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The Other Side of Socioeconomic Status

Students are coming into Class Lacking more than Money

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Introduction

Jiddu Krishnamurti said, "There is no end to education. It is not that you read a book, pass an examination, and finish with education. The whole of life, from the moment you are born to the moment you die, is the process of learning." In the world of education, a term often used in the classifying of students is socioeconomic status. In the broadest, most traditional sense of the term, socioeconomic status refers to the social standing of an individual by means of their income, education and occupation. Income could be spoken of in a variety of ways when spoken of in conjunction with students and their achievement. In some areas of the country, a more lucrative income might mean the ability to pay for additional learning materials, a private school education or it could be the access to after school private tutoring for those students that need additional help. For other children, income could refer to a devastating lack of opportunities. That lack could hinder the ability to pay for the simplest of school supplies, new clothes, or even household essentials. Another facet in the traditional meaning of socioeconomic status is education. Education is used to describe the highest level of education achieved by one or both parents. Studies have been conducted to determine whether or not the level of education of a parent influences the educational level that will later be achieved by children in their care. (Eccles, 2005) We see that there is a strong correlation between parents with higher levels of education and the likelihood that their children will also achieve higher levels of academic achievement. (e.g. Dubow, Boxer & Huesmann, 2009). Some attribute this

to the value that parents place on education and others report that education yields higher

paying jobs and more income yields academic attainment. Occupational prestige also follows a

similar patter as academic achievement. Not only is occupational prestige a basic indicator to

one's presumed income or how much money a family has access to, but also is a symbol of

social status. In the social hierarchy, studies say that a higher perceived social status, for

students, can lead to further engagement in learning. (North, Ryan, Cortina & Brass, 2019)

While most educators would agree with all of these findings and acknowledge that these

things influence the quality of a student's education and success, socioeconomic status is not

only a measure of physical dollars or social standing. Socioeconomic status encompasses the

traditional definition of the term in combination with cultural awareness, social capital attained

through life experiences along with family structure and mentorship roles and parental support.

As Krishnamurti said, learning is a lifelong expedition and process.

Cultural awareness or cultural capital refers to an accrual of knowledge that is hard to

objectify, unlike financial fluidity, but can equally as easily provide social mobility if used

properly. Cultural capital refers to the knowledge of cultural norms and attitudes of people

different from us, the realization that there are societies unlike our own and the awareness that

the world is bigger than the communities that we are a part of. It speaks to the familiarity of

the speech, skills and traditions of others along with the differences in characteristic clothing and belongings among different ethnicities, religions and genders. These intangible pillars of knowledge give students the power to be socially mobile and help to later build social capital. Through interactions with others, students are exposed to experiences outside their immediate comfort zones. Both through first hand and second hand experiences, students have the opportunity to partake in learning that comes most easily from their peers in social settings. In the midst of these interactions and experiences, students learn lessons that they may not even be aware they are learning; they learn things that teach them about being empathetic and aware. Not every students is afforded these opportunities, though. Similarly, social and life experiences begin to mold young people from the beginning of the educational careers. Social experiences like pre-school begin to shape students early on through learning experiences, but also with peer interactions. Extracurricular activities get children involved in organizations that holds them accountable for their behavior and academics and exposes them to peer groups they are not normally exposed to. From playing sports to participating in clubs, the peer interactions have an enduring effect. Sometimes in their lives, students move from here to there, exposing them to different areas of the country and of the world. These moves affect children in more ways than the surface level effects of having to find new friends. While they might experience a new world of opportunities, the stability that they crave might be missing or disrupted. Traveling can open up children to a world of new experiences as well. Furthermore, the

inadvertent learning opportunities that are afforded to young learners through traveling allows

them to immerse themselves into situations that provide knowledge that might otherwise come

across as "boring". Even though these experiences might not have an immediate quantitative

result, they have lasting effects through memories that are carried with students for years.

Another aspect that can have an effect on students' academic achievement is religious

affiliation and participation. Organizational affiliations provide a valuable network to provide

support to students of all ages. Support begins at home though, with parental support. Parental

support is an important factor in academic achievement. Not every student is supported at

home and encouraged to sit down with their homework. Others are not taught the value of hard

work and perseverance. Some students are not shown the importance of being a good citizen in

the community and no one is teaching them the basics of character education. These same

students often do not have an opportunity to see things outside their immediate community for

reasons outside of their control. One of those things could be their family situation. There is

an ever-growing rate of non-traditional family structures in our society. One parent homes,

foster homes, adoptive families, and step-parents create situations where, our students are

coming from all walks of life that can sometimes help them thrive, but ultimately sometimes

these family structures are not ideal and leave students lacking the support they need to be

successful. This is a look at how these things, that are often so difficult to objectify, can affect

students before they ever cross the threshold into classrooms.

Imagine Student A is a student from an upper middle class family who has parents in white collar jobs while Student B is from a low income family and has parents that work low income jobs. Traditionally, it would typically be assumed that Student A would be more likely to show higher levels of achievement in the classroom, on standardized test and overall show advanced behaviors. While Student A has more money, the parents work long hours including the weekends and are typically unavailable to attend events or school activities. Student A spends a lot of their time with an after school sitter that does not facilitate homework time or studying. Student B, who is from a low income family, has two parents that work low income jobs but are home for dinner each night, they dedicate time and attention to homework and attend every after school extra-curricular. The parents of Student B take their child to the library, park, plays and various other free activities. Further, as a family, they volunteer once per month at the local shelter serving meals to the less fortunate. Traditionally, if only the amount of money each family has and the social status of each set of parents was taken into account, it would be assumed that Student A would be more well-rounded, show higher levels of cultural awareness, discipline and score higher on standardized tests. One would be remiss to assume that this is the case, though. While Student B may not have things like designer clothes, the latest electronics, access to an after school tutor or even private tutoring, Student B has had access to life experiences that build social capital support at home that is valuable to

their education. While Student A does not lack money, there is a lack of other monumental

experiences and support that could later hinder their educational success. This hypothetical

situation is a perfect example of how students are lacking more than money when they enter a

classrooms. These stereotypes are only surface level assumptions that sometimes fail to

encompass what these students truly need.

Cultural Awareness

Pierre Bourdieu once wrote, "Because they neglect to relate scholastic investment

strategies to the whole set of educational strategies and to the system of reproduction strategies,

they inevitably, by a necessary paradox, let slip the best hidden and socially most determinant

educational investment, namely, the domestic transmission of cultural capital." Bourdieu was a

well-respected French writer whom, by the time of his death, had published 25 books and over

300 articles and in addition was considered one of France's greatest scholars. His theory of

cultural capital encompasses the entirety of elements like skills, tastes, postures and

mannerisms that one acquires. This theory, among others, took hold and came to the forefront

in many research projects. Since then, studies have become more thorough to take in to

account race, gender and social class. In each of these categories, research branches out to

connect these factors to not only school achievement, but also to discipline and choice. While

there is no standardized test or scale to measure the amount of cultural capital a student is privy

to, observation has proven to be a suitable means for measuring the effects of such opportunity.

One study finds that both low socioeconomic students and higher socioeconomic students were

positively affected by the effects of culturally valuable experiences. (Tan, 2017) Tan suggests

that students coming from a low socioeconomic status situation were equally as likely to

acquire cultural capital from a place like school, citing that these experience spur discipline,

resilience and independence that leads to further academic success. Among the different areas

to be gauged, Tan states that his finding show that effect margins were much larger in reading

achievement. Similarly, another study discusses that cultural capital, a lack there-of, rather, is

linked to a perceived lack of investment in early reading habits and success, noting that

students would lack cultural capital tend to place a lower value on reading. (Brown & Hurst,

2016) Wong notes that the effects of cultural capital can range all the way into college. (2018)

He specifically talks about non-traditional college students and the many things that effect the

success of students who are continuing their education. Even more specifically his studies show

that there is a positive correlation between cultural capital and the success of these non-

traditional students achieving their academic goals. Similarly, a study of elementary school

students shows the same kind of results. This particular study was conducted on students in

Cyprus in two different primary schools, evaluating the relationship between cultural capital

and the academic growth shown from one year to the next. (Loizos, 2007) Families with little

social capital tend to yield students who do not place a high value on education making it

difficult for them to succeed in the education arena. Conversely, families with more cultural

capital yield students who are more prepared for academia and are more accepting of its'

demands and structures.

Educational research is now 3 generations beyond Bourdieu's initial theory on cultural

capital. The second generation coined three variants of cultural capital and now the third

generation has elaborated on these three variants even more and named each of the "streams".

The first of these is called the DiMaggio tradition and uses research methods that quantify

cultural capital as a resource that drives student outcomes. (Davies & Rizk, 2018) DiMaggio,

the tradition's namesake, analyzed statistics to determine a relationship between high-class

cultural activities and school outcomes. He found the relation to be strong, stating that high-

class cultural activities and exposure could be a countless resource to help facilitate anyone's

academic success. DiMaggio urges educators to find ways to incorporate these exposures in to

their classrooms because there are students that are not afforded the opportunity to be a part of

such learning opportunities outside the classroom. Cultural capital continues to be a topic in

the forefront as a pivotal theme among educational research.

Social and Life Experiences

Between the ages of 3 and 4, children begin to enter preschool programs across the country.

While there are some stipulations on entrance that vary among programs such as potty training,

verbal skills and in some cases income, preschool can provide a structured environment for young children to learn independence, how to socialize with their peers and can prepare children academically for their next educational step, kindergarten. Bakken, Brown & Downing (2017) argue that pre-school is an imperative time for "developing the foundation for thinking, behaving, and emotional well-being." In their research, Bakken, Brown & Downing compared students whom were enrolled in The Opportunity Project (TOP) Early Learning Centers across the country with similar students from the local school district and followed these students until 4th grade, recording their levels of growth in standardized testing, absences, placement in special education programs and disciplinary actions required. Further, they included the teachers of classes with TOP students in attendance to survey them on the variations in the TOP vs. non TOP students on three social variables including appropriate behaviors, social interactions, and emotional maturity. Through their research, they found that students who had previously attended a TOP program were more likely to show appropriate behaviors in the classroom, were more confident and were able to interact with their peers more effectively and further showed higher levels of emotional maturity as early as the 4th grade level. Their research indicated that TOP students were 29% more likely to score at a level exceeding standards in reading and 25% more likely to score at a level exceeding standards in math. Not only do students that attended this pre-kindergarten program tend to be more prepared and score higher on tests later in their young educational careers, but they are also more likely to be

referred to special education programs earlier when necessary. In another recent study

(Muschkin, Ladd, & Dodge, 2015) two more early childhood education programs in North

Carolina were evaluated and data was collected to determine the effectiveness of these

programs. Together, the two programs reduce the odds of special education placement by 39%.

Furthermore, research shows that students who are involved in pre-k programs and are able to

take advantage of socialization with their peers and are more likely to develop healthy

relationships as they become school age students. These Pre-K programs immerses young

learners into all sorts of social interactions and experiences around their peers that help to mold

them. One study says that not only are these peer interactions useful and beneficial in some

situations, but that their findings suggest that the benefits of peer interactions are consistent

across most all age groups and environments. (Guralnick, Connor, Hammond, Gottman &

Kinnish, 1996) Pre-K aged students learn through every interaction rather it be a structured

activity facilitated by the teacher, or free play facilitated by themselves. Through these

opportunities, they are able to push themselves in order to reach their own individual limits on

their own time rather it be more quickly or more slowly.

These early learning opportunities do not only occur in a Pre-K setting, though.

Experiences in extracurricular learning activities like trips to the museum prove to leave lasting

memories. In a study performed by Green, Kisida & Bowen (2014), it was shown that middle

school aged students recall details from paintings at a particular museum months after their

initial visit. When Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art opened in Arkansas, students who visited the museum on school field trips were survey 3 months after their visit to gather data on the recollection of details they were able to articulate. At a rate between 70 and 88 percent of students were able to recall specific details about a variety of paintings they had seen while attending the museum. Not all students have access to opportunities to visit such places and absorb historical knowledge contained within the arts. The overall outcome of learning that accrues from any experience is directly related to a student's interest in the subject, among other factors (Rennie & McClafferty, 1995). Studies also show that students who directly participate or are exposed to these co-curricular type opportunities like zoos or science museums are more likely to later develop a more positive attitude about the topics in which they have been exposed. (e.g. Behrendt & Franklin, 2014). Without even realizing, students with opportunities like these are being immersed in learning situations that are sparking an interest, dropping seeds of knowledge and allowing them to learn outside the classroom. These extracurricular opportunities have benefits early on in a student's career, but can also later effect the probability of high school dropout. According to McNeal, (1995) participation in school sports decreases the likelihood of high school drop out by 40%. Another study finds that students who participate in music education and school clubs have a higher GPA than students that do not. (Craft, 2012). Getting students involved with their peers in extra-curricular activities of all kinds has proven to be valuable in keeping them engaged and

encouraging them to work hard to attain their goals. Through this research it is proven that not

only are these social experiences fun and engaging for students of all ages, but that they are

paramount to success both throughout their educational careers but also later in life as adults in

the workforce.

Life experiences can also offer valuable lessons through occasions such as moving,

travel and religious affiliations. In some areas, there is a very high rate of transient students.

One specific area that this might be prevalent is in towns with a large military community.

According to the Department of Defense website, there are some 1.1 million military children

of active duty service members and nearly 700 thousand child dependents of armed forces

reserve service members. There is a quote that says military children "bloom anywhere",

referring to the resilience of these young people. One study looks deeper at this, evaluating the

emotional health of highly transient military children. Their research finds that creating an

environment that is stable and surrounded with parent involvement best helps to aid in

emotional health which in turns aids in literacy achievement. (Eodanable & Lauchlan, 2012)

Eodanable and Lauchlan suggest that in order to combat the depleting emotional health of these

students that schools implement an emotional literacy curriculum. In their research, though,

they found that even with intervention there was no significant change in emotional health.

This presents a daunting realization that military children are lacking emotionally and in turn are struggling academically.

Not all highly transient students are from military families, though. Many adults have careers that require moving from one state to another, other families move to be closer to their support system and some children may have to move due to a change in family structure. Regardless of the reason, the implications are the same. Parr states in his book that his research reveals that in all subject areas, transient students score lower on standardized tests than do their non-transient peers (2010). The variations across subject areas fluctuates from 18% to 25%, meaning that transient students are scoring 18% to 25% lower than non-transient. Further, these transient students are more likely to fall into at least one other "at-risk" category. Parr notes that, unfortunately, educators may tend to approach these students casually and with the notion that they will only be in their classroom for a short time. If proven to be true, this could very well be a cause for concern among the transient student population. As our society is becoming more mobile than ever, Parr suggests that it is imperative to maintain the same level of motivation and confidence in transient students in order to provide them with equal opportunity to thrive.

While not every student is boxing their life up and moving every few years, many are traveling. They travel to other areas within their state, to other states and some are even fortunate enough to visit other countries. According to a recent article by WYSE Travel

Confederation (2018), more than half of students who travel have better GPA's than those that

do not and further, adults who had the opportunity to go on domestic educational trips in their

youth on average earn 12% more per year than those adults who took no trips in their youth. In

addition, 57% of youth in the study who travelled at least 50 miles one way from their home on

a trip of some kind went on to attend college. A large number, 80%, of students who were

surveyed believed it to be true that educational travel sparked further interest in what they were

learning in the classroom. This study also cites that increased travel is linked to higher

educational achievement, regardless of other factors like demographic, social status, ethnicity

or gender. In the study of adults, of those who travelled at least 5 times, 95% went on to

graduate from high school and 2/3, 67%, completed a post-secondary education. Another study

argues that children learn on family trips and through educational travel by "experiential

learning", in which knowledge is converted from experiences to knowledge in relevant subject

areas. (Park, Ahn & Pan, 2018) The authors also note that while these benefits might not be

instantaneous, the results do come eventually and are relatively long term. Even though

teachers are actively introducing students to communities and cultures beyond their immediate

purview through activities and virtual field trips, research clearly shows that experiencing these

things first hand is paramount in academic achievement and retention.

Another life experience that can effect student achievement is religious affiliation and

participation. In an article by Barrett (2010), he notes that his research has proven that among

young African American students studied, attending religious activities has a remarkably good effect on academic achievement; especially when compared to their peers who do not attend any type of church. Barrett, throughout his writing, speculates on how and why the church could be having such a substantial effect on students. One of the first things he notes is the value that is often placed on education within religious organizations. He claims that the environments typically found at churches breed positivity and encouragement that can set the tone for their attitude toward school and learning. He focuses mainly on African American students, citing that at one inner city school the population of non-Caucasian students was 75% and of those, 59% were living in poverty. He uses this to point out that church is much less about socioeconomic placement in society and provides the opportunity to absorb several differing types of capital in addition to being a center for support. Another advantage that Barrett argues is a benefit of religious affiliation is community and leadership skills. Green-Powell, Hilton & Joseph states that "improving academic performance seems to flow more from "doing" church than merely believing" (2011) agreeing with Barrett that the social and cultural capital gained from being a part of an organization has a positive effect on academic achievement. Many churches also offer afterschool tutoring programs and mentorship programs that focus on nurturing students in the community that lack support from other adult role models. While maybe the belief in church or having any type of religious affiliation is seemingly unimportant to academic achievement, the research shows that through the outreach

of programs, support systems and capital offered to attendees, there is value in not just going to

church but being a participant in church and by taking advantages of its' programs. Moving,

traveling, religious affiliation, these things are only a sample of life experiences that shape

students and research shows that the effects are substantial and worth noting when considering

the best way to service students in a classroom setting.

Parental Support

At the most basic level of parental/caregiver support, children have needs that need to

be met that have nothing to do with money or material things. As the most basic level, children

need to have their emotional needs met; their need to feel loved and to feel like they belong. A

child can feel love and belonging in many ways. According to one study, there is a strong

correlation between a student's mental health status and their academic achievement. (Dryfoos,

1993) Sometimes for a child to feel loved, an adult needs to show up for them; to activities, to

parent teacher conferences, etc. One example is a caregiver or parent being present to support

their child during extracurricular activities. In many school districts, students are afforded the

opportunity to participate in all different types of extracurricular activities. From sports to band

and from academic team to drama club, students are getting involved. When they are not

involved in some type of extracurricular activity, there are parent teacher conferences, after

school tutoring and banquets that need attending. A study by Ashim & Ahmed (2018) goes in

depth, studying parental involvement broken down into five factors. These included but were not limited to parents communication to the school and helping with homework. Ashim & Ahmed were able to conclude that academic achievement is directly related to parental support in school age children citing that when parents are involved in their child's education, GPAs tend to be higher, test scores prove to show more growth and students overall achievement tends to show more growth than students who lack substantial support. According to Child Trends (2013), only 58% of high school aged students have parents who attended a class event or school activity. That number does increase to 73% of middle school students and rises more for early elementary age students. Of those that participate in events and activities, 65% are parents who attended graduate or professional school. These numbers begin to paint a picture of which students, as a rule, are lacking support from their adult caregivers. Those are the same students that are often lacking the traditional definition of the term socioeconomic status; namely, money but also social status. Regardless, though, of family income or what their background might be, students with parents who are involved in their education are more likely to score higher on standardized test, have a better overall GPA, are more socially immersed with their peers, have less absences, show more well-rounded behaviors and overall adjust more favorably to school. (Henderson & Mapp, 2002) Another type of parental support come in the form of character education. At a young age, students begin to learn what is and what is not appropriate in all types of scenarios and environments. In the beginning, this comes from

the primary care taker at home, evolves into the teachers at school taking the forefront in

educating these young learners not only in mathematics or social studies, but in how to be

socially responsible for their behavior. Character education can not only be taught in the

cafeteria and on the playground, though. This character education begins at home and

continues at the grocery store, at the doctor's office and so on. In a school in Milwaukee, a

system was implemented the focused specifically on character education throughout their

academic, extra-curricular and advisory programs. (Hein, 2018) The program is merit based,

giving students the opportunity to be given demerits for inappropriate behavior and merits to be

given for behaviors that aligned with their core values. Their goal was to always have a 3:1

ratio for merits versus demerits each day. The school believed that building a positive culture

and environment at their school would help to build a positive learning environment, spurring

academic success. The results of their hard work were substantial. The first year they had the

program in place, they reduced detentions by 36% and increased student retention by 23%.

This success made the high school the only one out of 165 high schools in Milwaukee Public

Schools to earn a status of "Meets Expectations." A study by Roger, Hickey, Weiener, Heath

& Noble (2018) developed a scale to apply a measurement to the amount of parental support a

student receives but also to get a better idea of how that support is perceived by the child.

Autonomy Supportive Involvement was one type of support that they used their scale to

measure. Through their research, it was shown that parents who act in autonomy-supporting

ways and are perceived as patient and tolerant, are more helpful in growing children who are more confident in their own autonomy and are more self-confident and self-motivated in their schoolwork. The study also notes that parental involvement does evolve as students go from elementary to middle school and later middle school to high school. Adolescent aged students are more likely to demand space from their parents and as the course load grows, it becomes increasingly more difficult for even the most diligent of parents to stay on top of all the homework requirements. As the amount of time parents were physically sitting down with their children decreased through this natural change, it was still proven that when parents acted in autonomy-supportive ways, exercising patience, kindness and encouraging independence their children were in turn more likely to be academically successful.

On a similar note, another study breaks parenting styles into four groups: democratic, over protective, authoritarian and permissive. In this study, Kosterelioglu (2018) found that the most statistically significant positive correlation between parenting style and academic achievement was between the democratic parenting style and academic achievement. Through his study, he found that students with democratic type parents not only were more academically successful, they were also likely to be more "intrinsically motivated", meaning that they have enthusiasm about learning and a true willingness to learn. Further, he found that these students were more confident in their self-capability when facing difficult tasks and were more self-sufficient in problem solving. On the other hand, parents with more of an authoritarian

approach had children who were more likely to have performance avoidances, a fear of failure

in meeting expectations. These students avoid any situation that might make them look inferior

or incompetent to their peers. This can lead to the unfortunate circumstance of these students

missing valuable learning opportunities. In a study by Renth, Buckley & Puncher, through

their qualitative data, they determined that the same students that were lacking parental support

also had more behavior related incidences on file and were absent from school more often than

students that had at least an "average" amount of parental support. (2015)

Parental support through home learning is proven to have lasting effects even as early

as age five and has a lasting effect on educational attainment. (Melhuish, Phan, Sylva,

Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford, & Taggart, 2008) One study uses a list of activities that are

present or absent in a child's home learning environment to quantify the effects of not having

parental educational support at home. Their study does not speak to the educational or

economic status of parents, but rather if they support their child and offer them opportunities to

draw and paint at home, helping to teach letters and number, singing songs along with eleven

other activities they believed could be relevant to academic advancements. As children entered

the study they were evaluated based on a British academic scale and then were tested again at

ages five and seven using the same scale. Data was compiled, quantifying the number of times

these activities were present in the students' life, placed on scale and ultimately proved that

when there was at least an average presence of the fourteen activities that there was a 21%

increase in literacy and 18% increase in numeracy test scores at age five. At age seven, the test

scores showed an 11% increase in literacy and 12% increase for numeracy. (Mulhuish, et al.,

2008) The author pointed out that this lessened increase could be attributed to the introduction

of kindergarten and structured learning that begins taking place. At any rate, the significance

of home learning is clear.

Family Structure and Home Life

Students today are living in all different types of parental "situations". According to the

United States Census Bureau, in 1960, the number of children living in two parent homes was

88%. Since then, that rate has been at a steady decrease and in 2018, the number was lower

than ever, coming in at only 65%. While this decrease could be attributed to society's ever

changing views on marriage, the decrease is a notable change and there are benefits for students

in two parent homes. (Berlin, 2007) A study discusses the academic achievement of children in

single parent homes and notes that 82% of families with two parents participate in school

events and activities whereas only 68% of single mothers and 63% of single fathers.

(Nonoyama, 2017) In this same study, students were tested on both mathematic and language

arts growth values. The results show that both children living in single mother homes and

children living in single father homes were progressing slower than their two parent home peers

were. The author states that this could be attributed to the lack of parental participation.

Nonovama goes on to speculate that parental participation could often lack in these situations due to the working hours of single parents, noting the struggle that often arises to remain financially stable and still balance enough time to also invest in and support their children at home with their homework or attending school activities. Single parents often have significantly lower parenting resources including cultural and social resources to support their children along their journey. (Downey, 1995) Similarly, another study compared the educational outcomes of children living with both biological parents to those living in "alternative families". (Sun, 2011) Sun used panels of data to study trajectories of students in kindergarten through fifth grade, taking into account both their family status and changes in family structure if applicable. Sun also considered families that were alternative single parent or step-parent but were undisrupted during the kindergarten through fifth grade years. Having a constant means of family resources, even in alternative families, can decrease the negative academic effects. (Downey, 1995) While the negative effects were less when there was constant means of resources, single parents and families with a step-parent were often less likely to invest in social relationships with other parents and with school personnel (Coleman, 2000).

As earlier research has shown, these social experiences are important to academic achievement. The results of Sun's research showed that in his sample group of students, the performance gap between children in homes with both biological parents compared to children

in alternative homes, both disrupted and undisrupted, was about a 57% difference in academic

growth rates. On a more specific note, Sun found that children in undisrupted step families

showed the same advancement as those in homes with both biological parents. Other children

live in foster homes and group homes waiting for a forever family. According to the U.S.

Department of Education, there are roughly 400,000 children in foster care at any given time.

A recent article used data to evaluate the academic risks of students in foster care. (Segermark,

2017) Segermark notes that there are several different contributing factors for the academic

obstacles of foster students including the high rate in which they transfer schools, a lack of

communication between their caregivers and their teachers and attendance issues among other

things. Research indicates that when considering reading scores in their sample set, children in

foster care scored at one year and two months behind their peers based on researchers' scales

for comparison.

According to the National Foster Youth Institute, on average every year, 23,000

children will "age out" of the foster care system. This means that every year, roughly 23,000

children will turn 18 and be considered adults, no longer being eligible for foster care. The

Institute reports that at even the young age of 18, 20% of foster children become instantly

homeless. Further, the Institute reports that for those that age out, there is less than a 3%

chance of them earning a college degree. According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, at the

most basic level of needs are the physiological needs of students. Maslow was speaking

specifically of survival needs; food, water, shelter, clothing, etc. In 2014, it was estimated that

some 2.5 million children are homeless every year and are scattered in urban and rural

communities alike. (Bassuk, DeCandia, Beach, & Berman, 2014) According to the National

Center for Homeless Education, over the past three school years, there has been a 27% increase

in the number of students enrolled in school who were unsheltered. Other homeless students

reside in shelters or stay in hotels and motels moving around as necessary. (2019)   In a recent

study, the National Center for Homeless Education compared 15 states and various school

districts, collecting data specifically on the rate of homelessness in each grade, if there was any

type of shelter available to the family and test scores. In 25% of the states in the United States,

less than 21% of homeless students scored proficient on state standardized reading tests.

Overall, these homeless students tend to have lower grades, perform subpar on standardized

tests and have far more absences than do their peers who have shelter. (Fantuzzo. LeBoeuf,

Chen, Rouse & Culhane, 2012)

There is a broad range of issues that affect students in the home. Some students have a

home and parents in that home who are present and available but they have language barriers

between them and their children's teachers. While conversational English is typically mastered

fairly quickly by both parents and students, academic English can be behind schedule for years.

(Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001) Lacking essential vocabulary that is associated with

education can lead to a lack in understanding communications from teachers. According to

Flores, Abreu & Tomany-Korman (2005), approximately 3.5 million school aged children have limited English proficiency and 18% of households speak a language other than English as a primary language in the home. An increasing number of students overall fall into this category, comprising 10% of the overall student population. One study looks at the academic achievement of limited English proficiency (LEP) students, also referred to as ELL (English Language Learners), when compared to their non-LEP peers. (Spees, Potochnick, & Perreira, 2016) Further, Spees, Potochnick & Perreira find that of all immigrant students in the U.S., 20% are LEP students citing that 71% of LEP students score behind their peers who are not LEP. A concerning fact in regards to ELL students is the support they will desperately need to help them be successful. Unfortuantely, only 46% of LEP parents have higher than a high school equivalent degree.

As with previous research here, it is evident that low academic achievement breeds low academic achievement. The next level in Maslow's Hierarchy is the need for safety. Maslow suggests that in order for a student's cognitive needs to be met, their need for food, shelter and safety must first be met, or at the minimum partially met. Parcell & Dufur state that "Children's home environment reflect parental investment in child well-being". (2001) While the home and belongings are only material things and in the end, it is difficult to put a measure on cleanliness. Overall, though, household cleanliness could be an indicator of the importance of household efficiency and the importance placed on learning. (Cox, 2007)

Serving our Students

As the face of education continues to change, it is imperative for educators to realize

and understand the depth of the hurdles students must overcome to be successful. Through

these studies and research, as educators, we start to narrow in on the more specific issues that

students struggle with. Ranging from cultural awareness, to issues as personal as having access

to basic necessities, students are struggling in a multitude of ways. We must be determined to

recognize these challenges, no matter the severity or nature, in order to address them early on

and accordingly. How do we do that? What strategies do we need in our toolbox to implement

and combat these challenges? While we may not ever have all the right answers, a due

diligence is deserved to every student regardless of what they may be facing outside the four

walls of our classrooms. Since developmentally and socially students evolve a great deal from

the early elementary years, through middle school and in to high school, the approaches we as

educators take must vary. We have to learn to vary our interventions based upon not only the

nature of the need but also the age of the student. A proactive and thoughtful approach allows

us to serve our students in a way that breeds self-confidence and ultimately academic success

that carries them throughout their academic careers.

Elementary Aged Students

As the research has shown, young children are sponges, absorbing knowledge in every situation they are exposed to staring at a very young age. Knowing this, how then can we, in pre-k and elementary settings, introduce students to situations and environments that provide an opportunity to expand their horizons, allowing them to gain cultural and social capital? What types of lessons can we plan that brings the real world to our classrooms to provide a real life immersion experience? How do we implement a plan to get parents involved in student learning? Further, when parents are not able to or are not interest in getting involved, in what ways can we service the students in the classroom that lack support at home? Cultural capital looks different at every age, but educators can begin providing students with opportunities to expand their cultural capital early on. At any age, but especially in the early elementary years, a very effective and informal means of exposing students to cultures, lifestyles and values they are not accustomed to is by grouping students with peers that do not share their nationality, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, etc. for group play and activities. Before attending formal school, it is common place for children to be unaware that there are families that are very different from their own, serving meals that are unfamiliar, celebrating holidays differently and so on. Providing opportunities for students to talk about those things provides opportunity for students to see different traditions. For example, some families celebrate Hanukkah and others celebrate Christmas.

In some areas students are unfamiliar with a difference in language but can be exposed

to English language learners in your classroom. This provides an opportunity for students to

understand that there is a world of different cultures that differ from theirs in varying ways.

Even the youngest of students begin to see that there are cultural differences among the

students they eat lunch with and play on the playground with. These early interactions are

imperative for planting a seed of curiosity about what opportunities exist beyond their

immediate purview. The older elementary ages benefit from this simplistic idea but can begin

to benefit from more in depth opportunities as well. A leading goal in increasing cultural

capital is to encourage students to reach beyond the familiar and break out of the norms

surrounding them. Some students grow up without the expectation or assumption that college

is in their future. Some are expected from an early age to take over a family business or follow

a family member's footsteps into military service. It is our job as educators to begin to tear

down the barriers and open our students up to the possibilities outside of what they know.

Even inadvertently, through various forms of exposure, the wondering minds of children will

begin to take hold of the world around them. These various exposures can come through things

like the viewing of plays, virtual field trips to manufacturing facilities and all sorts of other

types of virtual field trips that allow us to bring the world to our students. We may not be able

to take our students to see plays, but we can bring Shakespeare to our classrooms through

online, prerecorded performances that are available for streaming. The options for virtual field

trips are limitless. Imagine being able to take your students on a virtual learning excursion

through an entire zoo. Thanks to technology today, we can. These types of experiences spur

interest in subjects and also provide life experiences that may not come through the everyday

curriculum. As the research has proven, life experiences like traveling can be very beneficial

for young students. Similar to the idea of virtual fieldtrips to a zoo, using the same sort of

picture tour could be useful across multiple disciplines. For example, in early studies of

government and politics, students could take a photographic journey through the White House

and House of Representatives. Being able to recall an image to their minds when they are

studying the State of the Union address can help students to bring these events into perspective

and capture the magnitude of their importance.

While we can help to bring these culturally rich, social and life experiences to the

classroom for our elementary students, how can we help to support students who are not

fortunate enough to have supportive parents encouraging them to be successful? In the

research mentioned, the most basic of student needs is the need to feel loved and belonging. As

educators, we see these students daily and it is far from difficult for us to show our students

support. Simple ways of doing this for the elementary aged students is a simple "So proud of

you" on a homework you hand back or in making that verbal as your struggling student is

heading out the door. The self-worth of a student is paramount in later success and words of

encouragement could help to give a student confidence to try harder and move forward. A bit

more time consuming way of showing students both individually and separately that you care

could be showing up to a Saturday morning basketball game or a Thursday night academic

team meet. So often parents are absent from these events, dropping students off without

staying to observe and cheer their child on. It is unfortunate that these same parents often lack

an understanding that cheering on their 4th grader at academic team does not just help them to

focus and answer a few questions. This kind of support helps students to place value on hard

work and participation in something that takes hard work to accomplish. Most educators would

agree that young students love for their teachers to show up to their events.

An even more unfortunate occurrence is students who lack the basic necessities and

school supplies. Each year, parents go to the local store to find a supply list that is seemingly a

mile long. Most are able to buy what is required or can reach out to local organizations for

assistance if needed. Beyond these though, there are students without those same materials at

home to practice their work with. Early Elementary students are learning to write and

acknowledging site words. Many of their waking hours are spent at school but there are

advantages to getting practice outside of school. Recognizing these needs and reporting them

to supporting agencies and organizations, even family resource within your school district can

help to provide some of the basic pieces of the materials they lack. Furthermore, some young

students even lack a safe place to sleep and call their own. Getting these families in touch with

shelters that offer assistance for families can make a big difference in a student's readiness to

come to class ready to focus on the lessons being taught. In the elementary ages, every single

opportunity we provide makes a difference. An educator's role in introducing young learners

to learning opportunities that are outside the spectrum of daily experiences is paramount is

aiding them in growing into young, confident and focused learners.

Middle School

As students approach adolescence, it can become increasingly difficult to engage them

in learning, regardless of what their life outside of the classroom might look like. It was once

said that it takes a special type of person to teach middle school. Middle school students, as a

whole, can be demanding, temperamental and uninterested on a regular basis. Not only do

educators need to learn and be proactive to the struggles that students are facing, but also find

ways to connect with and intrigue their middle school students. Culturally, middle school and

adolescent age students are naturally becoming more aware of the differences between

themselves and their peers. As educators, we can help to create positive attitudes about these

differences by educating them early on.

One fun way to help create interest in other cultures is by introducing students to

different kinds of money. Middle Schoolers are beginning to understand more about money

and its value as they mature and seeing the differences in bills and coins from other countries is

interesting; to middle school age students and adults alike. This opens the door to talk about

how our currency measures up to others and further how other cultures, financially, are much

more unstable that ours. One can easily compare average wages and the cost of everyday items

to put into perspective how some people, in other countries, struggle to provide necessities for

their families. Building on that, you can transition into clothing which is also an important

topic in the adolescent ages. While students of other cultures in your classroom may dress like

your traditional students, it is likely that they are familiar with some other sort of formal or

traditional dress from their native culture. Allowing students to see and experience these things

helps to bring an awareness to not only cultural difference but also to bring an awareness to the

struggles in second and third world countries. At this adolescent age, social experiences begin

to take the forefront of importance. Students begin to form social groups that shape their ideas

and. It is more important than ever for students to break outside those limited spaces, and have

social experiences away from their normal circle. We can do that by encouraging students to

get involved in the various clubs, organizations and sports teams. As the research has shown,

there are substantial benefits for students when they are involved and accountable to others.

Not all students will become involved though, so we must bring some other types of

experiences to them in the classroom. One way we can do that is to bring guest speakers from

different walks of life and different career backgrounds in to speak with students about how

they came to where they are today and what their careers entail. It is a perfect opportunity for

students to begin to explore various career paths, but it also give students a view of how adults

other than their parents reached for their goals and achieved those or found a path that was

better suited from them.

Another great way for teachers to bring the real world to the classroom is by using the

news and current events. Across all subject areas, you can find ways to implement their use,

from English and types of propaganda to Social Studies and politics. Many students do not

take the time or maybe are not afforded the opportunity to see the news on even a semi-regular

basis. It is important for these young learners to begin to understand the deeper issues of our

society and how they can later be an imperative part of our democracy. This is also a great

time to begin exploring the way society skews the truth to draw an audience. Helping them to

navigate what is real and what is fabricated in the news but also in life will help them to make

informed decisions as they grow older.

Beginning at some point in the middle ages, students make a transition away from their

parents and start to gravitate toward their friend group for support. This means that parental

support can become a bit more complicated, unfortunately. Due to this evolution, it could be

difficult for educators to differentiate between students who are drawing away from their

parents more and students who do not have as much parental support. At any rate, this is a

perfect age for teachers to fill the void and be in attendance at ball games, orchestra recitals and

academic club matches. A teacher's support, when parents are not available to be present, can

help to bridge the gap for students that are otherwise not getting that type of support.

Not only can teachers be the support, but we can also give students activities to do at home to help get parents involved. Signing a paper from time to time is not enough. At this emotionally fragile age, students need their parents more than ever. As educators, we can encourage this interaction by first building relationships with parents. When we build relationships with parents a multitude of things can become easier. Parents are more receptive to communications but are also much more comfortable communicating their concerns about their children and their learning. They are then also more likely to come in to volunteer, go on field trips, join PTO, etc. That is of great value to you as a classroom teacher but far greater value to your students. For those that will come out, math teachers could hold a family math night, turn it into a trivia night that is fun for attendees of all ages. Inadvertently, parents will have the opportunity to learn the new ways we teach math today and get familiar with the processes we expect children to use all the while bonding with their child and encouraging them to get involved in their studies. Ultimately, as educators, it is imperative that we diversify our methods of communications to focus of the strengths of each family. It is important not to make assumptions about a parents' lack of interest as we would most likely be wrong. Our first instinct should be to "walk a mile in their shoes" before drawing judgement. Some of these families are not "traditional" and take all sorts of structures. Some may be single parent, step parent or foster parent, all lending to the need for different forms of support.

Young adolescents are at an age in which they can understand much more than their younger, elementary age peers. Thus, the things they see at home begin to take the form of memories and those experiences begin to shape who they will become as adults. Some of these will be good memories that build character and others will be negative experiences that hinder growth and discourage learning. Referencing back to the hierarchy of student needs, their need for safety and love is paramount. Not only do we need to put in the extra effort to support these students, but we should also find resources to help these families combat their difficulties and grow to be loving and supportive as their children need them to be.

High School

In High School, students begin to become more intrinsically motivated, seeking success that will yield scholarships and college admission. Of course, this motivation is not commonplace for all students, though. How then, do we bridge the gap for these older students that are approaching adulthood and are learning to make life changing decisions for themselves? As students approach college, trade school and the workforce it is more important than ever for them to begin to develop an empathetic approach to those that they interact with on a regular basis. Cultural capital becomes increasingly important in this stage of life, therefore it is imperative that we prepare students for whatever lies ahead for them. As students graduate and become adults, they enter into college or trade schools programs that are far more diverse that

the high schools they typically come from. Developing a sense of cultural awareness not only

helps them to form valuable relationships with their peers, but also provides them with

knowledge that is useful in the understanding of society as they grow and evolve into young

adults. Further, cultural capital throughout high school helps to encourage and promote

retention and college enrollment. Teachers could enlist the help of former students that are

pursing differing paths to come in and discuss their journeys with students of all ages. Since

not all students have the opportunity to interact with peers that have reached the next step in

their journey, the value of their exposure to recent high school graduates that are pursing higher

education or joined the work force is vital.

As students mature and approach graduation, their social interactions are no longer

becoming the forefront of their focus. It is their focus. In many high schools today, places like

the commons area and the cafeteria begin to take a shape that looks identical day in and day

out. Students congregate with the same peer group before school starts, they each lunch with

the same friends, they gather at the end of the day to socialize. What effect does this have on

the diversifying of their socialization, though and how can we facilitate integrating students

from differing walks of life? One great mode of doing this is by giving a group a common goal.

For example, in most high schools prom is reserved for those in 11th and 12th grade, some these

schools delegate the task of planning a formal for 9th and 10th graders to their older peers. By

doing this, educators are able to choose students from all different social groups to serve on

committees together to organize, plan and execute an event for the 9th and 10th graders. While

this might simply seem like a fun social event for the underclassmen, it is in fact a rich learning

experience for the upperclassmen. Students learn to work together with those that are vastly

different from themselves with differing opinions and views. This is similar to many of the

challenges they will face in college and the workforce.

   While developing and expanding these social experiences is important, ensuring that

students have an array of life experiences is equally as important. In all grades, students can

gain valuable life experiences through varying volunteer opportunities. In most communities,

one can find opportunities to volunteer in even the simplest of tasks like helping to pick up

litter on the roadways. Some might say that community service projects like trash pickup

builds character. Regardless of the validity of that expression, community service projects

provide the opportunity for students to see that their social responsibilities in society matter and

that tasks they view as mundane are in fact benefiting the community. On a more influential

level, teachers can arrange for their students to volunteer in soup kitchens, homeless shelters,

food banks and after school programs. Some of the most eye opening conversations you can

have is over a hot plate of food being eaten by an elderly homeless person who worked their

whole lives only to fall ill, lose their job and become homeless. Families are displaced due to

all sorts of reasons and are forced to live, sometimes separately, in homeless shelters for

extended periods of time while insurance claims are filed, affordable housing is attained or

employment is acquired. In cities like Chicago, a large portion of the homeless population is

employed but due to the housing market and the lack of affordable accommodations, families

live in whatever means of shelter then can find. There is not a more real way for students to

see the unfortunate way that life can turn out for people with the best of intentions.

In other situations, they see that the sum of a persons' lack of determination and

motivation lands them in a world far from success.   As we encourage students to pursue their

dreams and discourage them from ending up in the streets, we can use various tools to spur

them on toward higher education. Since many students are not afforded the opportunity to tour

multiple college campuses, so we can bring college campuses to our classrooms. For example,

you visit is an online collection of virtual reality and 360 degree experiences at prestigious

colleges like Harvard, Princeton and Yale, but also has a variety of more practical options for

students like Ohio State University, Austin Peay and University of Kentucky that offer a

multitude of educational and student life opportunities and even some vocational and trade

school options like Georgia Institute of Technology and Ohio Technical College that give

students a look at smaller campuses. This insight can encourage students of varying ability

levels to pursue that law degree from Yale or go to vocational school to learn to weld.

Parental support can be the most problematic in high school aged students. Parents

often think that their students are on track but fail to check in or maybe they are at their wits

end and feel as though they have lost control. Others are at the opposite end of the spectrum

and have come to a place of mutual understanding as students have matured. As students near

the end of their public school careers, a great way to get parents involved is to set up exit

counseling sessions for students at which time parents come in to accompany their students in a

counseling sessions to discuss goals with a school mentor. Including parents in these goals can

help parents to understand their student on a level that maybe they had not known before.

Often, in the company of school personnel, students are more likely to openly discuss their

educational goals. In some situations, parents were unaware their student hoped to achieve

such goals. Not only can this be an eye opening experience for parents, but it provides them an

opportunity to be involved in setting goals and to encourage their children. Of course, this

lends to issues with a lack of parental figures available to participate in activities of this sort.

As with all ages, family structure is no less an issue of concern in the elder grades that it

is those in primary grades. Often, high schoolers are perceived as self-sufficient, so they are

left to prepare dinner for themselves and sometimes even their younger siblings. As they

approach driving age, they begin to become responsible for bringing younger siblings to school

and back home. Ultimately, the scope of responsibilities placed on these students becomes

expansive due to a variety of reasons. Sometimes it may be that students that come from single

parent homes and are forced to pick up the slack for a parent that is working two jobs to earn

enough to pay the rent and utilities. Other times it can be children of parents who are simply

too busy to invest their time in school activities. Some students will drop out and join the work

force or enroll in adult education programs. Most will go on to apply for college or technical

school. Others will commit to join the military. No matter the circumstance, schools can

support students that are without parental involvement by assigning teachers to be mentors for

these students and talk with them about the steps they need to take to prepare for life after

graduation and help them to become mentally prepared for life outside the four walls of their

school. These mentors can also help to support students who lack the necessary funds to apply

for college and pay for college entrance exams. Resources are available for students that need

help paying for these types of tests. Scholarships exist for students of varying GPAs,

demographics, first generation college attendees and a host of other specifications. Financial

aid is available for those who qualify, but students must submit their documentation early in

order to receive those benefits. Mentors are monumental in helping students to navigate all of

these different avenues that are available to them. Teachers must also be advocates for their

students, and help them and their families navigate these options, especially if those families

are new to the process. Even though many students are 18 when they graduate and are of legal

age to be considered an adult, they lack maturity that only comes through experiences. We, as

educators, can only do our best to prepare them for what is ahead.

Proactive Schools

In the classroom, teachers can come alongside students who need extra encouragement and support to find ways to help them succeed. The larger picture begins with schools that are proactive on a much more extensive level, though. Many schools that are filled with low achieving students are implementing programs and curriculum that focus on the issues students are facing. One such program is the Even Start program which is a literacy program for families. As we have seen through the research English language learners are growing in number and even those that are fluent in English can sometimes struggle with the language in many educational documents. Not only is this beneficial for families in their learning, but it provides an opportunity for parents to be active in the students' learning. Further, this provides parents and other care givers with the tools they need to help students with homework and studying.

Another interesting initiative that is working for schools is the "Go to the Office" movement. The idea of this policy is that students are awarded a "Go to the Office" slip when they are caught being exceptional. This could apply to any type exemplary behavior. When the go to the office, they visit with the principal, the principal has a one-on-one opportunity to commend the student for the positive behavior. The principal then writes a quick, personalized note that a student can take home to their parent as proof of their positive efforts. This kind of program can work for students of all ages, but especially those that are in the middle grades and younger. Students at that age are vulnerable and yearn for positive feedback and attention.

Involving school leadership in this is a great way for students to see that a trip to the principal's

office can be a positive experience.

Lending lockers are becoming increasingly more popular for schools to initiate. In the

middle grades and beyond, some parents long for resources to help their struggling students.

Lending lockers today are taking all sorts of forms and one of the ways they are helping parents

is to provide books and other resources that they can use to help navigate these issues that arise

with youth. Most effective lending lockers keep information on where parents and families can

seek out additional support from; counselors, food banks, resource centers, etc that will help

them with every day struggles. Meeting those needs is imperative in order for students to

thrive in the classroom.

A most important topic is student assessment. Society and parents like to see numbers,

for schools to quantify growth in their students. As we learn more about the cognitive

development of students, many schools are implanting programs to use multiple measures to

report improvement and accountability among their students and are not simply relying on state

standardized tests to define their students' growth. The important thing about this initiative is

that not every student in your class can sit down at the end of the year and perform on a

standardized multiple choice type test. They are much better off to show you what they learned

through hard work and accountability to a project or physical demonstration of the skills they

have learned. This can come in the form of a science project, mathematical model built to scale or maybe the performance of a short play they have written.

Another great program that schools can implement is a Big Brother, Big Sister type program to facilitate tutoring, mentoring, and accountability. The convenient and helpful thing about programs like these are that they offer a wide range of support opportunities for students. They can have access to tutoring from adults that are motivated and dedicated to their student's success. Further, they can be emotionally supported through their interactions with their matched adult. While educators should be diligent to connect with these students, it is difficult to have the same level of interaction on a one-on-one basis as can be had when we implement programs like Big Brothers, Big Sisters. The long term benefits of forming a positive and meaningful relationship with an encouraging adult is limitless.

Getting out of the classroom is most likely every student's favorite school activity. Likely, your school district has reduced the number of field trips allowed across all grades. If you are fortunate to live near enough to a major city with an aquarium or zoo, you might find that your school district can work together with the community and the facility to orchestrate low or no cost field trips for your students. Across the country, zoos and aquariums especially are offering schools that agree to bring a certain number of students to their facility each year a very low rate for entrance. Some even offer free entrance to school groups. The conclusion is simply that when budget constraints hinder the ability a district has to get students out of the

classroom, it is up to school staff to find ways to reduce the cost of these trips by finding free

venues to host students, restaurants to donate sack lunches, etc. It is unfortunate that schools

do not have an unlimited supply of money to fund field trips like these or the projects that they

would like to implement. Although difficult to acquire, some organizations do offer grants to

local education agencies and non-profits that work with local education agencies in order to

help with the cost associated with improving student achievement. Organizations like the

Innovation Fund provide grants to eligible agencies and organizations that not only have a

history of improving student achievement but that are implementing innovative practices

throughout their schools to focus on closing achievement gaps and increasing retention and

college enrollment. Many corporations like Kohl's, Target, Voya, Best Buy and Wal-Mart

offer grants for teachers of varying qualifications that can be used for diversifying educational

practices, purchasing state-of-the-art teaching materials and can even be used for field trip

opportunities for students. More specifically, there are grants available for disciplines and

areas like STEM that help to fund specific projects. Since most of these grants require

extensive research and dedication to acquire, many schools are enlisting staff that are readily

educated on the grant writing process and are capable of discovering, applying and ultimately

acquiring grants to help their school. While the work required of staff to make these things

come to fruition can sometimes be extensive, the experiences will become memories that last a

lifetime for students.

Conclusion

If we imagined the students in many of the circumstances discussed throughout this research we would feel apologetic for their situations. We could never begin to imagine the multitude of struggles and trials that students in our classrooms are facing in their lives and families. As difficult as they may be, these students do not need our sympathy. They need adults in their lives that believe in them, care for them and encourage them to achieve all that they set their minds to. They are capable of the same levels of achievement as their traditional peers. Is that not what being an educator is all about? Servicing every student no matter their state when they come through our classroom door? Educators are in the position to bring about changes that spur success and confidence that opens doors to life changing opportunities for students of all ages. The most vital thing for teacher's to accomplish is to build relationships with their students and their parents. From there we can assess each student and their situation and form a strategy to meet students' needs no matter where the teacher before left off. There is no right or wrong way to address these issues. In a perfect world, every student is fortunate enough to have at least one teacher in their life that looks out for them and encourages them to be the best version of themselves that they can be.

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