

S.P.E.C.I.A.L. Children and the Educators Who Help S.H.A.P.E. Them

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Simply put, the more resources available to a child, the more assets a child has for productivity. Resources are like capital gains. Low-resourced children possess very few of the capital assets necessary for being productive. As a result, a quality education which historically represented the way out of poverty has all but eluded them. An education that should hold out the hope of attainment for low-resource children often becomes an instrument of containment to a life of poverty. They are often locked in at the bottom with little to no hope of acquiring the capital necessary to be the productive and resourceful individuals they can be.

Educators know that engaged parents play a vital role in student achievement and success. A major challenge facing educators today is how to effectively educate the increasing student population whose parents either don't have the time, energy, knowledge, or even the desire to be actively and meaningfully involved in their education.

Also, well known is the impact that a child's socio-economic status (SES) has upon their education. What the education community is just starting to confront is how a school dependent child. A child's school dependency status (SDS) impacts the learning experience just as the child's SES. While a child's SES and SDS may be related, they are not necessarily synonymous. Low income parents can be fully engaged with their children's education just as high resource parents can be disengaged with their children's education. Regardless of the cause, a new American reality is that an ever-increasing number of children are depending on their schools to provide those core needs that make for academic success which were once reliably provided at home.

Many educators are increasingly concluding, however, that efforts to enhance or enforce parental engagement are like pulling teeth—they are often fraught with frustration and futility. There are educators who maintain that parents should be held accountable for their children's education and for schools to assume an ever-increasing role of meeting the child's basic needs is to let the parent off the hook. The reality for many children, however, is that they and their education are the ones on the hook and the schools must figure out a way to educate them despite their parents. Otherwise, their education and life chances must be put in a holding pattern while awaiting their parents' engagement.

Just as the US Census Bureau and children agencies identify and outline factors associated with SES that determine a child's level of risk, there are factors associated with children's school dependency or SDS that, if not addressed, put their education at risk. The degree to which schools have the willingness and capacity to address and meet the students' needs will be the degree to which the schools can impact the chance for effective learning.

It is well-known, well-researched, and well-documented that children can be most successfully educated with parental support. The new existential challenge facing educators is how to effectively educate despite parental engagement. Addressing this challenge starts with an understanding of the children circumstances and the conditions they bring into the classroom.

Again, the more resources available to children the more capital they have for productivity in the classroom. Under- or low-resourced children must be adequately resourced to perform up to their level of high-resourced classmates. There are seven essential resources needed for productivity.

Social Resources: *Those relationships and contacts developed naturally and acquired that can be used productively*

Conditioned by: The social networks available to the child

Children with a deficiency of **social capital** must be given an education by educators who recognizes the child's limited social network and seeks to compensate for it in ways that expose them to the broader community through:

- a. Field trip
- b. Guest speakers
- c. Mentors
- d. Volunteers
- e. Internships

Physical Resources: *The material goods necessary for sustaining life and maintain health necessary for productivity*

Conditioned by the quantity and supply of food, water, shelter, and rest available to the child

Children with a deficiency of **physical capital** need an education that is holistic in that it includes provisions for healthy living. These may include:

- a. Providing nutritional meals
- b. Allowing for proper rest
- c. Sanitary clothing (clean uniforms for example)
- d. Healthcare (through school nurses and clinics)

Emotional Resources: *Those feelings of adequacy and belief structures that proved the bases for purpose, morals, values, discipline, and self-worth that can be used productively.*

Conditioned by the emotional security and support available to the child

Children with a deficiency of **emotional capital** must be given an education that is more relational than institutional. These include:

- a. Security
- b. Stability
- c. Structure
- d. Self-worth

Cultural Resources: *Knowledge of the beliefs, customs, practices and rules of a social group that can be used productively*

Conditioned by the values training and lifestyles modeling available to the child.

Children with a deficiency of **cultural capital** must be given an education that includes training in and development of character and cultural skills. These include:

- a. Accepting Skills
- b. Giving Skills
- c. Interacting Skills

Income Resources: *Those financial means that can provide the material goods necessary for productively*

Conditioned by the family's level of employment and financial stewardship.

Children with a deficiency of **financial capital** must be given a quality education that is not subject to the family's socio-economic status.

Academic Resources: *Those human capacities (mental and intellectual) developed by education that can be used productively.*

Conditioned by educational aptitude and engagement of the primary caregivers. Children with a deficiency of **academic capital** must be given an assessment-based education that equips the child

with the necessary tools and resources for effective learning. If the child does not have an educated and/or engaged parent, the school must compensate for it in ways that equip the child with the necessary tools and resources for effective supplemental learning including:

- a. Cognitive skills development
- b. In-school homework assistance
- c. Additional instructions and time-on-task.

Language Resources: *Those abilities to communicate and understand words and meanings that can be used productively.*

Conditioned by the type, quality, and quantity of words to which the child is exposed.

Children with a deficiency of **language capital** must be given an education that builds their word and communications skills and abilities.

The Educators Who Help S.H.A.P.E. Them

The children's lives are in our hands, but our future is in theirs.

This simple proverb makes a profound statement about the critical role an education plays in determining the future. The future will be largely determined by the forces that shape the lives of the children who, as adults, will influence the future. Therefore, any strategy targeting future transformation must involve the formation of children today. Resource-deficient run a high risk of not being able to have meaningful and productive lives. Instead of being resourceful and positively contributing adults, the chances are great that they will be adults that society will have to resource and contend with.

Children may fail academically and morally individually, but the impact is felt collectively. The entire nation bears the cost for every child who is not effectively educated and prepared for life. Therefore, it behooves educators to endeavor to successfully and effectively educate all children. An educator who effectively shapes the lives of children has five essential characteristics.

Success-Oriented

High Expectancy Communicator

Assessment-Guided

Personable

Equipped

Success-Oriented

The goal is for the children's success. It's the one common ground that is shared with the parents regardless of their situations. It is not a predefined goal that someone sets for the child; rather, it is represented by the child's potential. It means helping children realize their God-given potential.

High Expectancy Communicator

Children must be inspired to exploit their strengths. Many do not suffer from a lack of resources, but from lack of resolve. As a result, their performance suffers. There is a natural tendency to equate performance with ability. Low performance and inferior ability are not the same thing. Rather, performance is often a behavioral problem. It can be a result of the tendency to avoid intellectual engagement and competition. Avoidance can be rooted in fear of failure, negative communications, and self-doubt. It can also explain the disposition many children have of seeking help.

Assessment-Guided

The overarching purpose for assessment should be to take the guesswork out of teaching a child. This generation of young people will not lend themselves to being group-taught. Educators today need to be master assessors so that the education can be tailored to children based upon their needs.

Personable

Ultimately, children are not impacted by textbooks, curriculum, facilities or the like. Survey any individual whose life has been impacted and the chances are it was an individual who made the impact. Everyone who makes it in life has help. Children are no exception. Impactful educators are three-dimensional in that they know their subject matter content in their heads, know how to deliver that content pedagogically with their hands, and connects with the children in their hearts.

Equipped

Prepared preparers prepare persons for prominent positions in public and private places for a purpose. A vital part of the education process must include as a goal of instruction preparing students for life. A life-long learner inspires life-long learners.