

Poverty: The Real Indicator

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OSBA 2016 Capital Conference, 11/14/16






1. Poverty in Ohio
2. Poverty and Student
Performance
3. School Solutions

Poverty, in the US and Ohio



The American Dream

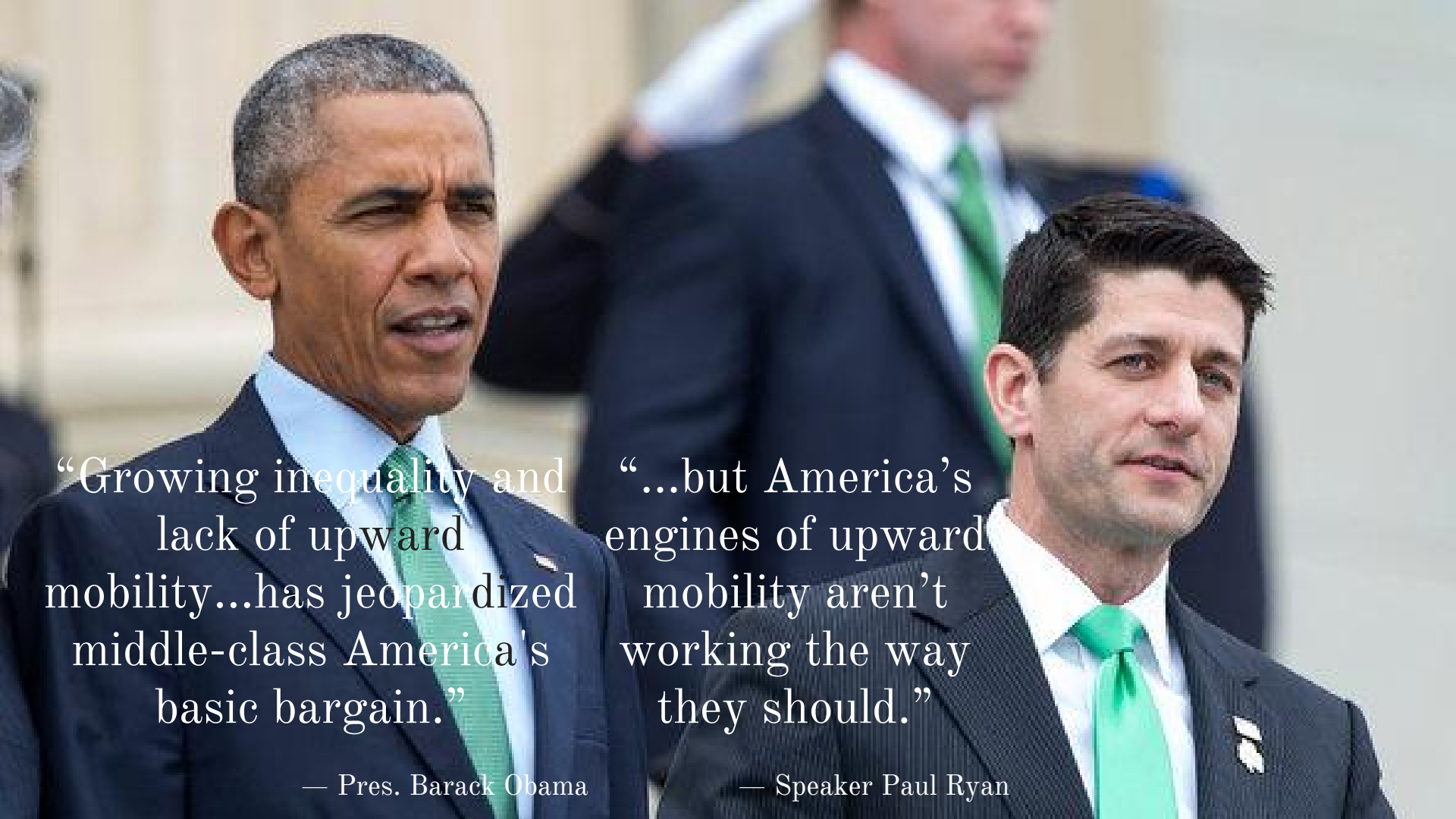
A photograph of Barack Obama and Paul Ryan. Barack Obama is on the left, wearing a dark suit, light blue shirt, and green tie, looking slightly to his right with a serious expression. Paul Ryan is on the right, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and green tie, looking towards the camera. In the background, another man in a dark suit and green tie is partially visible, out of focus. The background appears to be an outdoor setting with a light-colored wall.

“If you work hard,
you have a chance
to get ahead.”

— Pres. Barack Obama

“Upward mobility is
the central promise
of life in America.”

— Speaker Paul Ryan

A photograph of Barack Obama and Paul Ryan. Barack Obama is on the left, wearing a dark suit, light blue shirt, and green tie, looking slightly to his right with a serious expression. Paul Ryan is on the right, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and green tie, looking towards the camera. In the background, another man in a dark suit and green tie is partially visible, slightly out of focus.

“Growing inequality and lack of upward mobility...has jeopardized middle-class America's basic bargain.”

— Pres. Barack Obama

“...but America's engines of upward mobility aren't working the way they should.”

— Speaker Paul Ryan

Defining Poverty

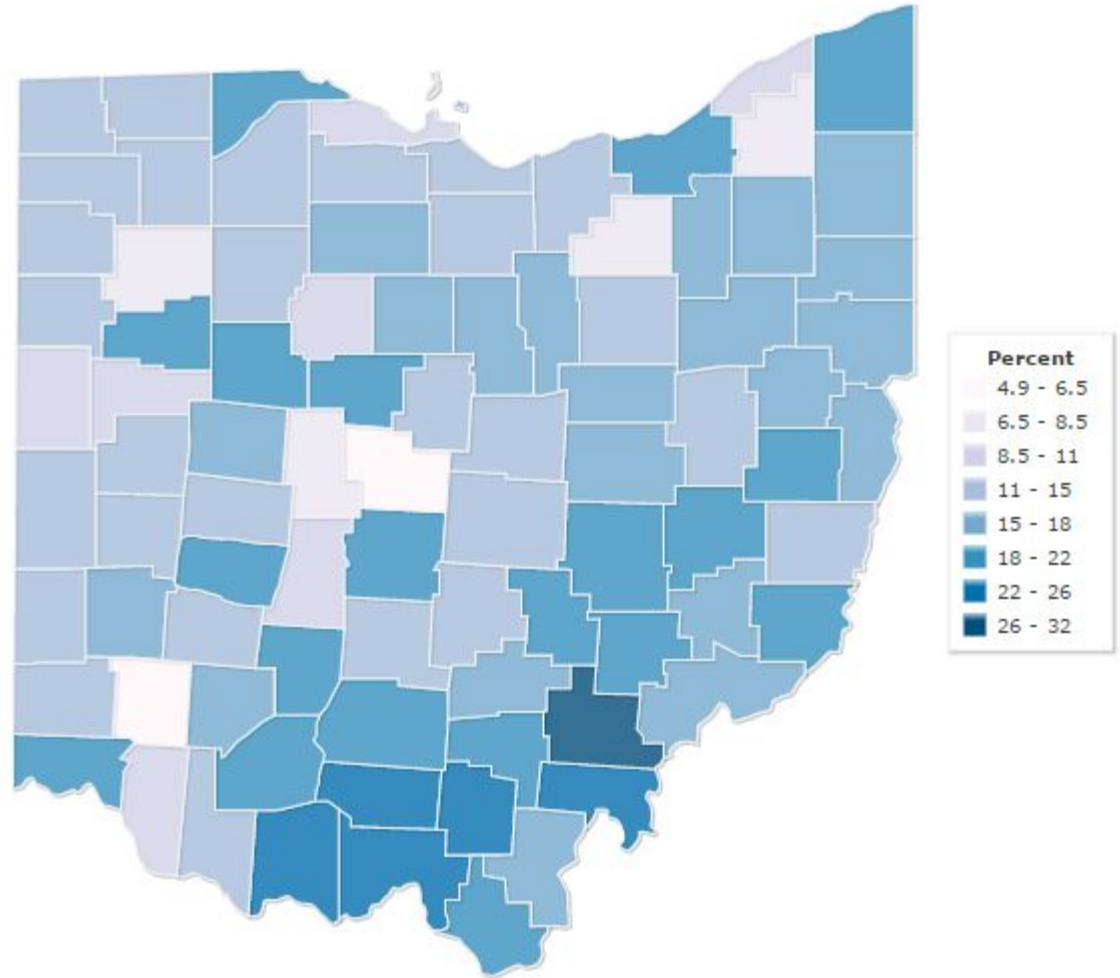
Absolute poverty:

Do you have money
necessary to meet basic
needs, such as food, clothing,
shelter, and community?

Relative poverty:

Do you fall below
prevailing standards of
living in a given societal
context?

Poverty Rate By County, 2009-2013



NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER



OUR KIDS

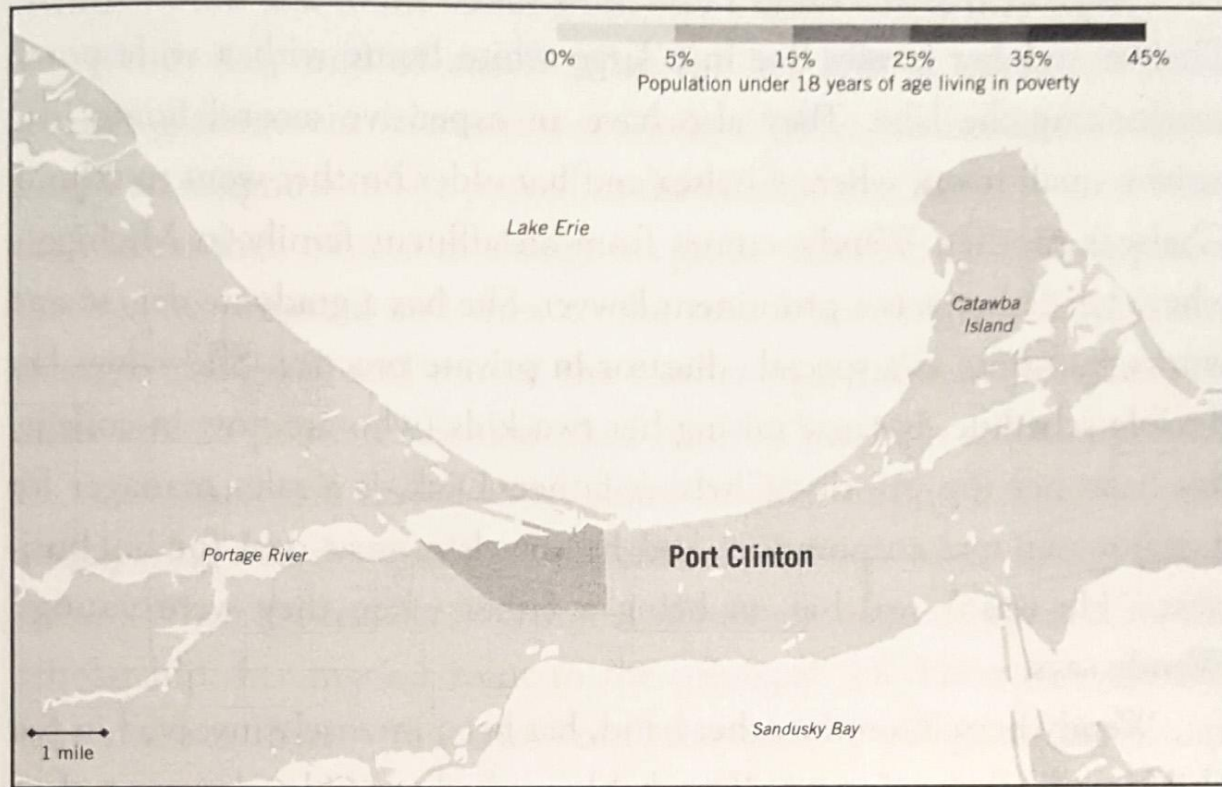
The American Dream
in Crisis

ROBERT D. PUTNAM

author of *Bowling Alone*

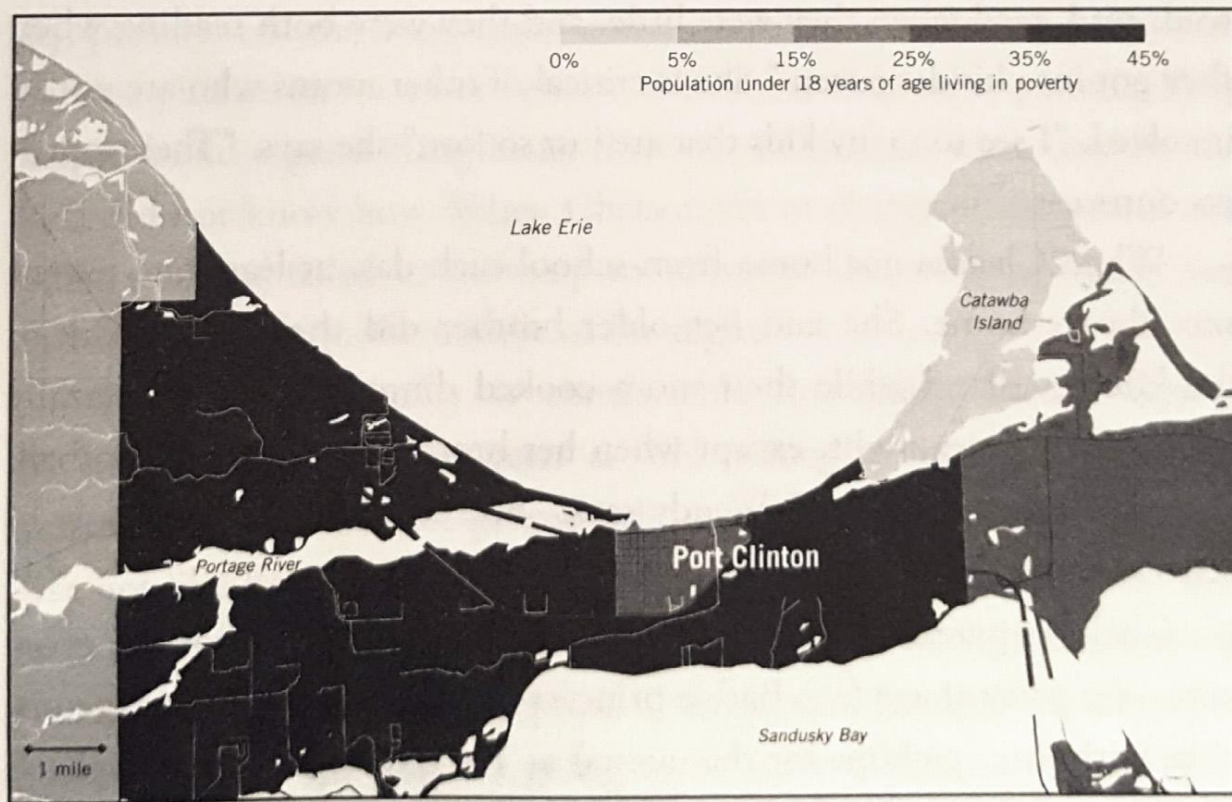


Figure 1.1: Child poverty in Port Clinton, Ohio (1990)



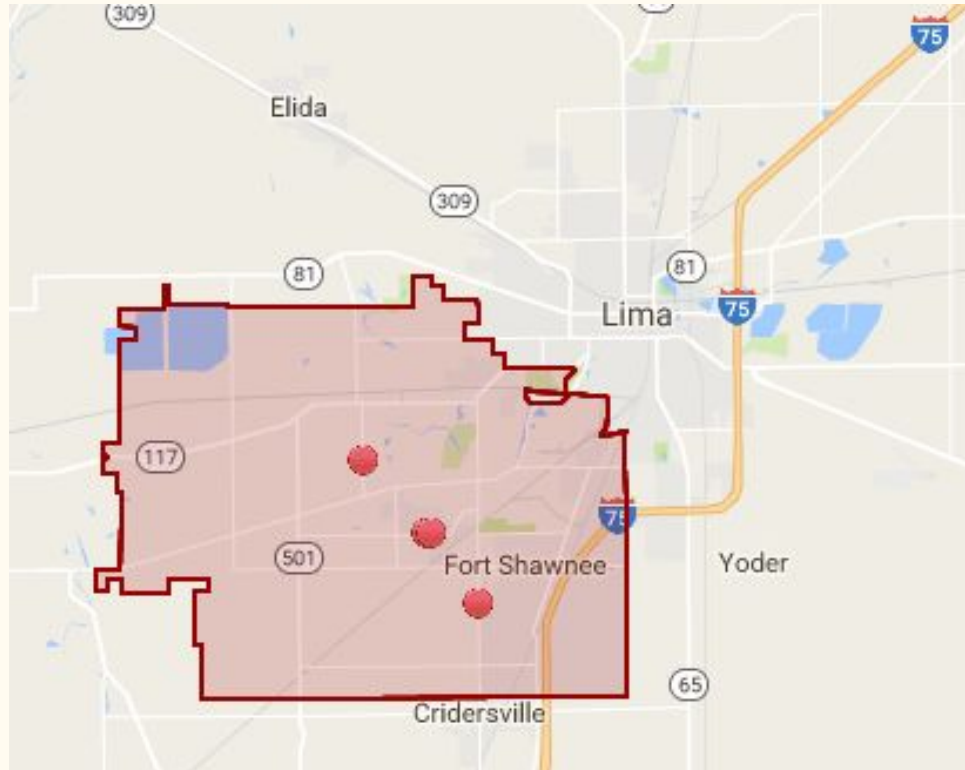
Source: Census 1990 data as compiled by Social Explorer, accessed through Harvard University Library.

Figure 1.2: Child poverty in Port Clinton, Ohio (2008–2012)



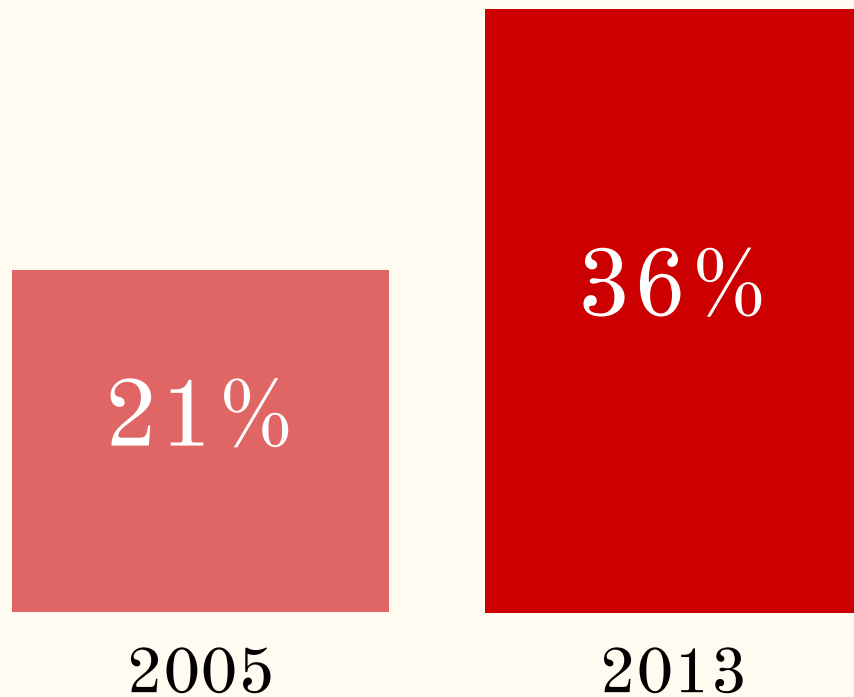
Source: ACS 2008–2012 (5-year estimates) data as compiled by Social Explorer, accessed through Harvard University Library.

Lima Shawnee School District

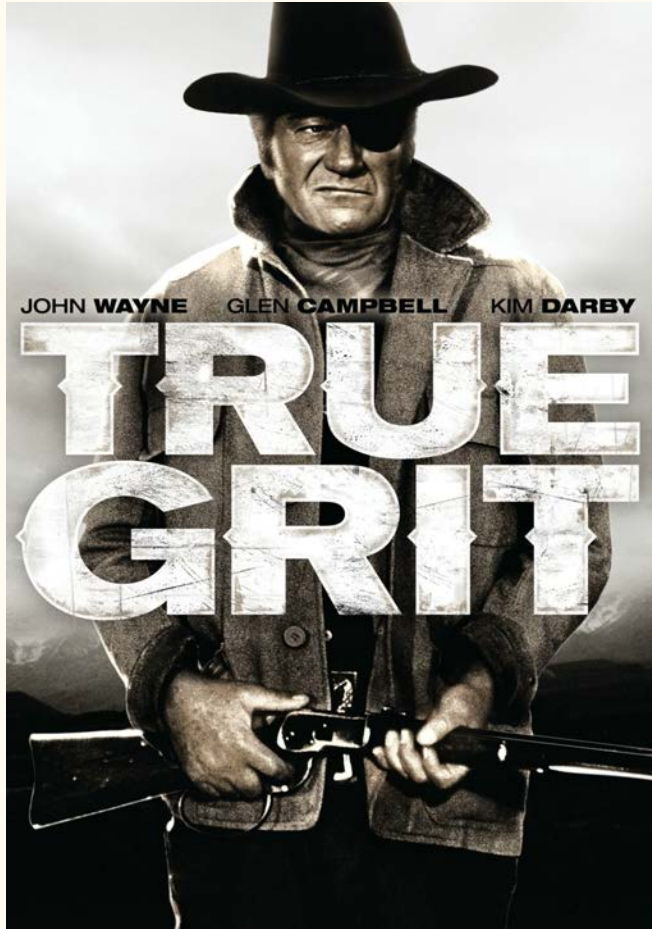


Lima Shawnee Poverty Levels

(% of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch)



Poverty and Student Performance



“Grit” in Education

- Touted in professional development
- Meant to enhance students’ sustained effort and interest
- But socioeconomic factors can influence possession and application of “grit”
- Upper and lower classes don’t know each other very well
- We idolize miracle students

Poverty beyond Material Wellbeing

- Poverty isn't just hunger, housing instability, lesser-quality possessions, etc.
- Poverty has social, political, and cultural manifestations



Poverty as a Root of Stress

- Housing instability: moves are seldom voluntary, often involve significant loss of material possessions and community networks
- Work: low wages, long and unpredictable hours, single wage, little chance for promotion, lack of childcare, lack of transit options
- Material disadvantage: lack of access to funds, food insecurity, unhealthy food options, poor quality clothing, no books/computer at home
- Safety concerns: bullying, neighborhood violence, domestic abuse, drug use

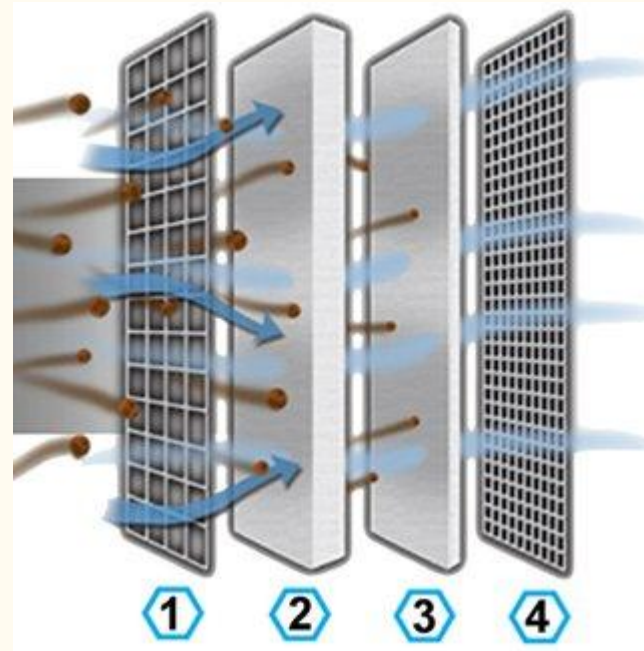
Harmful Non-Material Effects of Poverty

Increased stress can negatively impact a child's physical, psychological, emotional, and cognitive abilities.

1. Delayed brain development, reduced executive function, hopelessness, learned helplessness, depression
2. Emotional skills: Impatience and impulsivity, lack of social graces, more limited range of behavioral responses, less empathy for other's misfortunes
 - a. Feelings of pessimism, shame, isolation
3. Lack of exposure to broad vocabulary and formal language registers
4. Impaired parenting: less-developed skills, less time with children
5. Safety concerns lead to increased absenteeism, lack of engagement
6. Lack of support network outside of family & sometimes judgment for success

They're Filtered

What happens to
kids with these
problems?



Think about a Job Interview

- Computer knowledge/access
- Dress clothing
- Experience with books
- Social graces
 - Some of which are explicitly taught!
- Knowledge of job interview questions
- Resume assembly
- Previous job experience
- Networks/references



What we focus on in education:

- Quality Teachers
- New Facilities
- Assessments
- Digital Delivery
- Curriculum
- Career Preparation
- Child Nutrition
- Extracurriculars
- Spectrum of Course Offerings
- Transportation
- Counseling and support
- Assessment Development, administration, and evaluation

But poverty can limit gains from these efforts.

Possible Solutions



School Actions

- “Wrap-around” approach: health dept at school, navigator, etc.
- Incentivize/normalize academic success
- High quality teachers as student partners/mentors
- Incorporate coping skills and stress management techniques into curricula
- Identify and address roots of student misbehavior, including chronic stress
- Alter the environment: e.g., music to instead of bells for transitions
- Incorporating time for homework into the school day
- Incorporate physical activity into the daily routine.
- Goal setting instruction to help students focus on what they want
- Parenting classes
- School/community partnerships

Shawnee Opportunity School

- Created in 2016 to provide on-site digital delivery of curriculum for students at risk of dropping out/not graduating
- Includes full time enrollment (partial day on site) and school day enrollment for credit recovery
- 45 students actively enrolled
- 50% socio-economically disadvantaged



- Schools are in defensive mode trying to validate their performance.
- Performance indicators are important, but poverty is the most accurate indicator of student success.
- We should redirect some energy focused on schools to addressing the real indicator: poverty.

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