

Promoting and increasing education in low-income and minority families



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It can be agreed on that education on a general scope is important, so it would not be a false statement to say that everyone needs it. Education can help in most areas of societal function, primarily in job acquisition. Typically, more job opportunities are offered to those with some level of education as opposed to some who do not. So, it should come as no surprise in that because low income and minority families are not able to get higher education and thus do not value it as much, they stay in a level of low income and lack of education. To help solve this, low-income and minority education should be promoted and increased due to lack of higher educational access, mental health concerns and the reach of government programs.

One of the biggest problems for low-income and minority families seems to be access to higher education. College is very expensive, with little regard or guarantee for the outcome of going. Not only does this make it difficult for people who are somewhat well off, but it makes it even more difficult for those who are impoverished and gives no desire for some minority families to go into college. This is in part because they cannot afford it and it would cripple their rate of income so much, that even the possibility of some kind of success is too slim that the chance is not even taken. It is stated by US Department of Education, " Addressing growing college costs and debt is absolutely critical... America's higher education system has focused almost exclusively on inputs—enrolling students in college—and too little on outcomes—graduating from college with high-quality degrees." (" College Affordability"). However, this is not to say that everything the school has to

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offer should be free, as some extra-curricular activities require more expenses. In light of that, a student's education should not be based on the money in their or their parents' pockets. Education is a powerful tool that allows for a continuation between generations; past, present and future. It is a valid point for education to have a price on it, especially due to the simple fact that schools are expensive to run, even with just basic classes. The point still remains; however, a student should not be denied benign knowledge, especially if they are being abjured based on something so intractable. People seek higher education to receive a high-paying job, and even with said education, this is not promised.

Getting students in school is only half of the battle, so while making schools affordable, it should be also taken into consideration that students need to be kept there to actually make an impact. The aforementioned does not just apply to colleges, but also secondary and primary schools. There can be many effects on how much a student would want to stay in school, but it almost always boils down to mental health of students. This is especially a problem in low-income and minority households. While low-income and poverty are not exactly the same thing, they can both face similar issues in terms of mental health. It is important to consider the impacts that poverty and low-income at home can cause. That matter can also drive funding away from schools due to how negative the communities are perceived. The general perception of how dangerous impoverished communities can turn away potential help. Just as well, children don't have the same kind of support and therefore, no encouragement to be resilient to learning. Eric Jensen states, " Low-income neighborhoods are likely to have lower-quality

social, municipal, and local services. Because of greater traffic volume, higher crime rates, and less playground safety...poor neighborhoods are more hazardous” (8). All of these examples listed can have negative effects on these children’s’ mental health, which can not only hinder and limit student learning ability, but also their willingness to learn. These students also seem to have less books at home, which can inhibit their learning process as they will typically spend more time watching television or doing anything other than something to allow educational growth, primarily because they are either not inspired to or simply are not encouraged to do so. Children often fall into different levels of negative mental states which make it hard to go to school, as Jensen then states “ Common issues in low-income families include depression, chemical dependence, and hectic work schedules... feelings that kick off a downward spiral of unhappy life events, including poor academic performance, behavioral problems, dropping out of school, and drug abuse” (9). These students also have less support from families due to their parents either being focused on work and getting food on the table or other things. Jensen puts it at such, “ Poor children have fewer and less-supportive networks than their more affluent counterparts do; live in neighborhoods that are lower in social capital; and, as adolescents, are more likely to rely on peers than on adults for social and emotional support” (8). These peers that they can rely on will often lead them to substance abuse or peer pressure. Often times, events like these can lead students to eliminate the option of college and as a result poverty and the presence of low-income families is perpetuated, a cycle of poverty perhaps. To help solve this issue, there can be more incentive and implementation of teachers actively caring about their students. Teachers supporting students

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mentally can help students stay in school through providing an environment where the students feel cared for. While teachers should not be babysitters or the students' parents, they should be helping students really learn and work with them to achieve what they want. In the article "The Voices of Maine's Early Care and Education Teachers", it is noted, "When asked about what would help them address children's challenging behavior, almost half of the teachers recommended increasing supports to families to help them with poverty-related problems, substance abuse, mental health, and other challenges" (Sheila and Granja 11). Just as well, relationships between the parents, teachers and schools is just as important as between the student and teacher. It is important to build these relationships so that students are more able to do their work and know what is expected of them. The significance lies in that parents can connect with teachers to come to an understanding of how their child learns and what they can do to accelerate that growth. This can be considered a protective factor of which is described by Julia Bryant, "Resilience in children can be fostered and promoted by establishing protective factors in environments...The main protective factors that families, schools, and communities can foster to increase resilience in children are caring and supportive adult relationships..." (22). Resilience in students is very important, as it keeps them in school and keeps them inspired to acquire their education. Factors like those aforementioned can help prevent stress in students, which can in turn reduce how much these students are actually willing to drop out or give up pursuing their education.

To achieve a better focus on student mental health, there needs to be more government programs of which help with funding schools for better supplies

and more effective teachers. Sometimes schools don't have access or are not provided the necessary tools typically because of how they're funded as well. Furthermore, teachers also are not given an incentive to really care about their students or how they teach. As such, teachers only really can work with what they have which is not much, and as a result, students are not getting the full scope of what they could get. Brian Jacob and Jens Ludwig bring up the point, " Schools serving poor and minority students have fewer resources than they need. In this case, a potential solution would be to provide more money to disadvantaged schools. High-poverty schools lack the capacity to substantially improve student learning, independent of financial resources" (56-61). They basically state that because often times, schools in low-income environments are not provided the necessary resources to achieve the same as schools in higher-income environments. Teachers need more of an incentive to care about students, and while this is not typically the case, it seems that way because they do not have the tools or resources to actually do anything for their students. These schools neither have the necessary flexibility with their budgets to do what is actually necessary to help these students in the way that they need to be helped. Offered solutions included can be to helping change the way the standard for how teachers operate. This can be to hold teacher accountable for how much their students participate as well as willing to help these same students. Another way could be to hire new teachers of which will be open to change as well as put forth the effort to help their students succeed.

The education system is chock full of imperfections and issues, however, often times there are solutions which are as simple as encouraging teachers

to have conversations with their students. While this may not solve all of the problems with the system, it can certainly help in the area of student mental health. Funding for schools may be a little more difficult, but it is a necessary sacrifice for a better future and better living. The same could be said for higher education. These all can help solve the issue of lack of access for higher education, mental health concerns, and reach and funding of government programs for low-income and minority education.

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