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Poverty Paper

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Appreciate your honesty -
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I have to say I was quite skeptical when I first started thinking about what to write for a paper on poverty. In my mind, much of the poverty was contained to inner cities. While I was sure there was poverty in Idaho, I figured mistakenly that social services by far covered the needs. What little might have been left over was surely picked up by local churches. After last night's presentation and today's experiences in the schools, I found my original assumptions to be completely untrue. I have to say that last night's presentation by Peggy Miller, the Nampa liaison to the homeless within the district, was quite shocking. I had always assumed that maybe in small towns such as Wilder or Melba; there might be that high of a level of need. In the bigger cities though, I figured everyone was doing about equally well. Not everyone was wealthy enough for new school clothes or the latest electronics, but surely they had enough to eat. Peggy's presentation proved me completely wrong.

When she was telling the stories of the underprivileged I couldn't help but be completely stunned. Her story of the mother who walked from Caldwell to Midland Blvd. and then to Meridian just to get her children to school was both heart wrenching and meaningful. It challenged many of my previously held beliefs. Another story she told was equally saddening. I couldn't believe it when she told about her son's friend whose mother left him at a grocery store after not being able to take care of him.

This story made me reconsider again, what choices do parents have when they are no longer able to ~~heart-breaking~~ care for their children? I had always thought that people would simply go to shelters and get help if they

needed. The idea that many might not understand enough to get help was quite new to me. It makes sense that in all of the paperwork that is necessary, many who have never experienced poverty before

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most shelters don't allow families, so some parents
choose not to separate

would be quite confused. In this case then, it becomes apparent why the navigator is so important and needed within this setup.

Another thing that surprised me greatly was the increasing numbers. I thought it was high when she talked about 500 children's needs for Christmas last year. When she mentioned though that it had risen to almost 800 this year I was saddened and surprised. The idea of so many people without the basic necessities for Christmas is just devastating. When she told the story of finding a family whose only Christmas gift had been a corndog from their neighbor, I was somewhat horrified. What kind of a world do we live in if children cannot even have food for Christmas? In many ways, I feel like that is where Peggy comes in. She meets needs that frequently fall through the cracks in Nampa. In many ways, I wished that there was someone like her in every district. I couldn't help but wonder who is caring for those in Caldwell? Or Boise? I am thankful though that she has been so instrumental in many ways, none the least of which is the Feed the Children backpacks.

good ques. —

All of this was circulating in my mind today when I went to observe at my elementary school. The school is typically considered a high poverty, high ELL percentage school. However, they have made enormous steps to work towards a positive school image. In many ways then, it is easy to forget that these children are from poverty as well. Today though was partially a wakeup call. I had never actually asked the teacher about many of the student's backgrounds. Instead she would share little by little in private moments. Today, she told me about one of the girls in our class. She had asked the student for a signed permission slip from her mother. When the girl told her she could not get it, the teacher inquired why. In a nonchalant way, the student replied that she could not get her mother's signature because her mother was in jail until the next morning. While it turns out that it was for a relatively minor problem, it opened my eyes once again to what we may not know that could be occurring in our classroom. The way the student broached the subject made it seem too as if this was not a shocking occurrence. It saddens

me that in the world in which we live students end up calloused to parents leaving for jail. This kind of constant disruption could not possibly be helpful for the student's well being. This is another reason that I think that Ruby K. Payne is correct when she states "Keeping students with the same teacher(s) for two or more years or having a school within a school are other options. Both of these concepts are designed to build longer-term relationships between teachers and students. Also, much less time is wasted at the beginning of the year establishing relationships with the students and their parents" (Payne 72). If the teacher had been able to have this student the previous year, she may have been able to predict what kind of issues might occur and prepare for them. By only learning about it this late in the school year though, it very much limits the amount that the teacher can do.

I actually "looped" w/ several of my classes - Amazing experience

"looping"

Review
ABA
Payne (date)
p.

Another experience I had recently with poverty was in the form of the student that I have selected for my ethnographic project. I had inquired of the teacher who might be best and she had immediately pinpointed a certain student. I was surprised because of all the students in the class he seemed to be by far one of the more privileged of her students. I soon found out though that was not actually the case. In reality, he was from a very poor home. In fact, the previous year he was removed from the home. The teacher did not know exactly why but hypothesized that it was likely due to the shoplifting that had been occurring in the family. She said that the children in the family had been found shoplifting from grocery stores, likely in order to have food. She said that he also comes from a family that speaks only Spanish at home, which hinders his ability to speak English, thereby classifying him as ELL. This saddened me greatly because the student seems exceptionally talented. He is polite and quite helpful within the classroom. In fact, in any other setting, I would have considered him likely one of the students that was most likely to succeed. It is saddening then that he does not have the support continually to do well in school. As I watched in schools, many of the scenarios from the Framework of Understanding Poverty were all too realistic.

Great case study
student

Throughout everything I have been learning about recently in class and through observing, I have found that poverty is everywhere. When the teacher recognizes this, ^{she's} ~~they~~ are faced with a choice. "At this point the individual must make a critical choice: remain, and learn how to function effectively within the new setting; or allow the frustrations to build, and eventually retreat from the unpleasant situation" (Cushner 114). At this point teachers must choose to face poverty head-on because it is present in the small schools and the large schools, the big cities and the small rural cities. It is also present in far more faces, many who have never experienced the situation of being homeless or poor. In many ways, the face of poverty is changing. No longer could it be categorized into a certain race or ethnicity. Instead it has spread, threatening the children we work with everyday. In fact, I feel like school teachers today must keep it in mind. In many ways, it defines a lot of the opportunities and chances that students may have ^{pro-active view}. It also challenges the teacher in the classroom because students' needs are frequently being met by teachers, volunteers, and giving employees like Peggy Miller. Poverty is a hidden member of our society that we must deal with in order to help the children we want to teach.

Sources:

Payne, Ruby K. Framework for Understanding Poverty.

Cushner, Kenneth. Human Diversity in Education.

You've done an excellent job with this paper, Karissa. Thoughtful and contextual with real life examples. LB

LB
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Well written paper. You related touching examples from Peggy's presentation and from your own classroom.