



Engaging Students With Poverty in Mind

Eric Jensen work

Goals for the Day

- Review the work of the researchers including the hidden rules
- Consider ways to react to student behavior that will help them learn middle class hidden rules
- Start thinking about our students in new ways

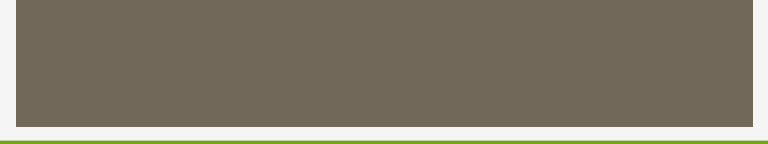
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Engagement Factors

- Engagement is a vital piece in a student's educational life
- They are not failing us, we are failing them.
- According to all the research the thing that can change this downward cycle is:





“Teaching matters more than any other factor in a student’s school years. In fact, research (Hanushek, 2005) tells us that quality teaching can completely offset the devastating effects poverty has on students’ academic performance.”

7 Engagement Factors

- Before we tackle the solutions, we have to know why so many teachers have problems working with these students.
- What is it that makes these students different or our reaction to them different?

- Keep in mind...
 - All of these things can be OVERCOME!!!

1. Health and Nutrition

- Nutrition
 - Quality
 - Quantity
 - Breakfast
- Health
 - Born premature
 - Higher incidence of asthma, obesity, hearing loss
 - Live in older home
 - Plumbing
 - Paint

2. Vocabulary

- By age 3, children of professionals have twice the vocabulary of those living in poverty
- Toddlers use more words talking to their upper/middle class parents, than low-ses moms use with their own children
- Vocabulary **MUST** be a part of what you do for kids at school, especially with academic vocabulary

3. Effort and Energy

- No one inherits the “lazy” gene
- Students in poverty are practical
- When teachers don't/won't connect with them personally they don't trust them
- The teacher has the power

4. Mind-set

- “smarts” are not set at a fixed amount from birth
- When the teacher and student have a positive attitude about learning capacity, growth occurs
- “mental strength” or GRIT

5. Cognitive Capacity

- IQ is not fixed
- Performance is lower because of environmental factors and issues early on
- These brains are ripe for engaging!

6. Relationships

- There is a need for positive adult relationships
- The rates of positives to negative is 1 to 2 in poor homes. It is 6 to 1 in higher income homes.
- Absent parents
- Stressed caregivers

- Instead of punishing bad behavior you will have to teach appropriate behavior.

7. Stress Level

- Bills, family violence, overcrowding, harsher discipline
- Acute-severe
 - Leads to aggression
- Chronic-over a long period of time
 - Detachment and hopeless

Extended Stress damages students

- Emotionally damaged students cannot effectively deal with criticism and channel it to improvement
- When many children from low SES run into difficult challenges they engage in negative self-talk and may perceive their failures as challenges they cannot overcome

- Children raised in poverty rarely “choose” to behave differently
 - Stress conditions - their brains have adapted to suboptimal conditions that undermine good school performance
- Infants’ brains are hardwired for only 6 emotions. Name them.

6 Hardwired Emotions

- Joy
- Anger
- Surprise
- Disgust
- Sadness
- Fear



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Other emotions we expect:

- Empathy
- Forgiveness
- Gratitude

The Rules for Engagement

- “...good teachers matter more than curriculum, the administration, or what students eat for breakfast (Hattie, 2008).”
- The following rules will power your strategies!

Rule 1: Upgrade your attitude

- It is attitude AND strategy
- Use affirmations
- Small engagers
- Failure happens

Rule 2: Build relationships and respect

- Students don't care how much you know until they know you care!
- Share a bit of yourself everyday
- Show them respect
- Upgrade your interactive language

Rule 3: Get buy-in

- Use the 'bigger kid' challenge
- Offer an incentive
- Start a competition
- Pique curiosity
- Lower the stakes
- Use their imagination

Rule 4: Embrace Clarity

- Plan with a purpose
- use fewer words
- Say what you want, not what you don't want
- Give clear, simple directions

Rule 5: Show your passion!

- Be excited
- Change your voice
- Stay active
- Keep your eyes on them
- Be positive

Tammy's Story



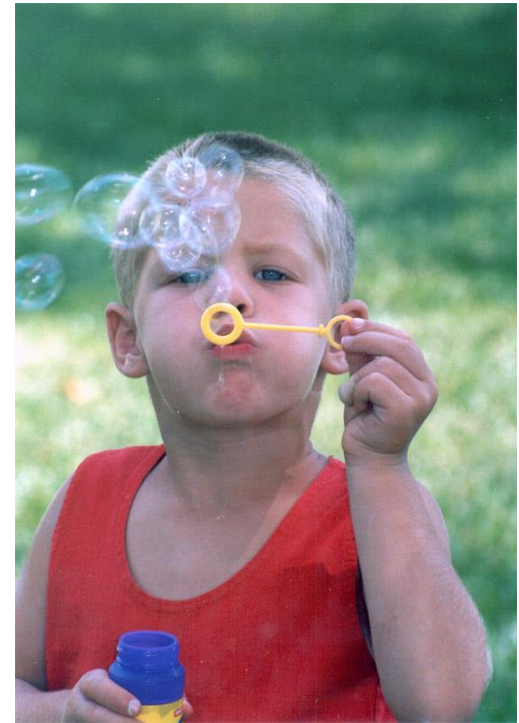
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Keep this in mind

- One in five low-income families is headed by a parent who works full-time all year
- Material possessions including electronics and clothes are not good indicators of a families SES
- As middle class Americans, it is almost impossible to really know what it is like to live in poverty.

Poverty is not just about \$

- It's about resources!!
- Some of our students in poverty will come in under the radar. (No crayons only iPods.)
- We need to be cautious about assumptions.



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Numbered Heads Together

- List the 8 resources that we need to consider as we teach our students



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Resources Listed by Dr. Payne

1. \$ - to purchase goods & services
2. Emotional – ability to control responses (stamina, perseverance, & choices)
3. Mental – ability to read, write & compute
4. Spiritual gives hope
5. Physical – health & mobility
6. Support system – friends, family
7. Relationships/Role Models – frequent access to appropriate adult
8. Knowledge of Hidden Rules - unspoken cues and habits of a group

Which resource makes the biggest difference in lifelong learners?

Which resource makes the biggest difference in school success?

Are there any “hidden rules” here? We’ll look at this more closely in just a few minutes

Resources

- How does a lack of resources impact a student?
 - Field trips
 - Participation in extra-curricular activities
 - Homework
 - Enrichment opportunities
 - Expectations
 - Future vision

Hidden Rules

- Are not communicated
- Are associated with intelligence, but are not linked
- **We each believe our hidden rules are best**
- **We all assume everyone knows the rules but think about sports...**

Hidden Rules

- How many students that have brand new Nikes can't pay for books?
- How many students on F/R lunch but have money every day for candy?
- How many students have no school supplies but have the latest CD or piece of technology?
- There are RULES about how we spend our money!

Hidden Rules

	POVERTY	MIDDLE	WEALTH
Possessions	People	Things	One-of-a-kind object
Food	Quantity	Quality	Presentation
Time	Present	Future	Past traditions

Hidden Rules

	POVERTY	MIDDLE	WEALTH
Money	To be used	To be managed	To be conserved/ invested
Personality	Entertainment	For stability; achievement is highly valued	Connection: political, financial, etc.
Clothing	Valued for individual style	Quality and acceptance into norms	Valued for artistic design—designer is important.

Hidden Rules

	POVERTY	MIDDLE	WEALTH
Education	Valued in abstract—not in reality	Crucial for success ladder and making money	Necessary tradition for making and maintaining connections
Destiny	Fate	Choice	Innate rights and privileges
Language	Casual Register	Formal Register~ about negotiation Helping teachers improve student learning	Formal register: language about networking

What does it really mean to be “smart”?

- Who is smarter?

Question

- Does the inappropriate use of language impact the way we view a person?
- What assumptions do we make based on a person's language? Do we assume that students know more than they really do?

Hidden Rules

	POVERTY	MIDDLE	WEALTH
Family Structure	Tends to be matriarchal	Tends to be patriarchal	Depends on who has the money
World View	Local setting	National setting	International view
Love/ Acceptance	Conditional; based on whether a person is liked	Conditional; based largely on achievement	Conditional; related to social standing and connections

Hidden Rules

	POVERTY	MIDDLE	WEALTH
Driving Force:	Survival, relationships, entertainment	Work, achievement	Financial, political, and social connections
Discipline	Say “sorry” and ask forgiveness	Change!!	Sense of entitlement

Keep in mind...

- What may seem to be workable suggestions from a middle-class point of view may be virtually impossible given the resources available to someone who is in poverty.
- Schools operate from middle class values and norms

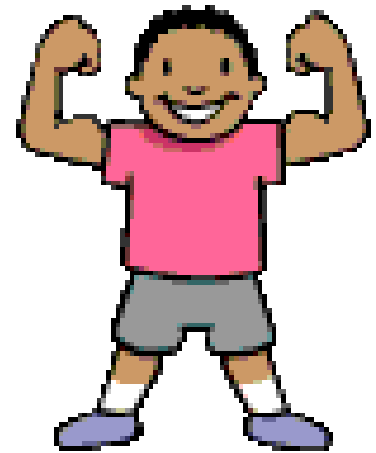


Help

Question to Consider

- When we (schools) propose or set expectations for our students, do we consider **all** of their resources?
- When we complain of lack of parental support, do we consider **all** of their resources?
- If a parent does not have a support system, he/she cannot be one for their child.
- When we set expectations for students they cannot fulfill, what does that do to our relationships with them?

- Children from poverty come to school believing that “might makes right”
- This works until the students get big enough to realize a teacher cannot physically make them work



The Brain's Operating System

- These are the must haves for school success:
 - Ability to defer gratification
 - Auditory, visual, and tactile processing skills
 - Ability to engage, focus, and disengage
 - Short-term and working memory
 - Sequencing skills
 - A champion's mind set

Jensen's Research shows...

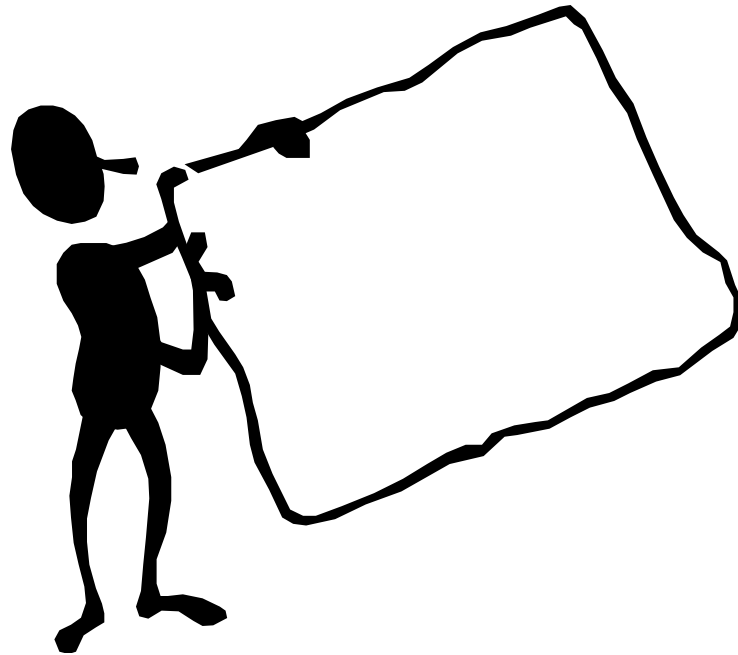
- Low SES children's behavior is an adaptive response to a chronic condition of poverty, but a brain that is susceptible to adverse environmental effects is equally susceptible to positive, enriching effects.

The Brain is malleable

- Physical activity can increase the production of new brain cells
- Playing chess can improve reading
- The arts can improve attention, sequencing, processing, and cognitive skills
- MUSIC—improves academic operating systems and helps students learn persistence
- Talk in your groups...how can you do some of these things?

9 Powerful Practices

- Article and Poster Activity



But what about those kids who don't try!

- The giving up process is known as learned helplessness—it is NOT genetic
- It is an adaptive response to life conditions
- It can take hold as early as first grade
- Kids from poverty are often fatalistic about their lives—so they don't try.
- Behavior that comes across as rude or apathetic may indicate feelings of hopelessness or despair

In Poverty...

- Decisions are driven by:
 - Relationships (Think—effective praise)
 - Entertainment
 - Survival
- How does this impact student achievement and behavior?

Use these: You need to So that ...

- Will be in control
- Will be smarter
- Will win more often
- Won't be cheated
- Will be safe when you are old
- Haberman says: Teach that learning is FUN!!!
- AND
- "Life is like a card game - you get bad hands."
- "The mind is a tool or weapon that no one can take away"

Thoughts...

- If an individual depends upon a random, episodic story structure for memory patterns, lives in an unpredictable environment, and has not developed the ability to plan, then ...
 - If an individual cannot plan, he/she cannot predict
 - If an individual cannot predict, he/she cannot identify cause and effect
 - If an individual cannot identify cause and effect, he/she cannot identify consequences
 - If an individual cannot identify consequences, he/she cannot control impulsivity
 - If an individual cannot control impulsivity, he/she has an inclination to criminal behavior

- “No significant learning occurs without a significant relationship.”
 - Dr. James Comer

Tammy's Story

- [Let's check in on Tammy](#)



Could you survive?



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