

Student Name

Instructor Name

Class Name

Date

Educating Children from Low Socioeconomic Status Families

As a teacher, it is our responsibility not only to provide high-quality education, but to provide high-quality care and support for all children. For some of our students, their experiences and treatment at school can have an immense impact on their lives. One group of children that I believe teachers need to be hyper-aware of are children that are living in low-income or poverty-stricken families. Some main concerns when it comes to these children include unmet needs at home, lack of age-appropriate educational materials and extracurricular activities, and access to positive and loving role models.

As a preschool teacher, I have children in my class from all different backgrounds. It's important to be intentional and observant so that you can help children in need, even if you don't know their exact situation. Many children from low-income families may struggle with hunger, not having appropriate clothing for the weather, or not getting enough sleep. These are all issues that as a teacher, I can help with. Children that are frequently hungry can be given additional food at meals during school hours. Information can also be sent home to families about organizations in the community that can help. I would also make up snack bags for children to bring home on the weekend, so I know they won't go hungry for days. If children don't have appropriate clothing, the classroom can be stocked with a variety of sizes of outerwear and clothing so that children are warm and dry. If this isn't possible, providing information to families about local organizations would also be helpful. For children that aren't getting enough

sleep, we can provide opportunities for them to rest during the day if they are tired. In a preschool classroom we have quiet areas where a child could rest as needed.

Another concern for these children is a lack of educational and stimulating materials at home and opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities. Children from low-income families are at-risk for developmental delays and later academic problems, partly due to the lack of stimulation and appropriate education and materials their families have access to (Karoly & Gonzalez, 2011). There are many options in the community to help with these materials, such as book banks and mobile libraries. When these aren't an option, teachers can provide the same materials through take-home bags. In preschool, these typically contain books, games, and a set of materials for an art project or science experiment for the family to do together. Families can check out a bag at any time, just like a library. This set up gives families activities they can do with their children for free, providing both family time and educational activities.

Extracurricular activities are expensive, which prevent many families from participating. Many communities offer scholarships for park district programs, which would be important information to share with families. As a teacher, I would also work with my school or fellow teachers to plan family outings and other events for all children to participate in. This could be done through an occasional event such as a family literacy night, or a frequent event such as a weekly sports night or game night.

Finally, many children living in low-income families struggle with having a positive and loving role model. For many of these families, the focus is on putting food on the table and keeping a roof over their heads. Many caregivers must work more than one job, tend to have less education, and are more stressed than others of higher socioeconomic status (Lamy, 2013). This can create stress for children and cause them to have responsibilities far before they are ready for

them. As a teacher, we need to intentionally develop a relationship with each of our students.

Our students need to know that they are loved, they are worthy, and they are an important part of our class and community. This can be done one-on-one with students, such as making sure to spend at least a few minutes with each child reading a book or talking about their weekend. This can also be done by setting up the classroom environment so that all children feel ownership of their classroom, such as children choosing a topic to study more in depth, hanging up children's artwork, and giving each child a special cubby for their belongings. As teachers, we need to have high expectations for our students, while providing each child the support they need to meet those expectations (Bondy & Hambacher, 2016). A big part of making that happen is by providing a positive atmosphere, using kind words, encouraging children throughout the day, and intentionally expressing our love to each child. Children need to know that we are there for them no matter what.

I believe that an effective teacher can change children's lives, especially those that are the most vulnerable, such as children from low-income families. We can provide for children's unmet needs while they are in our care and provide information for families as well. We can help families access appropriate materials and books for their children, which can help provide quality time for children and their families. We can also help these children by intentionally providing love and positive interactions every day.

References

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