Running head: Inequalities

Disparities in Urban Schools

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between students, families and educational staff in a poverty level urban neighborhood. A central concern of this study is to look beyond the structure of our educational system, digging deeper into the inequalities and where they stem from. What factors make some low-income, urban, children more at risk of such disparities, than others? What needs to be done to support the social/academic development of children and what can be done to prevent this in the future?

In every state, inequity between wealthy and poor school districts continues to exist and cause a worrisome gap. Education is often paid for with the amount of money available in each district. Alternatively, this doesn't equal the amount of money required to adequately teach students in urban areas. According to the U.S. Department of Education, high-poverty districts spend 15.6 percent less per student, than low-poverty districts do. Lower spending can irreparably damage a child's future, especially for kids from poor families. Inner city neighborhoods and schools are faced with racial segregation, low-wage work and high levels of poverty. Most families in these poverty stricken areas are often wondering if there will be food to put on the table for dinner or enough money to pay the bills at the end of the month. The development of cognitive skills is essential for all children in school and beyond. The undeniable relationship between economic inequalities and education inequalities, represents a societal issue. "In the education arena, children's socioeconomic status (SES), of which income is a key component, is considered one of the most significant predictors—if not the most significant predictor—of educational success. A number of studies show the strong relationship between social class (of which socioeconomic status is a frequent measure) and test scores, educational attainment, and college attendance and completion" (Kolodny, K. A., 2001).

Achievement gaps in relation to social class have grown substantially since the 1960s, especially between children at the highest end of the income factor, in comparison to the others. Among high socioeconomic status (SES) parents, researchers have identified a large increase in parental investment within their child's education, as one main driver in the divergence of educational outcomes. Among other contributing factors include: the amount of time parents spend with their children (in relation to job/day to day responsibilities), time parents devote to

extra-curricular activities, income level and neighborhood. Are families in improvised, low

poverty areas, set up for failure?

Review of Literature

Research demonstrates that inequalities in both opportunity and outcomes along the lines of

race/social class begin early and often persist throughout students' K–12 years and beyond.

Circumstances that accompany racial segregation, low-wage work, joblessness, and poverty are

visibly noticeable in inner city, urban neighborhoods. Academically, around 74% of students

from urban schools graduate on time, in comparison to suburban schools, where 84% of students

graduate on time. Single mothers often are raising families. "Illicit activities, such as, drug

trafficking and violence are present" (Kolodny, K. A., 2001). Schools in these inner cities are

often in a deteriorated state. Poor and minority children are likely to be tracked in low-level

ability groups. Such circumstances clearly place inner city families and children at distinct

economic, social, and educational disadvantages. Low socioeconomic status (SES) greatly

affects a child's ability to a well-rounded, valuable education. Socioeconomic status influences

such things as: access to knowledge, material resources, self-esteem, and overall success in

school. These aggregate figures hide the extent of the problem. In many areas and for many

populations, fewer than one-half the students complete their education. According to the U.S.

Department of Education, "Dropout rates are much higher in urban areas and even higher among

low income, low-achieving youths and youths in ethnic minority groups" (U.S. Department of

Education, Office of Research and Improvement, 1997, 1999). Furthermore, students at greatest

risk of racial/ethnic and SES status receive the most impoverished education. "Many inner-city

schools are underfunded, overcrowded, and in need of new books, materials, and curriculum"

(Kolodny, K. A., 2001). Some researchers have also suggested that instruction in low-income urban schools often is based on low-level, unchallenging material.

Restructure and Collaboration among Families, Schools and Communities

Family–school collaborative alliances can help overcome institutionalized inequities and disparities by promoting children's success. Miller, G.E., Colebrook, J., & Ellis, B.R. (2014) found that, collaborative relationships are critically important for families from underserved or minority populations who may be economically disadvantaged. Furthermore, "These families may be unfamiliar with cultural educational practices or lack the means to communicate with teachers/other educators. Successful collaborative partnerships that protect and honor the best interests of the child must (a) encourage relationships built on mutual trust, respect, and appreciation of each other's roles and expectations; (b) promote welcoming environments that foster perceptions of safety, friendliness, and personal relevance; (c) foster two-way communication and exchanges of ideas; and (d) ensure that partners feel knowledgeable and confident about their role in promoting a child's well-being and school success" (Lohmann, Hathcote, & Boothe, 2018).

Advocating for these collaborations indicates that utilizing such partnerships allows children from inner city areas to have a higher potential, by further strengthening their academic/social development skills. For example, if inner-city parents and families work with educators, they are able to learn more about their students, including gathering data on their economic circumstances, cultural traditions and overall life experiences. "This exchange of information is particularly important in urban schools where the economic and cultural differences of poor and minority students historically have been ignored and devalued, and a

common culture of schooling imposed. Through urban parents, families and school staff working together, the home and school worlds of inner-city children potentially can be bridged" (Kachel, D.E., 2019).

Methods for Advocating for Children/Families

School-based community centers offer a new approach to promote child development within the school atmosphere. These centers typically focus on a range of school and community members who work together to address factors, such as: the child's overall well-being, safety, self-determinism, academics and social/emotional health. Positive interactions and relationships among students, their families, educators and community agency members offer a broad array of educational, health, and mental supports within the school context. Indeed, in rural settings, the centralization of critical community resources and services can make a school a "one shop stop" leading to more positive child and family outcomes. Nevertheless, the collaboration that occurs at these centers can assist families/parents in promoting their child's development. School-based community centers offer many benefits, including: overcoming any shame that may be attached to obtaining similar services in the community, increasing access to services in populations who would not otherwise have access and enhancing intervention consistency.

A second practice that helps to overcome the barriers to effective partnerships is intentional and positive communication. Families, caregivers and educational staff members must be on the same page in order to adequately benefit the child's overall well-being and path towards success. Examples of this include smiling while talking to parents and asking about the needs of the family in addition to the child's needs. I think schools need to outline the communication expectations, this allows schools, parents and families to be on the same page. The final category to relation to effective collaboration between schools and families, is

logistical issues that prevent parents to get to the school or attend important meetings/events. The first barrier is parental work schedules. When parents' work schedules interfere with their abilities to be present in their children's school, teachers often assume that the parents do not care about their children; however, this sentiment is not true. Secondly, families may not have adequate transportation to get to the school. These logistical barriers serve to alienate families from the school, thus preventing involvement and collaboration. Streaming these meetings live would allow parents a chance to watch such meetings at their own convenience or through the use of their cell phone.

Conclusion

Family–school collaboration leads to strong partnerships, an improvement in the child's academic journey and ensures greater educational equity. Successful collaborative partnerships across homes, schools, and communities can be developed through a multitiered approach. Children need abundant opportunities to learn and access to "whole child" supports. Support and services are explained through the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) model. This WSCC model is centered on the child, the student, and emphasizes a school-wide approach (which is adaptable). Acknowledging that learning, health and the school are critical in supporting academic achievement and overall student health. The WSCC model provides a useful framework that school districts can implement to systematically identify and address barriers and supports. School districts can use the WSCC model to guide coordination and collaboration between component areas, facilitating awareness of issues across administrators, families and community partners in different areas. Working collaboratively, a team can take a district or school priority and work through the WSCC components, identifying what evidence-

based strategies and practices are already in place. Additionally, recognizing what might be

implemented in each of the component areas in terms of support.

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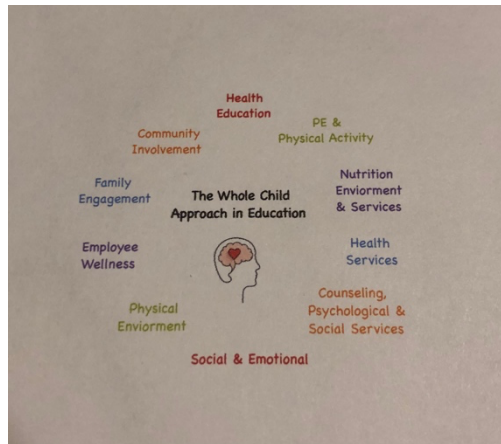
Talking Points

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Disparities in Urban Schools

• In every state, inequity between wealthy and poor school districts continues to exist. Inner city neighborhoods and schools are faced with racial segregation and high levels of poverty.

• Students at greatest risk of racial/ethnic and SES status receive the most impoverished education. Many inner-city schools are underfunded, overcrowded, and in need of new books, materials, and curriculum.

• Family–school collaboration can help overcome institutionalized inequities and disparities by promoting children's success. Successful collaborative partnerships across homes, schools, and communities can be developed through a multitiered approach.

• Support and services are explained through the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) model. This WSCC model is centered on the child, their family, and emphasizes a school-wide approach.
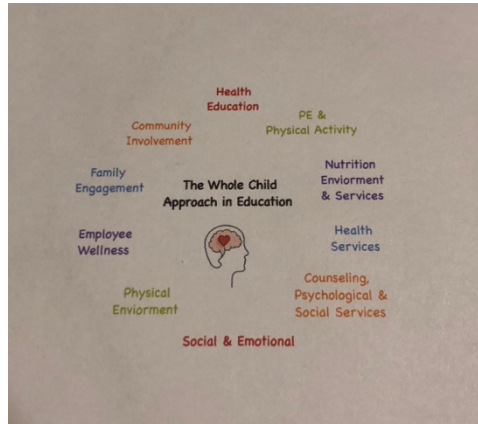
Key Facts

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Disparities in Urban Schools

• According to the U.S. Department of Education, high-poverty districts spend 15.6 percent less per student, than low-poverty districts do.

• Children's socioeconomic status (SES) is considered one of the most significant predictors of a child's academic success. A number of studies show the strong relationship between social class and test scores and overall education success.

• Achievement gaps in relation to social class have grown substantially since the 1960s, especially between children at the highest end of the income factor, in comparison to the others.

• Academically, around 74% of students from urban schools graduate on time, in comparison to suburban schools, where 84% of students graduate on time.

• Collaboration among students, their families, educators and community agency members, offer a broad array of educational, health, and mental supports within the school context.

• ASCD and the CDC developed The Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) model— in collaboration with key leaders from the fields of health, public health, education, and school health—to strengthen a unified and collaborative approach to learning.

• Integration and collaboration between education and health focuses on each child's cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development.

• Policy, practice, and resources must be aligned to support not only academic learning for each child, but also the experiences that encourage children's development.
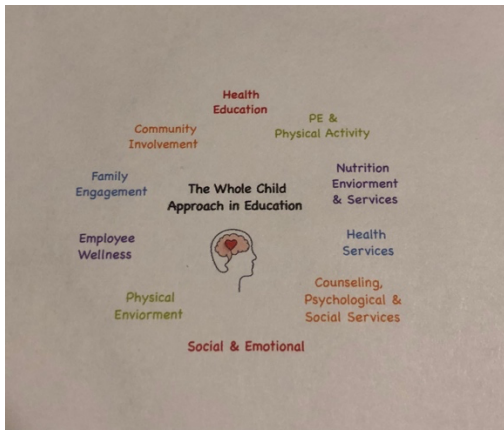
Action Alert

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11/13/2020

The inequities in our schools were created by design. Broken systems are functioning exactly as they were intended.

Teachers, parents, kids, and other community members have advocated for equality and helped make incredible progress toward ensuring EVERY child receives the same high-quality education. Over time, our schools have evolved to be more equitable, but we still have a far way to go. It happened *because people like you and me have fought to make them better.*

And this work isn't done. As the world becomes even more divided, sticking up for these inequities and lack of resources faced by inner city students, is needed now more than ever. WE can influence a positive change!

Take Action:

Contact your superintendent & school board. Email or write a letter on using The Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) approach. Inform them of the benefits and suggest implementing the framework. Here is a link to support: https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/wscc/index.htm.

Ensure that Congress members follow bipartisan Congressional intent and fully fund the grant in Title IV, Part A of the *Every Student Succeeds Act* that supports health and physical education in schools at the authorized level of $1.6 billion. Here is a link to directly contact them: https://www.shapeamerica.org/advocacy/advocacy_action_center.aspx#/7

To advocate for similar bills, please contact legislators using the following link: https://www.shapeamerica.org/advocacy/advocacy_action_center.aspx#/legislators

Stay informed! Additional partner advocacy resources:

https://www.shapeamerica.org/advocacy/partner-resources-page.aspx

https://www.naacp.org/campaigns/naacp-plan-action-charter-schools/

https://www.naacp.org/

https://www.marc.org/Community/Early-Learning/Public-Policy/Missouri