

Introduction & Chapter 1

What?

There is a relationship between academic achievement and low socio economic status (SES).



What's poverty and how does it affect my students?

What are the stressors for socially emotionally cognitively challenged students?

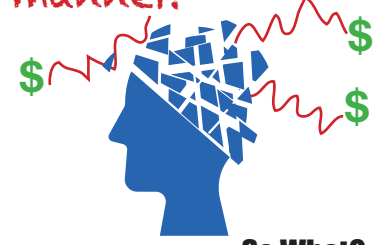
What happens at a macro level (school) and micro level (brain)?

Why is there such a disparity between low SES students and wealthy students?

Chronic exposure to poverty causes the brain to physically change in a detrimental manner.

UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE OF POVERTY

POVERTY: "A chronic and debilitating condition that results from multiple adverse synergistic risk factors and affects the mind, body, and soul."
 -Office of Management & Budget



So What?

The way the OMB defines poverty really hits home. Poverty truly affects more than our physical existence, but penetrates parts of our lives that are even invisible. I also appreciated that just having sympathy was not the answer! Low SES students don't need us to pity them; they need policies to change and empathy that results in direct improvement in their home and school life. What are solutions to ending this seemingly endless cascade?

6 TYPES OF POVERTY:

1. Situational (caused by sudden crisis/temporary; environmental disaster/health/divorce)
2. Generational (at least 2 generations born into poverty/families not equipped to move out of situation)
3. Absolute (rare/scarcity of basic necessities/families tend to focus on day-to-day survival)
4. Relative (economic status doesn't meet society's average status of living)
5. Urban (occurs in metro areas with populations of at least 50k people/chronic and acute stressors - crowding, violence, noise, dependent on large city services)
6. Rural (non-metro areas/population below 50k/families less access to services/job opportunities are fewer/exceeding urban rate of poverty)

How can we break the spiral & cycle of poverty?

"SCHOOL CAN CHANGE CHILDREN'S LIVES AROUND, BUT ONLY IF THEY SHOW UP!"

So What?

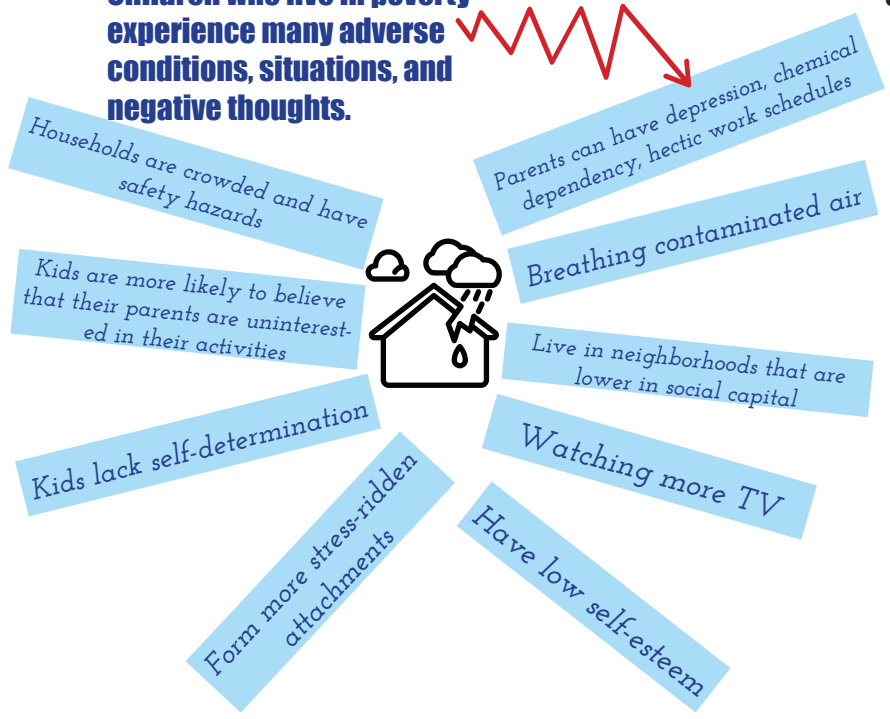
I think a lot of our problems regarding inequity in schools and the poverty crisis stems from systematic racism that has existed in our country for centuries. One of the ways to address this can be through policy changes, but educating the public about what it means to be privileged and what the root of systemic racism is and how to dismantle it should be part of the solution. Sonia Nieto is quoted in the book, *Teacher as Curator*, as saying, "With privilege comes power for some and oppression for others. The role of privilege in our society leaves many students with extra challenges for success. [Nieto] suggests that the achievement gap could instead be referred to as "the resource gap or caring gap" because of the vast differences in resource allocations for students in different zip codes and differences in "support and care given to children based on their identities."

Donovan, L., & Anderberg, S. (2020). *Teacher as curator: Formative assessment and arts-based strategies* (p. 30). Teachers College Press.

I was really surprised by this statistic!

When children don't have sufficient provisions, they are at risk of low academic success and are less likely to complete school.

Children who live in poverty experience many adverse conditions, situations, and negative thoughts.



Chapter 2

BRAINS OF INFANTS ARE HARDWIRED FOR 6 EMOTIONS:



So What?

How can we come alongside parents of low SES students and provide more stability? If children under 3 need strong reliable care-givers, it seems just as important, if not more, to figure out how to help the adults in the students' lives. But from experience, I have also fallen prey to the chaotic cycle of helping others in low SES who, for example, struggle with addictions. As teachers, what's our role? The fact that issues related to academic achievement starts in utero (as the brain develops) makes it even more complex! It continues to shed light on why we should reexamine the role of standardized tests and IQ tests since there's a direct link to low SES students and their performances on those tests compared to their more privileged peers.. Where do we draw the line? I have more questions than answers!

Factors that impact academic success for children in low SES

Now What?

Chapter 3 answers some of my questions! According to Jensen and his research: 1. Brains can and do change and are designed to change 2. Neuroplasticity is the quality that allows region-specific changes to occur in the brain as a result of experience 3. Intelligence is not 100% genetically determined (this means low SES students can improve their IQ scores) 4. Environmental changes can also increase IQ scores! Wow. 5. Fluid intelligence is how students rapidly change their strategies and thought processes > it helps our students with problem solving and reasoning skills > it CAN be taught!

There are real steps schools can take to improve the academic success of low SES students, including providing quality enrichment programs!

Action Steps:

- Change staff members' mind-sets
- Invest in staff
- Support ongoing collaboration
- Encourage staff dialogue
- Gather quality data

"... students with a low socioeconomic status (SES) that have a history of involvement in the arts have better long-term academic, occupational, and social outcomes than their peers."

Infographic Reflections/Views on Learning & Impact of Poverty

There are a variety of theories that have played a significant role in how our education system and ways of teaching have been formed. These theories were often created under limited research subjects that helped them formulate these ideas. For example, some of them only used white males, while others used a small selection of children. However, since some of these theorists also used our scientific understandings of the brain to backup their theories. I definitely wondered what motivated the majority of these theorists to work in this field!



Behaviorism - As a parent, I connected to the idea of rewards and consequences. It's fascinating to see how kids respond so differently even when they come from the same home when it comes to rewards and consequences and how we can apply the healthy parts of this theory in schools without the added stress of "perfection" and "performance."

Constructivism - Learning through socialization is very common I believe and connects easily with how students might naturally learn. I am most interested in learning more about the Zone of Proximal Development as a teacher. I think it will help me to know when to just let a student "run with it" and when to assist them during an art project.

Cognitivism - Like most of these theorists, it takes a lifetime to study the complexities of the human brain! Piaget's research and writing on the stages of cognitive development have certainly played a significant role in how we think about the relationship between the brain and our responses to our environment. I now can connect my children's wellness visits directly to Piaget's theories because the doctor gives me a form with "What you should expect from your child at age such and such..." The problem of course is that they don't always take into account all the variables associated with a child's development in relation to their environment.



Social/Contextual - Focuses on the whole life of a person and not just childhood. There are 8 stages of development, mostly dealing with when we hit a certain point of crisis. It would take a tremendous amount of research and subjects of diverse backgrounds to make this theor more believable for me since it covers so many stages of a human's life!

BLOOM'S TAXONOMY



POLICIES CAN AFFECT INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES

"BRAIN HERO" This video was a great visual helping understand the impact of early childhood traumas and negative experiences vs positive ones and those moments impacting the brain and overall life of a person. I would love to help kids be on the journey towards healing and wholeness and use art as one way to help them navigate their lives!

How can I use Bloom's Taxonomy to help my students go from lower-level thinking to higher-level thinking?
SCAFFOLDING. Use prior knowledge and build on that. Consider sequence of lesson to help students make connections! Their brains are "flexible" and can actually change - this is true for all my students, including my low SES students.