

Superintendent Update: August 24, 2018

Quote for the Week: "Cowards are cruel, but the brave Love mercy, and delight to save." — John Gay

All children are born ready to learn, but for 15 million children living in poverty in America, they enter school unready to succeed. We need courageous teachers and school employees here at MPV to love mercy and delight in saving our children.

Before even walking through the classroom door, American children living in poverty have already fallen behind in school. By age 4, children from low-income families are up to 18 months behind their peers developmentally.

A child's brain is already 80% formed by age 3; 90% by age 5. But children in poverty are less likely to attend preschool and often live in households where early learning activities are few and far between.

The best way to ensure all children have a fair chance at a brighter future is to give each child the opportunity to learn and grow early on.

We all have worked with students who are affected by generational poverty on a daily basis. We see many things. I have personally seen (over the years) students whose shoes are held together by electrical tape. I have seen students who have perfect attendance because the only meals they receive are through the public school's cafeteria. I see pictures that students draw of their "pet rats" that live in their house. One thing I do not see a lot of is help for the educators trying to make a difference in these students' lives.

As I look at the new teachers in our school full of excitement and ready to take on the world, I am encouraged. However, sometimes I worry that the first year teaching with the challenges we face might cause them to give up on education and never return. For that reason, I have compiled a list of easy tips (easy intellectually but not always easy in practice) I have learned along the way to help encourage teachers working with students affected by generational poverty.

1. Love the Students

This seems easy enough, but it is actually much harder than you suspect. While working in teaching, I have come across students whose fathers were in jail and whose mothers were alcoholics. I have certainly dealt with my share of discipline issues with students coming from dysfunctional homes. As teachers and school employees, it is imperative that we understand the difficulties students face if they do not have support from home. We may need to investigate and find if a positive behavior system will work with students in stressful situations. The effects of love may transform that struggling

young child. He or she may begin forming relationships with other students, working harder on school work, and smiling more. Children who live in generational poverty do come to us with their own set of issues and bad experiences, but it is our job as educators to make their school experience a positive one. You can still have a consistent grasp on discipline, but just make sure that love is a factor when you are trying to help any student who walks through your door.

2. Expose Students to Experiences

Many students in generational poverty have a limited amount of experiences. Their schema has not developed enough for educators to truly build upon their prior knowledge. Most of the students living in this environment may not have ever left their county or town. When this is the case, it is your job to give them experiences. Read them books about exotic lands, show them pictures of your travels, let them watch videos about other parts of the world, invite guest speakers in to talk about their experiences, and take them on field trips.

Many teachers cringe when thinking about the planning that goes into a field trip, but these trips are so essential if practical and approved. In this day and time, there could be grants that can help a whole classroom of students see things they never thought they would see. Stop making excuses for why it can't be done and make it happen. The students in your classroom will only remember a portion of the content you taught them, but they will remember every bit of the special experiences you exposed them to.

3. Give Plenty of Praise

Praise is key to any relationship with a child. Students want you to recognize both their small and big successes. Too many times these students hear from others about all of the things they do not have. This negatively affects their self-esteem. Without a positive self-concept, it is impossible for these students to have the confidence they need in order to learn. This is where praise comes in.

However, there is an art to praising a student. When praising a student for their accomplishments, make the praise specific. Do not just say "great job" or "wonderful." Instead take the time to look at what the child has done and tell them, "I am so proud of you for using this tool while trying to work out that math problem" or "I love how expressively you read that passage." Being specific lets the students know you are paying attention to their efforts.

4. Keep Expectations High

Do not insult your students by watering down the curriculum. The students are poor, not ignorant. By keeping high expectations, you reinforce to the students that you believe in their abilities. You give them the chance to show-off what they can do. You also allow them the opportunity to soar high above the expectations society has for them.

News for the week:

The Varsity Lady Jackets beat Ozark in Volleyball. Congratulations to our ladies and Coach Edwards. I also want to thank our student section for showing outstanding school spirit. It was a wonderful evening for our school district!

The Lady Jackets scores were: 23-25, 17-25, 25-23, 25-17, and 15-9. Our kids showed outstanding character by coming back from a 0-2 deficit and winning 3 games in a row!

Our Junior Varsity defeated Ozark 25-23 and 25-19. Our Junior High lost to Ozark 17-25 and 15-25. I am proud of all MPV student athletes!

The photos below are a submission to the Friday update from Marvin Primary. The school is getting involved with the HeartBridge Program and did a social/emotional learning activity. The photos show their "I am...." wall in the cafeteria. Students had to write a positive word about themselves and hang in the cafeteria. I think the project was a wonderful idea!

brave

FUN

Sweet

loving

Adventurous

AWESOME

silly

Good hugs

Shout, IT

Nice

Loveful

DAZIL

responsible

Smart