

Mentoring Students in Poverty

Dr. Ruby Payne's

Understanding the Framework of Poverty

P4K Volunteer Training

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U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

2013 POVERTY GUIDELINES 48 CONTIGUOUS STATES & THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Persons in family/household	Poverty guideline
1	\$11,490
2	15,510
3	19,530
4	23,550
5	27,570
6	31,590
7	35,610
8	39,630



Poverty & Resources

1. Financial
2. Emotional
3. Mental
4. Spiritual
5. Physical
6. Support Systems
7. Role Models
8. Knowledge of Hidden Rules

Could you live in poverty?

1. I know which rummage sales have “bag sales” and when.
2. I know how to get someone out of jail.
3. I know how to physically fight and defend myself physically.
4. I know how to get a gun, even if I have a police record.
5. I know how to keep my clothes from being stolen at the Laundromat.
6. I know how to live without a checking account.
7. I know how to live without electricity and a phone.
8. I know what to do when I don't have money to pay the bills.
9. I know how to move in half a day.
10. I can get by without a car.

Types of Poverty

Situational poverty

(shorter and is caused by circumstance, i.e., death, illness, divorce, etc.)

Generational poverty

(poverty for two generations or longer)



Hidden Rules

The hidden rules of the middle class govern schools and work;
students from generational poverty
come with a completely different set of hidden rules.

by Ruby Payne, Baytown, Texas

*...likewise, those who consider themselves middle class may
not know the hidden rules of what it means to live an
impoverished life.*



Hidden Rules

"I had to hit him, Miss! He was messin' with me!"

"What did he say?"

"Nothin'! He was lookin' at me, Miss!"

Rule 1

Non-verbal communication is much more important than verbal communication.

Rule 2

Physical fighting is often necessary for survival.

Language

Language issues cause many students from generational poverty not to fully develop a cognitive structure.

Formal	Casual
Business & Education	400 – 500 Word Vocab
Complete Sentences	Broken Sentences
Specific Word Choices	Non-Verbal Assists

Relationships

A relationship is valued over achievement.

That is why you must defend your child no matter what he or she has done.

Too much education is feared because the individual might leave.



Hidden Rules

Hidden rules shape what happens at school.



Possessions

Poverty	Middle Class	Wealthy
People	Things	One-of-a-kind objects, legacies, pedigrees

Time

Poverty	Middle Class	Wealth
Present most important Decisions made for the moment based on feelings or survival	Future most important Decisions made against future ramifications	Traditions and history most important Decisions made partially on basis of tradition/decorum

Money

Poverty	Middle Class	Wealthy
Survival Relationships Entertainment	Work Hard Achieve Material Security “Things”	Political, Financial, & Social Connections

Food

Poverty	Middle Class	Wealthy
Key question: Did you have enough?	Key question: Did you like it?	Key question: Was it presented well?
Quantity important	Quality important	Presentation important
What's affordable?		

Gender Roles

Female	Male
Caretaker	Lover
Disciplinarian	Fighter
Martyr	Provider
Keeper of the Soul	Flight

Key Point for Mentors

Poverty is relative. If everyone around you has similar circumstances, the notion of poverty and wealth is vague.

Poverty or wealth only exists in relationship to known quantities or expectation



Chronic Stress

Criticism

Neglect

Social Exclusion

Lack of Enrichment

Malnutrition

Drug Use

Exposure to Toxins

Abuse

Overcrowded Living Conditions

Unsafe Neighborhoods

Financial Strain

Forced Mobility

Material Deprivation

Lack of supervision

No control

Trauma

Symptoms of Chronic Stress

Linked to over 50% of all absences

Impairs attention and concentration

Reduces cognition, creativity, and memory

Diminishes social skills and social judgment

Reduces motivation, determination, and effort

Increases likelihood of depression

Impact on the Mentoring Relationship?

The mentor:

- Is more understanding with attitudes.
- Is more realistic in setting goals.
- Understands the need to expose the mentee to different points of view and opportunities.
- May be likely to search for additional opportunities for the mentee.
- May be more understanding of the family and family values.



What Students from Generational Poverty Need from a Mentor...

- To test our sincerity by acting a bit worse in the short term
- For us to keep reaching out even when it looks like it is not working
- Hope and a vision for future
- Consistency, honesty, advocacy
- To see a different worldview...careers, schools
- Academic support and direction
- High expectations
- **Empathy but not pity**
- To realize they have a choice



What do mentors need to know?

"No significant learning occurs without a significant relationship."



What else do mentors need to know?

Your students may be trailblazers in their own right!

....first one in their family to graduate from HS?

....first one in their family to pursue higher education?

These students may be the catalyst in their family to break the cycle of generational poverty.

**ENCOURAGEMENT AND
UNDERSTANDING IS KEY!**

