Walking in Your Student’s Shoes

In search of educational strategies to break poverty’s cycle

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Based on Dr. Ruby Payne’s *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*
Some Elements of Poverty

- Poverty is not a choice
- Poverty occurs in all aspects of life
- Poverty touches race, ethnicity and social class
- Poverty can become a way of life
- Poverty is relative
- Poverty can be overcome
Operational Definitions

- Poverty is *wanting* in material riches or goods
- Poverty is the *lack of resources* to cover basic needs
- Poverty is the extent to which a person can *survive without resources*
Framework

- Financial aspects
- Social aspects
- Intellectual aspects
- Emotional aspects
- Spiritual aspects
- Communication aspects
Financial Aspects

- Jobless
- Various low-paying jobs
- Short-term jobs
- One salary for large household
- No access to discount-bulk stores
- No safety net: savings, credit, etc.
Social Aspects

- Lost maternal language
- Single parenting
- Encounters with law representatives
- Self-destructive individual behaviors
- Dangerous group behaviors
- Lack of positive role models
Intellectual aspects

- Low academic level
- Low academic expectations
- No access to cultural media
- Written illiteracy
Emotional Aspects

- Life happens in the present
- Generational pain
- Response only to instant gratification
- Short-lived childhood
- Low self-esteem
- Lack of hope
Spiritual Aspects

- Declining knowledge of traditional beliefs
- Conflicting religious promises
- Apparent uselessness of religion as life support
- Emergence of easy money as life support
Communication Aspects

- Registers of language
- Discourse patterns
- Story structure
- Three voices
- Nonverbal communication
- Noise
A register is a variety of a language used for a particular purpose or in a particular social setting.

The appropriate language register depends upon the audience (who), the topic (what), the purpose (why), and the context (where).

Most languages have five REGISTERS:

- Frozen
- Formal
- Casual
- Consultative
- Intimate
Discourse patterns

The organization in which the speaker presents information

- *Formal register*: speaker gets directly to the point
- *Casual register*: speaker goes around or through a tangent before getting to the point
Story Structure

The organization of the narrative

- **Formal register:**
  - beginning, plot, wrapping up

- **Casual register:**
  - beginning, audience participation, tangent, audience participation, wrapping up
Three voices

- **Child Voice:**
  Defensive, victimized, whining, manipulative, negative non-verbal, prevents resolution. Can be playful, spontaneous, curious.

- **Parent Voice:**
  Judgmental, bossy, punitive, authoritative, demanding, win-lose mentality. Can be loving and supportive.

- **Adult Voice:**
  Factual, non-judgmental, question format, win-win mentality
Some Hidden Rules on Use of Money

- WEALTH: Conserve and invest
- MIDDLE CLASS: Manage
- POVERTY: Spend
Some Hidden Rules on Time

- WEALTH: Past-oriented, traditions and history determine decisions
- MIDDLE CLASS: Future-oriented, future ramifications determine decisions
- POVERTY: Present-oriented, circumstances and survival determine decisions
Some Hidden Rules on Education

- **WEALTH**: Necessary tradition for making and maintaining connections

- **MIDDLE CLASS**: Crucial for climbing success ladder

- **POVERTY**: Perceived as goal but not as reality
Some Hidden Rules on Driving Force

- WEALTH: financial, political, social connections
- MIDDLE CLASS: work, personal achievement
- POVERTY: Survival, relationships, entertainment
Poverty Richness!

- Community/group oriented
- Resourcefulness
- Elders & children are valued
- Sense of humor
- Awareness of self
- Value natural knowledge
- Playfulness
- Generosity/Solidarity
Reasons for Leaving Poverty

- Goal vision
- Painful situation
- Specific talent or ability
- Support of “mentor”
**Relationship Dynamics**

Stephen Covey’s emotional bank*

**Deposits**
- Seek first to understand
- Keeping promises
- Kindness, courtesies
- Clarifying expectations
- Loyalty to the absent
- Apologies
- Open to feedback

**Withdrawals**
- Seek first to be understood
- Breaking promises
- Unkindnesses, discourtesies
- Violating expectations
- Disloyalty, duplicity
- Pride, conceit, arrogance
- Rejecting feedback

* *The Seven habits of Highly Effective People.*
Deposits & Withdrawals for students living in poverty

- **Deposits**
  - Appreciation for humor & entertainment provided by individual
  - Acceptance of what individual cannot say about situation
  - Respect for demands and Priorities of relationships

- **Withdrawals**
  - Put downs on sarcasm about humor of individual
  - Insistence and demands for full explanation about situation
  - Insistence on the middle-class view of relationships
Deposits & Withdrawals for students living in poverty... (continued)

- Using adult voice
- Assisting with goal-setting
- Identifying options, available resources
- Understanding importance of personal freedom, speech, personality

- Using parent voice
- Telling the individual his/her goals
- Making judgments on value and availability of resources
- Assigning pejorative character traits to individual
Some Points to Remember

- Poverty and lack of intelligence are not synonyms.
- Poverty and lack of values are not synonyms.
- Individuals are doing the best they can with what they know and have.
- Attitudes are integral part of culture and belief system.
- Many people stay in poverty because they don’t know other choices.
- School is a safe place to learn middle class rules
- Formal register and direct discourse need to be taught
- Relationship between language, academic success and jobs, need to be taught
- Hidden rules need to be directly taught
- Educators need to assume role model responsibility
- Educators need to take the lead building relationships with students