviant behavior. Academically, school suspension has been correlated with low academic performance." (Morris & Perry p. 78)

One additional reason for the increase in student suspension rates across the United States is specifically directed at students who derive from inner city communities that have had a history in delinquent behavior. It is the perspective that many schools in the United States, especially those in a low socio-economic setting are being designed more like a prison. Morris and Perry present the idea of how school discipline can be closely compared to the justice system stating "contemporary regimes of school discipline "criminalize" student misbehavior in ways that mirror the criminal justice system. School resource officers (uniformed police officers stationed in schools), security cameras, random searches, and "zero tolerance" policies requiring automatic suspension or expulsion for specified offenses all exemplify this strict, encompassing approach. This shift in disciplinary mentality has resulted in a sharp increase in school suspensions." (Morris and Perry p. 80)

The thesis author found this concept very relatable and intriguing because he teaches in a building where every area of the school is under surveillance, a security guard is present, all of the doors are locked, the students transition from class to class one group at a time, and the only social interaction the students have is during lunch and free-time. Additionally, the students often refer to the school as a prison/jail and use the phrase "get me out of this jail" in reference to how identical the format is in comparison to the Juvenile Detention Center. Sadly, when the students

get suspended, it is viewed more as a vacation and freedom from jail than it is a punishment being away from school.

View Four

The raise in suspensions in public schools across the United States has been growing in controversy, not only from the racial standpoint and the negative effects of academic achievement, but now a new term has come to surface known as the "school to prison pipeline" In her article "The School to Prison Pipeline," author Marilyn Elias examines how the zero tolerance policy as a form of punishment correlates into the school to prison pipeline by eliminating the margin of error for students to make mistakes and leave them without any hope for growth because they are never given a second chance to learn from their mistakes. The school to prison pipeline is a phrase that represents disproportionate tendency of minors from disadvantaged backgrounds becoming incarcerated due to harsh school policies. These harsher policies that schools are implementing are known as a "zero tolerance policy." Zero tolerance policies in particular have markedly impacted school suspensions. "Disciplinary reformers modeled these policies after "tough on crime" approaches to policing and sentencing. According to the logic underpinning these approaches, loose social control will allow deviance to flourish. Thus, even small transgressions left unpunished can evolve into larger transgressions and eventually create a deviant normative context." (Elias 2013 p. 2) The goal behind this logic is that more severe punishment is critical for maintaining order within the school. Zero tolerance policies in schools, which mandated automatic suspension or expulsion for serious or repeated offenses, soon followed suit. "Despite evidence that zero tolerance does not actually enhance school climate or safety, schools across the country continue to be enamored with strict

disciplinary policies." (Elias, 2013, p. 3) Under such policies, exclusionary school punishments such as suspension and expulsion have become widespread, replacing milder repercussions such as detention or loss of privileges.

"Hundreds of school districts across the country employ discipline policies that push students out of the classroom and into the criminal justice system at alarming rates." (Elias, 2013, p. 4) Elias believes the school to prison starts in the classroom because when combined with a zero-tolerance policy requires teachers to discipline by removing students away from the classroom which is the initial step in the pipeline to prison. The vast majority of the students who make up the pipeline to prison are made up of two groups: racial minorities and children with disabilities. The author conducted a study throughout many school districts in the Southern Portion of the United States to see how the results mirrored the "African-American students, for instance, are 3.5 times more likely than their white classmates to be suspended or expelled, according to a nationwide study by the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights. (Elias, 2013, p. 3) The author conducted pulled data from numerous school districts in areas of the South where suspension rates where states had some of the highest rates using the zero-tolerance form of discipline across Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama etc. One report found that while "8.6 percent of public-school children have been identified as having disabilities that affect their ability to learn, these students make up 32 percent of youth in juvenile detention centers. Additionally, black children constitute 18 percent of students, but they account for 46 percent of those suspended more than once" (Elias, 2013 p. 4). Following her study, Elias concluded the idea that the more time students spend away from their classroom, they fall back to become a product of their environment, manipulated by the negative influence to partake in delinquent acts and substantially enhancing their risks of becoming incarcerated. To back her

data the author references a "2005 study found that children are far more likely to be arrested at school than they were a generation ago. The vast majority of these arrests are for nonviolent offenses. In most cases, the students are simply being disruptive. And a recent U.S. Department of Education study found that more than 70 percent of students arrested in school-related incidents or referred to law enforcement are black or Hispanic. Zero-tolerance policies, which set one-size-fits-all punishments for a variety of behaviors, have fed these trends" (Elias 2013 p. 5). Zero-tolerance policies criminalize minor infractions of school rules, while cops in schools lead to students being criminalized for behavior that should be handled inside the school. Many of these children have learning disabilities or histories of poverty, abuse, or neglect, and would benefit from additional educational and counseling services. Instead, they are isolated, punished, and pushed out.

Data shows that there is a substantial gap in achievement between students with a high and low socioeconomic status. Although the data proves this statement is true, one of the biggest questions that still ponder in school districts across the United States is why the achievement gap continues to grow further apart. Educational policies that have been implemented have failed at all levels (national, state and local) to improve the academic achievement amongst students living in poverty, but no long-term plan has ever been sustained long enough to use on a broader scale. The consensus from all of the research in this section show that the reason more and more kids from urban communities are failing in academics is because they are absent in class either due to dropping out or the massive increase in suspension rates for children of color. Additionally, suspension (short term and long term) has been one of the biggest triggers for students dropping out of school.

The repercussions for time spent away from the classroom are not only detrimental to a student's ability to have success in the classroom, but the ability to become a productive member in the community as well as receive all of the benefits an education can offer are at risk. Whether it is a short or long amount time away from school, the riskier it becomes that they will be either expelled or arrested for a criminal act and become locked up. One of the biggest challenges for children after being involved in the criminal justice system is the process can be extremely overwhelming for a student to get re-enrolled back into public school. Often-times, this will lead to the child becoming overwhelmed and making his/her time away from the classroom a permanent choice.

Suspension and expulsion can influence a number of adverse outcomes for disadvantaged children in urban schools. One specific area that this is most common in is academic achievement. "Young students who are expelled or suspended are as much as 10 times more likely to drop-out of high school, experience academic failure and grade retention, hold negative school attitudes, and face incarceration than those who are not" (Petras, Masyn, Buckley, Ialongo, Kellam 2011). The idea of keeping the students away from the classroom either due to short term suspension (in school and out of school) or long-term expulsion can have detrimental short term and long-term effects on academic achievement. This is the consensus philosophy presented in all of the literature used for research in the thesis. Among the research a recurring question all of the authors sought to answer in their literature was: are students really being held accountable for their actions by use of suspension and expulsion? Furthermore, when the students return to school, if they return, are they coming back better behaved or a higher risk for repeating their offense because when they were away from school, it was simply a mini vacation? If the student does not enjoy their time in school, the research provided in the research

shows students are more likely to repeat their offenses. Thus, spending more time out of school on a regular basis. Now, with a high increase of zero tolerance policies and being implemented and the continual growth of suspension rates in urban schools across the United States, the challenge to keep kids in class is facing its biggest uphill battle. Educators do not make the ultimate decision for a student about their academics or behavior, but we do have the ability to have a strong, positive influence in that young person's life to assist them in making good choices in life. Often times, due to a lack of accountability and punishment being enforced while growing up, children growing up in impoverished neighborhoods often come to school without any previous teachings of how they should properly conduct themselves in schools and the classroom. Research provided in the literature showed when students are shown the value of an education and taught the simple basics of what is right or wrong in certain situations, is far more beneficial to young people that immediate suspension for unacceptable behavior. This will help eliminate the student being kicked out of school and left with them questioning, why am I being suspended. Furthermore, it will erase the negative mindset of a student that they are not wanted at that particular school or left with the feeling of nobody cares about them. If educators take the time to invest in their students and teach them why their behavior is inappropriate in specific setting instead of just telling them, a lot of less adverse outcomes will take place for at-risk children.

This is the conclusion of Chapter Two. Next, the thesis will proceed with Chapter Three: *Discussion and Conclusion*.

CHAPTER III: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Summary of Literature

Through the articles reviewed in this thesis, it evident that the challenges students face with academically, physically, emotionally and the ability to live the life of a normal young person are inevitable. Numerous theories in literature about this issue explain the differences in behavior and academic performance among children living in an urban setting. However, the most dominant of these arguments supports the belief that behavior and academic performance of students derive from a mix of a mix family genetics and their socio-economic environment. From recent research, it has been concluded that the intricate network of social relationships that students have with their peers in school, their family members, and other members of society significantly influences the behaviors. The influence process begins with the learner's primary relationship with their parents or caregivers. "This core relationship with the primary caregiver in their lives forms the child's character that is either safe and emotionally involved or apprehensive and isolated" (Martens et al., 2014, p. 33). Children who possess a safe and connected personality characteristically show better behavior in school. Similarly, children that possess an anxious and indifferent character typically exhibit bad behavior both in the home set up and in school. Once children are in school, their socialization, and social status tend to affect their behavior significantly. "The typical school setting pressures students to be like their friends and the socioeconomic background of a child is a significant part of the entire process. A child from a low socioeconomic status background will hardly ever choose to behave differently" (Martens et al., 2014, p. 34). Instead, they face numerous challenges that children from a high socioeconomic status family can hardly understand. Consequently, this preoccupation leads to poor academic and behavior performance inside and outside in the community.

"Poverty has an adverse effect on student performance and studies have shown that students in poverty are below grade level at much higher rates and that they generally have poor or average grades" (Murphy & Tobin, 2011, pgs. 34-35). These educational deficits provide a serious handicap for students in poverty. Specifically, when looking at students living in poverty and the correlation to poor academic performance, the authors of the literature used for this thesis all agreed the most substantial factor is engagement. The level of engagement is the somewhat the nucleus of academic performance. Additionally, as author Eric Jensen supports throughout his literature, the biggest obstacle for educators is keeping students engaged is vital for their success inside the classroom. Then, with engagement playing the role of the control center, we have all these different branches of both positive and negative outcomes to when students are or are not engaged in the classroom. Often times, students living in poverty are less engaged in the classroom, leading them down the path of becoming uninterested in the material, lack of attempting or completion of school work which leads to failing grades, an increase of absences, and all of these eventually leading to a student dropping out of school.

In addition to the idea of keeping students engaged as being the most difficult challenges for educators, the next biggest concern presented in the literature is why aren't students engaged in the classroom. However, when it came time to answer, this was a question that that brought forth no similarities amongst the author's opinions. Answers from some of the most famous educational and psychological historians were all different. Blumenfield, Fredericks and Paris had the belief engagement is broken down into three different categories: behavioral, emotional and cognitive. Schlechty's framework is built on his belief that engagement must be active. To have "active engagement to be successful, students must be attentive and as well as in attendance." He broke his level of engagement down into five different categories Additionally,

teachers must present students with an activity that they will be committed to as well relate or find value in. Authors Krause and Coates had a belief that for students to be engaged, they must be active in the classroom. David Kuh has constructed seven different types of engagement centered around his idea that schools differ from one-another on how they engage with students by not always using mindful strategies. Hamish Coates used a two axis (social and academic) style of engagement to breakdown his four styles of engagement: Collaborative, Intense, Passive, and Independent. Lastly, the most modern approach to keeping students engaged was Eric Jensen. In his research found that there were seven vital differences for the cause if lower engagement between students attending Title 1 schools and those who did not. Jensen believes students living in poverty are strongly tied to a set of seven core engagement factors that play a pivotal role in the effect of their academic success.

Despite the authors not having similar beliefs of why students are not academically engaged, all of the authors did agree that there are both internal and external factors causing students to be or not to be engaged in the classroom. However, Eric Jensen in the only author that brings into his literature the role of children living in poverty and how devastating and detrimental this can be towards a student's ability to acquire academic success.

The sections that precede engagement are all the most detrimental effects that poverty has on a student's ability to retain academic achievement and positive behavior in both the classroom as well as in the community. The role of poverty on academics and behavior is quite significant. On a consistent basis, children deriving from urban impoverished neighborhoods are falling behind academically and spending less time in the classroom compared to their more privileged peers. Despite the goal of education in the United States playing a role of a counterbalance, this ideal has been a failing promise for at-risk children. Today, the achievement gap between

students with a high and low socioeconomic status is the further apart now than at any point in the history of education in the United States. In addition to the substantial gap in achievement, currently schools populated by low-income students are being suspended or expelled at a higher rate more than ever. Given the strong correlation between lack of academic achievement and disadvantaged students, the United States has attempted to implement numerous educational policies at the national, state, and local level to help improve academics and suspension rates. An example of this in recent years has been the No Child Left Behind Act. In 2001, the No Child Left Behind Act was integrated into schools across the US in an effort to reduce the achievement gap by enhancing academic success in low income schools by improving the quality of educators, authorizing programs for Title 1 schools to receive additional funding to insure low-income students are receiving a high-quality education. The policy put an extreme pressure on individual states and to create educational programs for success based on testing, specifically in math and reading. The reform in educational policy lead to teachers getting further away from traditional academic teaching and were now forced what the literature called "teaching for the test." A vast majority of the research provided by literature used in the thesis proved the NCLB Act to ultimately be a failing policy that caused schools to fall further behind in their academic achievement in Title 1 schools.

In addition to academics, the effects of poverty are very detrimental on a child's behavior at school and in the community. Disadvantaged children are being more harshly disciplined inside and outside of school. At-risk children face a tremendous amount of influences in the community that play a significant role in their ability to behave properly inside and outside of the classroom. Students living in urban impoverished neighborhoods are being exposed to a much higher rate of crime, drug use, gang activity and a lack of accountability by some-sort of parental

advisory compared to more privileged children. Sadly, in most cases children living in poverty are strongly influenced to partake in one these areas by elders in the community to enhance their social status because it is seen to be more acceptable in low-income neighborhoods. The literature used in these sections of the thesis show that the continual influence of this negative behavior is carrying over inside of schools of a regular basis. The may concern brought to surface by authors throughout the research is the influences in the community to partake in this type of behavior is nearly impossible, as if the inner city is a trap for the youth that cannot be avoided.

Research provided in the literature showed a very unique correlation between student engagement, suspension rates and juvenile delinquency. Often times, students living in poverty are disconnected with education, so when educators fail to keep students engaged in their classroom, the outcomes can be very detrimental to a child's future. This is known as the school to prison pipeline. The less students are engaged, a greater frequency of them being absent for school occurs. Furthermore, the more students are not in school, a greater chance for them not only being suspended, but partaking in criminal activity greatly increases. The more time at-risk children spend away from the classroom, the pipeline to prison only continues to increases to a point where it is seen as students are becoming a manifestation of their community. It is very important to note that I am a firm believer that children do need to be held accountable for their actions to properly learn from their mistakes. However, that reality is gradually becoming more of a disadvantage for at-risk children due to the implementation of a new form of a disciplinary policy schools are using known as "zero-tolerance." The zero-tolerance form of discipline being used by a substantial amount of Title 1 schools is based on a belief that simply removing the problem immediately is far more beneficial than attempting to keep at-risk students in school to

possibly become a recurring offender. Thus, often eliminating any second chance opportunities for problematic students to learn from their mistakes and enhancing the potential to remain away from school for a longer period of time because what schools often see as a punishment, an undisciplined child views as a vacation. This allows for a student to have a mindset of anytime they don't want to be in school, now the ability to just act out and be sent home becomes far less of an impactful form of discipline. I am strongly against this type of discipline being used by schools that populate disadvantaged students due to the fact that a majority of these children are not taught the difference between right and wrong or how to properly conduct themselves in a public setting. I find it way more beneficial to keep the student in school and describe to them how the action they were involved in was not acceptable and teaching them how to make a better choice moving forward. It will be far harsher of a consequence on a student to keep them in the classroom and eliminate any possibility for that child to have the opportunity to involve themselves in any form of negative behavior in the community which could eventually lead permanent removal from school.

Professional Application

The research provided in the literature illustrates that on a daily basis, poverty has a strong negative impact on a student's ability to obtain academic and behavioral success in and outside the classroom. Students that not only live in impoverished neighborhoods are being constantly exposed to and influenced to participate in multiple risk factors that puts their ability to receive an education in jeopardy. Furthermore, many of these children living in urban communities already face some sort of educational deficit and are not receiving any additional academic support or being taught the value of receiving an education. When educators choose to work with children with a low socioeconomic status, it is vital to understand that to have success

both academically and behaviorally, a lot of extra time must be dedicated to make this happen, because it is a process. Initially, this process begins with developing positive relationships with children living in poverty. Many of these have been raised in broken households where a positive adult figure or role model did not exist. Additionally, these children have gone through a lot of traumatic issues that have led to them have a lot of issues of trust and direction from authority figures they do not have a mutual respect with. Taking the time to develop positive relationships with disadvantaged children will only help enhance the student's probability to take behavioral redirection and become more engaged in classroom activities.

Attempting to keep low-income students engaged can be one of the most difficult challenges for an educator. This often stems from children in the inner city have very different interests and beliefs about education in comparison to their more fortunate peers. So, educators must take the time to learn about what interests their students have, meet them at that point and move on together to become successful. For example, all of the students I work with on a daily basis have an extreme liking of hip-hop music, clothing, sneakers, basketball etc. However, they are being raised in a neighborhood where to acquire any of these items must be done by illegal activity. On a daily basis, the students are being influenced by those who do not value education, pray on young kids to join the neighborhood gangs with money and to gain rank in the community. Sadly, this the trap many children fall into either due to the influence or becoming desperate to provide for their struggling families. If educators take time to become invested in their students by learning about their interests and showing them the value of education, we have a much greater chance for keeping our kids in school. Educators should also be mindful in being open to changing parts of their curriculum to be more relevant to their student population.

Ninety-nine percent of the children, I work with are African American and when I teach material that they can relate more to, the greater outcomes we both have. For example: In history class, I always make sure incorporate the positive impact African American soldiers had on World War 2 for the United States, or instead of just brushing over the importance of Black History Month, we spend the entire month of February and into march going in depth studying the African American culture and prominent figures throughout history in the United States. When students are not engaged, the likelihood of low-income students dropping out of school substantially increases. Once the student drops out of school or is suspended, an even greater chance for becoming a statistic of the juvenile justice system is highly probable and ultimately eliminating any chance for academic success.

Limitations of Research

The primary limitation of research came in the lack of application from the author's beliefs on student engagement. A vast majority of the literature on engagement was very opinionated made from observations conducted in the classroom. However, a lot of the research the author's conducted failed to specify what kind of classroom their data was being taken from. What made it even more difficult for me during the research process was finding information about engagement that was specifically directed towards low income students. All of the authors except for Eric Jensen presented a lot data about the topic of student engagement but failed to present any type of strategies that educators can use to keep students engaged in classroom activities. Aside from author Eric Jensen, literature also failed to incorporate many of the different variables that potentially cause a student to be disengaged inside the classroom as well as outside in the community. Especially in urban communities where children face a substantial

amount of traumatic or lack of support at home and the negative influences that are present in impoverished neighborhoods.

Another limitation in literature was finding any sort of consistency in all of the articles related to the effect's poverty has on both academically and behaviorally on students living in urban communities. All of the authors agreed that the impact of poverty on education is very detrimental on a student's academic and behavioral success inside the classroom. However, they also had very different opinions on why certain factors impacted students more than others. For example: All of the various pieces of literature on educational policies in the United States negatively affected children living in urban communities but disagreed why they were harmful towards a student's ability to be successful inside and outside.

The last limitation of research I found was in literature that focused on all of the different challenges and negative influences that children living in poverty were presented with on a day to day basis. A vast majority of the authors discussed very surface issues but failed to dive more in depth on topics such as the impact members in the community have on children, gang life, drug use, trauma, neglect, structure at home and the lack of parental support in their ability to assist their children on homework and showing them the value of education.

Implications of Future Research

Poverty in the United States is inevitable. Furthermore, the effects of poverty on education are continuing to get worse at a point where academic success has hit an all-time low, drop-out rate have peaked and juvenile detention centers across the nation are populated with more disadvantaged youth than any point in history. Childhood poverty poses serious problems for public education. Children raised in poverty generally achieve a lower level than their advantaged peers. Additionally, schools in a higher socioeconomic community are now enrolling

and populating more low-income students in recent years than ever before, so it is time for places of education to come to the forefront and confront this epidemic to begin closing the achievement gap.

   The general consensus within the educational community is that closing the achievement gap between poor students and their more advantaged peers must be more than a one-front operation. Educators must be held accountable for improving student performance, but policymakers at the national and local level in education must recognize that the achievement gap has deep roots. I was once told by my parents that we do not have the right to judge others, until we have walked in their shoes. In relationship to poverty, this is the vast majority of teachers in the United States. We have educators trying to work with and educate students who live a life many of us have no exposure or experience ever living in. However, I have found that despite the fact we have never lived in poverty the more we take the time to educate ourselves about disadvantaged children, their lives, their culture, interests etc... the more success we will have moving forward in education.

   Next, for future research policymakers need to invest time in adopting school practices. The adoption of school policies through research provide the opportunity to practice in improving outcomes, particularly of disadvantaged students, could be more broadly applied. For example, ample research indicates that children in smaller classes achieve better outcomes, both academically and behaviorally, and that class size reduction can be an effective strategy for closing for racial or socioeconomic gap.

   Future research and training provided by school districts to assist in educating teachers working with disadvantaged children will enhance a higher quality teacher workforce. When teachers are more trained into working with low socioeconomic children, they will able to

present material that is more relatable to students, showing them the value of education, the probability of dropping out or being suspended will decrease. My wish is for further research to be conducted on improving schools with fewer resources. I am a firm believer that the blame for the lack of academic achievement should not all be placed on the shoulders of teachers. Similar to our disadvantaged students being with a lack of resources, low income schools generally have a lot less of resources made available for their students to use to enhance their education. Further research can potentially find ways to enhance resource availability for title 1 schools.

I have found throughout literature that the term "poverty" represents a very broad spectrum of low-income families. Furthermore, at times families living in poverty do not feel the same detrimental effects of those that are living in with a low socio-economic status in impoverished urban communities. I mentioned earlier in the thesis, a family living in poverty in the Twin Cities is different from a family living in poverty in Los Angeles, whom are different than a family in New York etc... Depending on where a low-income family is based, living in poverty may face harsher of times compared to others in a different geographical setting. In fact, it has been noted throughout the literature that sometimes families whom are below the national poverty line are still able to live very comfortably depending on the cost of living in a general setting. Despite the effects of living in poverty in urban communities of metro areas across the United States, it would be very beneficial for research to be conducted on all of the factors that play a role in the day to day life of extreme poverty. Extreme poverty is a term that is not commonly used in the United States and more present to represent the economic status of third world countries. However, the term extreme poverty was first introduced by the United Nation in 1995 as "a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information. It depends

not only on income but also on access to services" (Report of the World Summit for Social

Development). Sadly, as much as society does not exist in the United States, many of the

children living in inner-city urban communities retain some of these traits used to define extreme

poverty. This is why many low-income schools provide free and reduced lunch and breakfast.

From personal experience when I have had discussions with my students about their available

resources for living, all are on free and reduced meals and have often expressed to me that school

food is their only meals of the day. Furthermore, during the harsh winters in Minnesota it is

common for them to not have enough blankets or proper attire for the cold weather and very

common trend is for the students living in households where the electricity is turned off

numerous times a year due to a lack of funds. It is in my opinion that all of the previous

examples are clearly reflect what extreme poverty represents, however the term is almost

impossible to find in any type of research involving the impact it has on education.

Conclusions

There is a strong correlation between a students' socioeconomic status and their potential

academic level of success. Educators must be held accountable for improving the levels of

academic and behavioral performance of all students, specifically those students from

impoverished urban communities because schools as a whole cannot do this task alone.

However, eliminating all of the devastating components of poverty that support the large

achievement gap between low income and high-income students takes a much greater power to

fix, which makes somewhat impossible to do. However, educators are only in control of our

individual actions and we have the ability to put forth all of our controllable effort. Research

indicates that students living poverty have significantly lower levels of academic achievement,

less resources and support, higher percentage of dropout rates, higher exposure to drug usage and crime and much higher suspension probability than their peers raised in a higher socioeconomic setting. It is my belief; sadly the issue of poverty and its negative impact on academics cannot fully be fixed. Poverty present in urban communities is a cycle or as author Eric Jensen calls this, "generational poverty." However, that does not mean we can give up the hard work in showing our disadvantaged students the value of education, and how to be a successful students and members in the community.

Over the last five years I have had the most humbling experience and privilege of teaching wonderful young men and young woman from some of the absolute lowest socioeconomic and impoverished urban neighborhoods in the State of Minnesota. From this experience, I have concluded that it is important for not only educators, but members in society to realize none of these children ever wished to be born into the lives which they were given, however they accept it without any complaints or ounce of sympathy. As educators, we have the ability to be the spark of light and hope in a world of darkness for these children. Often times, when working with children in poverty our role as educators goes beyond being a teacher in the classroom. We are a parent figure, a brother/sister, a friend, provider and most importantly we are the only consistent positive adult role model in their lives on a daily basis. So, it is in my belief as educators that we must take full advantage of this tremendous opportunity and go out of our way to provide them with the best education as possible. It will require us to go way beyond our standard duties as educators, but the overall reward is well worth it. With the research conducted for this thesis and through personal experiences, I have concluded that it is important for us as teachers to show students the value of education and whether their dream is to become the next professional basketball player or hip/hop artist; we must support them to the fullest

capacity in order for them to believe in themselves. In order for our students to live up to their full potential as a student in class every day, it will require us to provide them with any type of extra resources that may be limited in their daily lives. One example of this is making extra food available for them to eat in class or take home to their family because sadly, the only meals they possibly receive are at school. Furthermore, the responsibility of providing resources may require us to go out and purchase a basketball for a student to use at the park because doing so will keep him focused on improving his game and providing him/her the ability to avoid the community influence they acquire to join the neighborhood gang and from potentially winding up in a prison cell. From an academic standpoint, we must take the time to not only educate our students but take the time to educate ourselves about our student population. This will help eliminate the ignorant mindset that all students have similar interests and that students from a low socioeconomic urban community have the same interests as children in a higher socioeconomic suburban community. When teachers take the time to educate ourselves about our students living in poverty, we will find that they have actually completely opposite interests. There will be a much greater challenge to keep them engaged to the typical curriculum. So, we must find material to present to our students that they can find relatable to their lives. Whether it is using a basketball to assist with math or using hip/hop icons 2 Pac Shakur and Notorious B.I. G's rivalry to represent the North and South of the Civil War in history class, finding material that our students living in poverty can relate to will substantially reduce the risk of disengagement in order to keep our students in class and out of the streets. The power that everyone working in education while working with students in poverty is immeasurable and we owe it to them to get their needs met by any means possible by meeting them at their point of ability and working together and progressing forward from that point towards not only being successful in the

classroom but will lay the foundation for being positive members in the community as well. There is not better chance to fulfil God's plan, by participating in God's work in helping these disadvantaged children because at the end of the day, they are all God's children as well.

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