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EN106

The Hidden Inequality in Schools

The future of every society, great and struggling, is in the hands of its young people. These future leaders and their store of knowledge, their abilities to reason, their worldviews and skills will determine the improvements and problems the rest of the century will bring. With this perspective in mind, some education experts in the United States harbor concern that, if education policies and teacher recruitment and retention approaches in the U.S. don’t see some change, the country will face compounding societal challenges in the years and decades ahead.

Different education levels, same grades, students who are at an economic disadvantage experience an array of challenges that is not represented to society. Susan Dynarksi’s *Why American Schools Are Even More Unequal Than We Thought,* shines a light on this topic by making an overall argument that the systematic measure of using subsidized meals to determine economic disadvantage is not the best method.

To begin, *Why American Schools Are Even More Unequal Than We Thought* (Dynarski) emphasizes the point of properly representing the persistently disadvantaged. The proper and most accurate way is to analyze the learning gap between the poorest, almost middle class, and rich. There is a multiple grade level divide between these differing economic statuses; therefore, this should be the base of the way students are economically measured in schools since school is about education first, and not how many students need to pay a reduced lunch. In paragraph 9 says, “In Michigan, “measured using that conventional approach that has a gap in math scores between eighth-graders who are disadvantaged than their classmates in Michigan is 0.69 standard deviations. This places the disadvantaged children about two grades behind in their classmates. Due to contrast, the gap is based on persistent disadvantaged which is much wider: 0.94 standard deviations, or close to three grades of learning”. Dynarski asserted that “A closer look expose that the standard measure of economic disadvantage – whether a child is eligible for free or reduced lunch in school – covers the greatness of learning the gap between the richest and poorest children(s)”. (Dynarski)

Continuing off of that claim, it’s evident that this inaccurate measurement hurts the persistently disadvantaged children due to the fact that it does not grant them the proper aid they need. This is evident in paragraph 17 when Dynarksi speaking on the topic by saying, “Many federal, state and local programs distribute money based on the share of a district’s students who are eligible for subsidized meals.” She then continues to support her stance by adding, “But schools that have identical shares of students eligible for subsidized meals may differ vastly in the share of students who are deeply poor. The schools with the most disadvantaged children have greater challenges and arguably need more resources,” (Dynarksi, 2016, paragraph 17). With support of these claims, the argument for the measurement of economic disadvantage to be changed is necessary to give persistently disadvantaged children the appropriate resources so that they do not fall behind.

Next, a notable flaw of this standardized measurement of student’s economic status is the fact that it does not acknowledge how the economic gaps between classes correlates to learning gaps between the divisions as well. Take the words of Sean Reardon, a Stanford sociologist who spoke on the topic saying, “Rich Americans and poor Americans are living, learning and raising children in increasingly separate and unequal worlds,” (Education Next). This demonstrates the argument of how a student’s economic status affects their academic performance due to their livelihoods and opportunities. Another example is from the words of Charles Murray who said, “the United States is stuck with a large and growing lower class that is able to care for itself only sporadically and inconsistently…” (Education Next). Both of these statements by experts provide reason that through different statuses students are exposed to different opportunities; therefore, this needs to be a documented factor of how economic differentiations affect students in districts.

Also, evidence of this claim is found in numerous ways. One way it is evident is through the way it impacts social-capital, social-efficiency, and resilience of the adolescent directly, especially in junior high. This idea correlates to Dyanski’s study because junior high stands to be a highly impactful time for students of both economic classes; however, the well-off group is positively benefited compared to the persistently disadvantaged. For example, Ling Yiu’s article states, “Most of the paths are similar for the poor and the non-poor groups however family social capital shows a stronger effect for the poor group and school social capital has a stronger effect for the non-poor group” (Ling Yiu).

All in all, using subsidized meals to determine economic disadvantage is not the best method because it does not properly represent those who are persistently disadvantaged nor does it give them the proper aid they need, and it does not acknowledge how the economic gaps between classes correlates to learning gaps between the divisions This is proven by the fact that it does not include the learning gaps of rich and poor children that puts the poorest at an extreme disadvantage, nor does it give them substantial resources for them to succeed. Due to the statistical and credible evidence provided by Dynarksi, Reardon, and Murray believe the measurement of economic divide should be changed to more accurately give students the educational benefits they deserve. By using the Census Bureau’s Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM) which is a standard way of measuring income and adjusting for family size differences could help improve the inequalities in all schools.

Works Cited

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Changes:

Changed sentence structure to create better flow

Cited information

Provided accurate information

Remove sentences where I was making statements