Impact of socioeconomic status has amongst children learning to read & write

Sara Olsen

Chadron State College

Summer, 2020

**Impact of Socioeconomic Status has Amongst Children Learning to Read and Write**

**Introduction**

In the education system, there has always been the constant struggle of closing the reading score gap between students from low and high socioeconomic statuses (SES). Parents, teachers, and community members all need to work together to help children from low SES families close the gap. The purpose of this study is to explore the impact that socioeconomic status has amongst children learning to read and write. Research has shown socioeconomic status has had an impact on students’ reading for years. Therefore it is hypothesized that students from low SES families who have more motivation and have support from home, school and community members will begin to close the achievement gap between low and high socioeconomic students.

Every child’s home life is a little different than the next child. The Michigan State Department of Education defines SES as having three factors: family income, parent’s education level, and parent’s occupation (Chen, Kong, Gao, and Mo, 2018). According to the family stress model, parents in low SES families face more financial pressure and emotional exhaustion, which are associated with low income and self-efficacy (Chen, Kong, Gao, & Mo, 2018). This means that every home life is a little different: buying books might not be on the top of the expensive list for families, parents could have multiple jobs causing them not to have enough time to sit down and put a lot of time into reading with their child. When students start preschool, every child is at a different point of reading exposure. It is so important for students to learn to read and write. Students who read excel more in academics and social life (Sequera, Lourdusmi, 2017).

Every educator’s goal is to make sure they are helping students learn to read and write. Children struggling to read doesn’t just affect them in school but also can affect them later in the work force (Kavi, Tackie, Bugyei, 2015). I chose to research this because it has been a common problem over the years in education. With COVID-19 on the rise and online learning is taking place in more schools, the reading gap will continue to grow between students from low and high SES families. My personal goal was to find strategies to bring to my school and district to help students find resources and continue to learn to read during this difficult time.

**Review of Related Literature**

Teaching children to read can’t just be put solely on parents or educators; this has to be achieved in a group effort. Helping children close the achievement gap in reading should consist of parents, students, teachers and community members. When helping students from low SES families the “whole-child” approach should be used. The “whole-child” approach consist of high-quality early childhood education, health and nutrition, enriching, hands-on classroom activities, after-school and summer enrichment programs and parent and community engagement (García & Weiss, 2017). Before children start school, parents should make it a goal to read and discuss books. The sooner children have positive interaction to reading the greater chance students will grow to enjoy reading.

This literature review will dive into the struggles children face coming from low SES families, connecting school and home, and lastly whole-child approach summer strategies.

**The common struggles children face from Low SES families**

Currently in the world COVID will have the most negative impact on children from low SES families. The reason being children living in poverty don’t have the same opportunities at home as children from high SES families. Students are expected to still do online learning, but some might not have Internet access or electronics to do the work (Lancker & Parolin, 2020). The pandemic will have a long lasting affect for years to come: local and national legislators have to start preparing to target education support for low-income household to close the achievement gap that will grow because of COVID (Lancker & Parolin, 2020). Children coming from low SES homes live in neighborhoods defined as “book deserts” too often these children rely heavily on schools for books (Allington, & McGill-Franzen, 2015). Parents in low SES families are more likely to have lower paying jobs and work long shifts causing less time to read with their child. That doesn’t mean parents from low SES families aren’t working with their children it’s not the same amount as high SES families. For that reason, the children are experiencing less cognitive stimulation creating a learning gap before they even enter school (Jury, Smeding, Stephens, Nelson, Aelenei & Darnon, 2017). Children from low SES families face more setbacks but these can all be overcome by having persistence and never giving up on learning to read.

**Connecting school and home life**

The very first step schools need to take when closing the achievement gap is early childhood programs. The programs need to be well put together most importantly the teachers are educating parents on what they can be doing. Students coming from low SES families the parents sometimes need the guidance and recourse to know what they should be doing to help their children. One method to connect school and home is providing students with reading backpacks. A reading backpack can include a variety of books, reading bear buddy or stuffed animal and post reading activities (Curry, Reeves & McIntyre, 2016). Reading activities could include guided question already provided for them to talk over with their parents. This helps parents see the kind of questions they should be asking as they read. As a teacher sending material home, a common fear is will the item come back in the same condition. To help with this fear printed books that you laminate yourself could be sent home. There is a ton of books like this you can find them on teachers’ pay teachers and Pinterest. I was asking an early childhood teacher way she provides her students with books and she goes to Facebook for that. She shared that her first year of teaching she saw this Facebook trend and decided to try it out by asked her friends on Facebook to adopt or sponsor a student in her class. She had a great turnout and has continued to do it every year. By sponsoring the student, they pay twelve dollars, and this will provide every student a new book every month of the year. People in the community are willing to help teachers in any way possible. Another method is read-alouds: these should be used often in classes. Read-Aloud is when a teacher or parent read to a child. They bring a lot of learning opportunities for students they start to learn pitch, tone, pace, volume, where to pause, eye contact, questions and comments. As the adult is reading, they should be guiding and showing the children how print works (Wright, 2019). A “please read” bin could be placed in the room so students can give suggestions on what they want to read. Read-Alouds are a great reward to encourage children to independent read. Even as students get older read-alouds should still be used in multiple classes not just during language arts (Write, 2019). Read-Alouds bring about the opportunity for students to be exposed to literature that is above their reading level and expand their vocabulary.

As students get into middle school it is harder to get them to read. Many students who struggled to read in third grade will continue to struggle with reading for the rest of their lives (Strong Hilsmier, Wehby & Falk, 2016). That is why it’s crucial to start reading interventions at an early age to avoid learned helplessness when students get older. A way to help motivate students is creating reading and writing activities that are authentic to students that they might encounter in their day-to-to life (Gambrell, 2015). Twitter is an activity that can be used where students have to create a short writing response to their book. Students need to collaborate with peers on academic task, they have positive attitudes toward reading because students experience social support for learning (Gambrell, 2015). Three interventions to help reduce the SES achievement gap in high education: self-affirmation, differentiation and goal reframing (Jury, Smeding, Stephens, Nelson, Aelenei & Darnon, 2017).

**“Whole-Child” Approach Summer Strategies**

Summer reading programs are important to avoid losing all the work students and teachers have put in the prior year. During the summer months the estimated loss in academic is two-three months of reading growth for children from low SES homes (Lancker & Parolin, 2020). When a reading program is first put in place, teachers need to promote and explain what will be going on. Bringing the teachers and community together to help students read is extremely important. As teachers, they can help by showing students where to find online books, personal reading diaries, class visits to the public library and group read alouds (Gwilliam & Limbrick, 2016). Ideally a reading program should be two hours a day for five weeks. In the summer reading students need to be provided with choices to make it more intriguing to come. Children have so many distractions like watching television and playing videogames that summer reading isn’t always at the top of their list. Different activities that students could pick from could be readers theatre, drama, Lego construction, poster competitions and 3D printing if the local library has a 3D printer (Gwilliam & Limbrick, 2016). All the actives would be aligned with what the group is reading. The program will see high turnouts when the activities are unique and captivating to students. Summer reading programs isn’t going to fix the reading gap completely, but It can help (Cromie, Fa’Alogo, Gwilliam & Limbrick, 2017).

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, studies have shown that closing the achievement gap between children from low and high SES have to incorporate the “whole-child” approach. Parents have to be working with their child, classroom teachers need hands-on activates that are student centered, students need to develop motivation and self-drive to learn to read and the community need to provide opportunities for students to read. Data shows that summer programs can help close the gap but that alone won’t make the change. The whole-child approach brings about early gains and built throughout prk-12 SES achievement gap is narrowed. When students are given the resources and opportunities to read students will start to find the love of reading early on in life. They will be better prepared to succeed in todays world. Within my classroom I plan to bring more choice for students and read-alouds. It will take time, but I would like to bring the idea of a summer reading program within my school. Like everything that is new it will have to start small. I plan on talking with the librarian at my school and together we can brainstorm ideas. Hopefully over the years we could grow the program to include all of the community.

**References**

Allington, R., & McGill-Franzen, A. (2015). Why do poor students lag behind rich students in

reading development? *National Assessment of Educational Progress.* 1-4. https://letstalkcambridge.org/wp-content/uploads/Why-Do-Poor-Students-Lag-Behind-Rich-Students-in-Reading-Development.pdf

Chen, Q., Kong, Y., Gao, W., & Mo, L. (2018). Effects of socioeconomic status, parent–child

relationship, and learning motivation on reading ability. *Front. Psychol.* 9:1297. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01297

Cromie, R., Fa’Alogo, I., Gwilliam, M., & Limbrick, L. (2017). A summer reading programme.

*Teaching and Learning*. 29-36. https://doi.org/10.18296/set.0067

Curry, D., Reeves, E., & McIntyre, C. (2016) Connecting schools and families: Understanding

the influence of home literacy practices. *Texas Journal of Literacy Education, 4*(2) 69-7. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1121638.pdf

Gambrell, L. B. (2015). Getting students hooked on the reading habit. *Reading Teacher*, *69*(3),

259–263. https://doi-org.ezproxy.chadronstatelibrary.com/10.1002/trtr.1423

García, E., & Weiss, E. (2017). Reducing and averting achievement gaps: Key findings from the

report ‘Education inequalities at the school starting gate’ and comprehensive strategies to mitigate early skills gaps. *Economic Policy Institute.* 1-34. https://files.epi.org/pdf/130888.pdf

Jury, M., Smeding, A., Stephens, N. M., Nelson, J. E., Aelenei, C., & Darnon, C. (2017). The

experience of low-SES students in higher dducation: Psychological barriers to success and interventions to reduce social-class inequality. *Journal of Social Issues*, *73*(1), 23–41. https://doi-org.ezproxy.chadronstatelibrary.com/10.1111/josi.12202

Kavi, R., Tackie, S., & Bugyei, K. (2015). Reading for pleasure

among junior high school students: Case study of the Saint Andrew`s Anglican Complex Junior High School, Sekondi. *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*. 1-19. http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/1234

Lancker, W., & Parolin, Z. (2020). COVID-19, school closures, and child poverty: A social crisis

in the making. *The Lancet Public Health, 5*(5), 243-244. https://doi.org/10.1016/ S2468-2667(20)30084-0

Sequeira, M., Lourdusami (2017). Impact of socio-economic status on the English reading

comprehension of the first year pre-university students in Mangalore Taluk. *International Journal of Education and Psychological Research, 6*(1), 1-5. http://ijepr.org/panels/admin/papers/346ij13.pdf

Strong Hilsmier, A., Wehby, J., & Falk, K. (2016). Reading fluency interventions for middle

school students with academic and behavioral disabilities. *Reading Improvement*, *53*(2), 53–64. http://web.a.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.chadronstatelibrary.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=6&sid=7fc043c7-577c-4ce4-82ed-29275cbc806f%40sessionmgr4008

Wright, T. (2019). Reading to learn from the start the power of interactive read-alouds.

*American Educator,* 4-8. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1200226.pdf