

## Why is Teaching Children of Poverty Important?

Why is teaching children of poverty important? This topic is important because children are the future- even the children that are born into poverty. These kids need a chance too. The way to teach them is simple but takes a lot of work. First, they need to know that they are like everyone else, they are not greater or less than anyone else. Second, their physical and emotional needs need to be addressed. After that, they need to have educators that teach them the right way to live their life and make good decisions for their future. Lastly, these kids just need to know that they can do anything that they set their minds to- they just have to have the willpower to do good in school and in life.

Children of poverty need to be taught that they can live a normal life in the future. They need to know that they are not defined by the conditions in which they grow up. These students need to know that they are equal to each and every one of their peers. We are lucky that in the United States, no matter what background, children are offered free education. Most of these children just need that jump-start to become involved in learning and involved in shaping their future for the better. Because most of these kids have no one at home that supports and pushes them to succeed, teachers should take charge. Educators can be the ones that help to change these kids' lives and make them into good citizens and influential people in society.

The question everyone asks, though, is "How do we teach these children?". They might have problems socially, physically, emotionally, etc. from living in poverty. First, the education system needs to address the child's physical needs. This could be such things as food or clothes. Teachers wish that they could control where these kids live or

what they live in but unfortunately that is something that is not in their control. Because of this, other necessities need to be focused on. “The diets of students who live in poverty are rarely balanced or nutritious. Fresh foods are more expensive than pre-packaged alternatives, and inexpensive fast food is readily available.” (LSU 1) The education system already does a good job with the food aspect, such as breakfast programs and working with programs such as, Love Feeds, to give these kids food over the weekend. Helping children with clothing could be done in formats such as getting together with local charities to help raise money to buy these kids clothing.

Another thing that schools need to address to have students performing at their best is their health. Most children in poverty do not have regular dental or eye exams even though these are very important to a child's health. If they cannot see the front of the room where things are written on the board, they may be losing critical information that could help them have more success in school. Some schools already partner with places to offer these different services; the students are taken out of the classroom during the day to be able to go to these appointments.

After educators address the children's physical needs, then they can move on to other needs such as emotional. Some of these kids come from homes that are broken, unloving, and maybe even scary. Home should be a place of refuge, not a place to be scared of. That is why it has to be teacher's job to create their classroom as an inviting space. These kids need to feel comfortable and safe to be able to function in school. They should have to feel the stress that they have to feel in the “outside world”. “The same brain flexibility, called plasticity, that makes children open to learning in their early years also makes them particularly vulnerable to damage from the toxic stressors that

often accompany poverty: high mobility and homelessness; hunger and food instability; parents who are in jail or absent; domestic violence; drug abuse; and other problems, according to Pat Levitt, a developmental neuroscientist.” (Sparks 1) Emotional needs also relate to psychological needs; many of poverty-riddled students face many psychological problems and disorders. These problems can be from malnutrition, especially as an infant, or from an unstable home life. These kids may need to see a school psychologist in order to function in school.

When educators teach children of poverty the right way, these kids have the opportunity to become an integral part of society. This means that they will rise above the social class that they grew up in and make a difference in society. These changes happen early in a child's life, mainly in elementary school. If these children learn life skills and how to make good decisions early, their entire life can be changed. It could take one action that sets a child's life in a completely different direction. Teachers should be the one that inspire the child to think about their life and how they want to live in the future. Many kids that grow up in poverty have their lives changed by someone outside of the home; teachers can be that inspiration. These kids are with their teachers seven hours a day. This is plenty of time for teachers to create a lasting impact on their students.

Education can be the way to end the cycle of poverty. All it takes is a dedicated education system and teaching and administrative staff. Education equals power. Kids can go so much further in life if they have a good education. They need to know that they do not have to be like their parents – they can rise above their social class. They can change; these students just have to work hard and want to do better. “Nothing good

comes easy”, as they say. Dedication, hard work, and perseverance through tough times can change a person’s lives. Teachers need to instill these traits in children early to set them up for success in the future.

What society needs to remember is that children of poverty are like every other child. Every child is born with the same potential. That one student that grew up in poverty could become the scientist that cures cancer or the future president. Teachers need to want for all of their students to grow up and succeed. The way to success is a long road; that road is hard for children in poverty because they face more bumps and setbacks that lead them astray from the road.

## Works Cited

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