

# An Action Approach to Educating Students in Poverty

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Today's program information based on research and  
training provided by Dr. Donna M. Beegle.

# Workshop Objectives

## Introduction to understanding poverty

- Insiders Perspective on Poverty
- Understanding the different types of poverty
- Oral/Print Communication
- The 3 levels of Self-Disclosure and what works with this student
- Characteristics of Effective Mentors
- What Poverty means to this student

# Insider's Perspective

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# Defining Poverty

- Generational Poverty
- Working-Class Poverty
- Immigrant Poverty
- Situational Poverty

# Realities and Facts About Poverty for families

- Inadequate pay—2/3 of people in poverty are working 1.7 jobs
- Inadequately funded fragmented support systems
- Policies often punish for poverty conditions
- Isolation from people who have benefited from education and jobs
- Lack of health care and stable housing

# What Does Generational and Working Class Poverty Teach?

- No one cares about me.
- I am alone.
- I don't belong.
- I am not wanted.
- I have nothing to offer.
- I am not smart.
- I am in a war one and need to survive.
- I have no control and neither do the adults in my world.

# Two Distinct Styles of Communicating and Learning

- **Oral Culture** is the natural human way to learn and communicate. Oral Culture is linked to poverty
- **Print Culture** learning and communication styles develop when people read for their primary information. Print culture is linked to middle-class.
- **Balance** is having the skills and characteristics of both styles.

# Oral Culture Characteristics

**Relationships based on identification:** Learns from people with whom there is common ground and respect.

**Spontaneous:** Communicates and learns best when information is presented in a variety of ways.

**Repetitious:** Storytelling and repeating stories are important for learning and maintaining knowledge.

**Holistic:** Focus on the “Big picture.” Tendency to take in everything going on around them and not paying attention to details unless they are emphasized and repeated.



# Oral Culture Characteristics

**Show Emotions:** Comfort with emotions. Relies on feelings and looks for emotion, facial expression and gestures.

**Present Oriented:** Highly in tune with the here-and-now. Behavior depends on what is modeled around them and what is going on in their home lives.

**Agonistic:** Physical. Use the body as a part of relating and communicating. Learn best when they can touch or do the appropriate behaviors.

**Self Disclosure:** Take information from people they identify with—use self-disclosure to gain identification.

# Print Culture: Comes from Reading for Primary Information

**Linear:** Organize thoughts and actions by a “first this, then this” thought process.

**Time:** Puts high value on time. May seem cold or unfeeling.

**Analytic Abstract:** knowledge is outside of self. Ability to step back from a situation, separate and disconnect self from what is going on. Ability to generalize information to multiple contexts.

# Print Culture: Comes from Reading for Primary Information

- **Self-Disciplined/Focus:** Strong ability to shut out sensory data and focus on one idea at a time
- **Delayed Gratification:** Ability to understand relationships between parts. Highly confident that rewards will come.
- **Strategize:** Confidence to plan ahead, set goals, focus on future. Learns to break things into parts, and connect small efforts to reaching end desires.

# What does this mean for me?

Because a majority of the homeless children and families are predominately oral, it is important to communicate in a manner that they understand. What does this mean for me in my role as a Homeless Liaison?

- Make sure that all mail outs are written in a manner that they can understand.
- Parents do not look in backpacks for their information....home visits and personal contacts make it happen.
- They love their children just as much as everyone else so do not assume that they are not responding to your phone messages or mail outs because they do not care. They are generally living in a crisis situation and are not tuned into our wants and needs.

# What works with this student?

## **Building relationships based on identification.**

- We must go beyond “sharing information” and assist youth and adults living in poverty in seeing that those who are educated are not so different from them. We must become role models for their success in breaking out of poverty.

# Building Relationships

**Building relationships that improve educational outcomes requires self-disclosure.**

- **Level 1**—information sharing with the goal being to get information out. Not effective for breaking poverty barriers
- **Level 2**—Share information and personal stories and real life examples. Goal is to find common ground with those you are serving. This level is effective for building poverty-busting relationships.
- **Level 3**— Share your deepest secrets and problems. This level is not effective and problematic.

# Mentoring Makes The Difference

## **Believe in the unlimited potential of youth and adults who live in poverty**

- State directly that you believe in those you serve. Teach them intelligence is learned, not fixed

## **Believe everyone has knowledge and skills**

- Treat students like they are knowledgeable and help them realize that they have skills and knowledge to contribute to learning. Make learning relevant to what youth and adults are passionate about. Teach students that they do not have to excel in every subject area in order to attend college.



# Mentoring Makes The Difference

## **Have poverty Competency.**

- seek facts about poverty in your community and read about the history of poverty. Visit areas that serve people in poverty.

## **Reduce isolation and build address book.**

- Assist youth and adults in building their address book. They need to know people that are not in poverty!
- Teach networking skills. Show them that there are people that care and will assist them. Take them to resource fairs, college days, and anything that might broaden their horizons.
- Focus on resources and opportunities.



# What Poverty means for a homeless student

**A lack of necessary resources**—food, clothing, hygiene products, alarm clocks, school supplies, transportation, medical and dental care, birth certificates, a legal guardian, bed or bedding, and clean clothes. How can we help?

- --District Resources and Referrals

**A lack of an adequate support system**—highly mobile and living in temporary situations with temporary people. Peer issues and self-esteem issues are very common with this student. Mental health issues may be present and undiagnosed due to the student to being highly mobile. Attendance, grade and behavior problems are general present. How can we help?

- Referrals for counseling services either in-district or out-of-district. Community based mental health facilities will see students without insurance because they received funding for this service. Families must make application for this service. Extra support at school from counselor and staff.

# What Poverty means for a homeless student

**Attendance and grade problems**—many of the homeless students do not have transportation in the home. If they miss the bus they will not be in school! Finding ways to assist with extra transportation for these students is a must. Once a homeless student misses a large number of days they do not want to attend school because they feel like they don't fit in and no one cares. How can we help?

- Pay close attention to their attendance and make contact to resolve attendance problems. Home visitation programs are a great way to let both the children and family know that you miss them and are willing to help resolve any problems. They will probably not call you for assistance if you have not already built a relationship with them.

# What Poverty means for a homeless student

**And more grade problems** --- pay close attention to their grades. Statistics show that every time a homeless student moves they lose 6 months of education. How can we help?

- Alternative Education programs, summer school, tutoring, mentoring, and one-on-one assistance locating all of a student's records. Because they move often and sometimes live in facilities their records may get lost. Ask a student about his academic past because many times they move so often that their records do not reflect it. Residential facilities, foster care placements, and Juvenile facilities quite often have information on students that is forgotten or lost.

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