

Addressing Inequality and Poverty in Learning and Living Environment

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### **Abstract**

Poverty and inequality are affecting children's learning and development. Due to lack of funds in districts or community some of these schools are not healthy to attend. Some schools are decaying, and some are overpopulated with children. Even their homes are not healthy to live in. Children need their education just like children in well-funded communities and school. They should get equal and appropriate learning materials as well. Children start to lack confidence and motivation. We as educator and Directors should create a school environment where all type of children is welcomed to attend. Parents/families who are within low-income neighborhoods to come together with the educators to create a pamphlet with resources to help and support these children who come from poverty. We must speak on how children's health and education are getting effected all the time. We can work together to create a better system to help children get the right education they deserve.

### Introduction

Inequality and poverty are important issue in early childhood because economic class deeply affects young children's lives (Derman-Sparks and Olsen Edwards, 2020). According to *Addressing Inequality with Anti-Bias Education: Learning about Class and Fairness*, "Although a family's economic resources do not determine how much they love their child or how skilled they are at parenting, a lack of those resources can make the fundamental necessities for their children's healthy growth and development (e.g., safe housing, nutritious food, regular health care) very difficult or impossible to get" (Derman-Sparks and Olsen Edwards, 2020). This means that due to poverty children are not able get fed the nutrients they need or have a safe living environment that compromises children's health. This will lead to children's learning development to be affected as well. Poverty and inequality affect the school environment as well. According to *The Shame of The Nation*, there was a stream of water flowing down one of the main stairwells due to a rainy afternoon (Kozol 2005). There were overpopulated classrooms with no windows. "This was a period in which financial markets soared and a new generation of free-spending millionaires and billionaires was widely celebrated by the press and on TV; but none of the proceeds of this period of economic growth had found their way into the schools that served the truly poor (Kozol 2005). These people who have money spend money freely with no problem while no money is being funded for more important issues like Schools, and communities and children's education.

### **Statement of The Problem**

Children from low-income community/home living such as African American and Latino and the wealthier white children have a different learning and living experiences. Due to living in poverty and not getting the proper learning tools, and children health issue can affect their cognitive development and their development in general. Schools in these low-income communities also are affecting these children's learning development. The schools do not have the funds to get proper learning materials or equal learning material as the other schools in wealthier districts. Children and their families and the communities are getting affected by inequality and poverty. The children health is getting affected by living in these house that are not sanitary for children or their parents to live in. Due to their health, they are absent from school and missing out on learning. The schools not getting enough funds, they lack learning materials. The children might lose interest in learning. The children who are coming from poverty and have parents that lack education themselves have problems with speech, learning, and emotional development as well as other developmental domains.

The families are affected by living in poverty. These parents/families cannot afford to send their children to these greater schools. These families have more than one job at a time, and still must put their children in schools in districts with fewer learning recourses. Due to these parents living in poverty lack educations and that lack of school can affect their children's learning development. Parents have a difficult time having an opened schedule for school activities with their children, from the parents having to work. The community is affected by the schools closing due to bad conditions within the school. The schools did not have funds to get new learning materials. These poverty districts have these schools that do not even qualify to other districts schools and affects the community because parents having no other choice but to

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send their child to attend these low funded schools. The school is convenient for these families within these communities, that cannot afford to send their child to a better school. These children are the future and without giving them the same equal learning experiences as these wealthier and better community schools. These children should be able to come in to a welcoming and safe environment that they are not getting at home. We need to address inequality and poverty because these children are the future. These African American and Latino children who come from poverty deserve to have the same great learning experience as these white children who come from middle to wealthier families. Their education should not be affected because their families are struggling to make ends meet. They should be able to go to a safe school that has a healthy environment. These children and families are getting affected by poverty. The greatest problem is that children are not getting the proper equal education as these other children because of poverty.

Action should be taken now or soon to stop continuation of poverty and it affecting children having education inequality. There are actions we can take to support these children and their families. We as educators and directors should make the schools children are attending, to be a safe zone for the children that deal with poverty at home. A community of people can come together and make the situation known, such as different organization and schools. Create a school environment that will teach these children different job other than city jobs. Have a welcoming surrounding for the children to feel safe and healthy. We need teacher to support these children. Having the support from teachers and the school to help have a positive influence on children who are living in poverty. The teachers are there to help them gain skills within a child learning development. The schools give children an environment that makes them want to continue learning. The mayor can help have an influence on poverty. They

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can have an influence on the community and help create a better living area for the families and children. They can also help find funds for a better school environment within a poverty district.

### Article 1

In this article, *Addressing Inequality with Anti-Bias Education: Learning about Class and Fairness*, Louise Derman-Sparks and Julie Olsen Edwards both contributed information on fairness and equality in a classroom. Children who experience inequality opportunity, life experiences and privileges can affect young children. Though families are having difficulty providing for their children, so they lack resources to establish a healthy nutrition, health care and not having a safe home. They mention that people living in poverty work extra hard and remain having struggled to make ends meet. Poverty can also affect children's ability to learn. Poverty cause children to have poor mental and physical health. They might be living in shelters and in cars. These families probably live-in neighborhoods with violence and with few libraries. Due to living in poverty these children might grasp negative judgement on their own values and belief and the neighborhood they live in. They mention how biases toward people of poverty usually are negative verse the people with wealth are usually positive.

They go on to talking about how classrooms should value and show importance of different kind of jobs. As well as strategies and activities for teachers on creating a welcoming equality learning environment. These strategies and activities are for all children no matter what economic background. Children tend to learn about which and whose jobs matters from both home and school environments. These jobs tend to contain of middle to upper income careers,

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like doctor and firefighters and police officer, but they never focus on people who work as restaurant staff, farm worker, office staff. Teacher working with children that have a sense of entitlement. Some strategies for teachers are to create a class quilt, for each child to contribute to the quilt. Another strategy is to give a pair or group of children the same task, for example setting the table for snack or cleaning up a learning center. They mention that teachers should create a beautiful environment for all children. Decorate the classroom with paint, living plants and clean, bright cushions for the classroom.

### Article 2

This reading *The Shame of the Nation*, Jonathan Kozol speaks on poverty and inequality amongst different schools and districts. He went to eleven different states and visited 60 schools on 30 districts. He mentioned of letters he received from children in different schools complaining of issues in their school. One student said her school was not offering music or art, and they did not have a garden. Another student goes on and say they use the gym for line up. Kozol goes and visits school and there were some unhealthy conditions he noticed. In one school he notices water streaming down the main stairwells on a rainy day. There was fungus mold growing in an office where the student went for counseling. In another school that holds 1,000 children, held 1,500 students. The school was overpopulated. Another school could not get the windows clean due to the window being loose from the frame. He mentioned around 1970, when white children attended school 400 doctors were present to help these children with their health. By the time 1993 came along the number of doctors were cut to 23. Most of these doctors are part time. Children in the poorest neighborhood were affected by cutbacks. They were faced more health problems and had doctor not really in school due to the cutbacks.

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In 1997, the salary of a teacher for a teacher in the city was 43,000 dollars compared to 74,000 dollars in the suburban Rye. In Manhasset, the salary was 77,000 dollars. Only 11 miles from the city, the town of Scarsdale's teacher's salary was 81,000 dollars. The salaries are even different for the teachers that work within these poverty communities compared to the salaries within the wealthier communities. He goes on to mention that due to accident of birth and the choices the government make over budgeting starts with children in their infant and toddler years and because the children come from low-income neighborhoods do not receive the opportunity for preschool education. While white children of privileged get the better developmental early education. Families of wealthy district do not send their children to public school, but private school instead. Prep schools in the city cost more than \$20,000. They are paying to get their child a better education. The children in low-income communities have no choice in which school they get sent to compared to children in a wealthier community are being sent to school their parents are paying for.

### **Small Advocacy Action**

One action I can take is creating a school environment where all types of children are welcome. The school environment will have different cultural values and create a curriculum around fairness and equality. I can create a pamphlet for parents within the community to get together once a month to speak on how we can work together to create a better school environment for these children who come from poverty. The pamphlet would have information on the school and the activities the children will get to do together. I want to be able to give parent the support they need to help with their children's development. In the pamphlet there would be organization families can go to for more support on their living environment as well as



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what they can do to better their communities as well. I want the family to be comfortable enough to come and ask us about the organizations that can possibly help them. I also want to be able to do a food drive for families that might need food. I want to give children and their families the support they need.

### **Large Advocacy Action**

The families along with educators of all ages can come together to speak to the community about inequality and poverty. The families and educator can go to a council and speak on these issues at hand. The educators should speak on what they can do differently within the classroom to make sure children do not feel left out or the families to feel like their children are getting the proper education. The children will have an interest in learning. They also will gain confidence due to having a welcoming environment. The families need a safe environment to speak on their home living situation and what better way than going to a council meeting with other people who are going through the same issues. They are trying to be heard by people who can make a difference. The families should not feel like they are on their own. The families/parents should be able to feel welcomed and important in their community. The community can come together and create donations for the families in need. The community can go to different districts and get donations from other people to help.

### **Commentary**

Inequality and poverty have a connection, and both affects children's development. It also affects their health as well. These children are the future, and the school systems are failing

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to give these children coming from poverty the education they deserve and need. How can we expect children to even pass these exams or even go onto the next grade when they cannot get an education because they get sick from having to live in a shelter or home that is not healthy to live in. These children are losing interest in school because they have insecurities and compare themselves to their peers on the type of clothes and shoes they are wearing. I do agree that schools should teach children about the different types of job choices and not just professional ones. The idea of having any school that has decay and is falling apart is upsetting, to think parents cannot afford to send them to a school with a healthier and safe setting.

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