

# Professional Development for Teaching Children of Poverty

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In the following report, Hanover Research examines teaching strategies and professional development programs focused on improving outcomes for students of low socioeconomic status (SES). The report presents best practices for selecting a professional development program; suggests instructional strategies for teaching low-SES students; and profiles nine professional development programs with relevant offerings.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY FINDINGS

## INTRODUCTION

In this report, Hanover Research examines teaching strategies and professional development programs with a low-SES student focus. The report comprises two sections:

- **Section I** presents best practices for selecting a professional development program in strategies for teaching low-SES students. It also presents specific strategies for teachers to use in their instruction of low-SES students.
- **Section II** profiles four private companies and consultants and five programs affiliated with institutions of higher education offering research-based professional development programs for teachers with low-SES students.

## KEY FINDINGS

- **Hanover Research identified nine research-based professional development programs focused on improving effective instruction of low-SES students.** At least four of these programs focus primarily on the philosophies of Ruby Payne and Eric Jensen. Programs are available in a variety of formats (on-site workshops, conferences, online classes) from a range of service providers (private companies, consultants, higher education institutions).
- **Four U.S. higher education institutions identified in Hanover's research offer courses for graduate or professional education credit focused on improving teaching strategies for low-SES students.** Francis Marion University, Colorado State University-Pueblo, the University of Wisconsin-Stout and Madonna University all offer distance learning courses with limited or no face-to-face requirements. All of these institutions are accredited by regional organizations.
- **Four professional development programs identified in our research offer on-site services through which consultant(s) visit a school or district to conduct a workshop on low-SES teaching strategies.** Ruby Payne and Eric Jensen offer workshops in-person or through representatives in their respective companies; EdChange and the CLASSroom Project offer tailored workshops based on the unique circumstances of the client school or district.
- **Regardless of organization or consultant, professional development programs typically emphasize reaching a better understanding of life in poverty, establishing family and community partnerships, and maintaining high expectations for low-SES students as important aspects of effective instruction.** Programs utilize different ideologies based in social and political inequity, culture, and/or science to inform their approaches to teaching strategies for low-SES students.
- **Research finds that teacher professional development in general exerts a positive impact on student achievement.** Several major education authorities, including the

National Center for Children in Poverty and the American Federation of Teachers, likewise recognize professional development as a key component to effectively educating low-SES students specifically. Despite a recognized link between professional development and student achievement in general, however, rigorous research analyzing the correlation between the two as related to low-SES students specifically is somewhat limited.

## SECTION I: BEST PRACTICES FOR TEACHING LOW-SES STUDENTS

In this section, Hanover Research reviews the literature linking socioeconomic status to student learning and achievement, as well as the need for differentiated educational programs and teaching strategies to effectively instruct low-SES students proposed by several industry organizations. This section also presents recommended teaching strategies tailored to low-SES students.

### EDUCATION AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

SES is measured by a combination of education, income, and occupation; low-SES populations are correlated with risk factors such as lower education levels, poverty and poor health.<sup>1</sup> The American Psychological Association (APA) recognizes SES as having a measurable impact on academic achievement and the rate of academic progress.<sup>2</sup> Low-SES students have been shown to acquire language skills more slowly, exhibit lower proficiency in mathematics, and experience a higher high school dropout rate than children from higher SES backgrounds. Although the correlation between SES and academic achievement is well known, the contributing factors and consequences are more complex than is often recognized.

Family resources can affect a child's earliest levels of cognitive development, which in turn impact school readiness in children from low-SES families.<sup>3</sup> Poor nutrition, associated with food insecurity in low-income families, and chronic stress factors negatively impact childhood development, especially in the first years of life. Low-SES families often have fewer financial resources and less time available to allot toward academic growth activities such as reading; for example, a 2002 study of kindergarten children across the country found that only 36 percent of parents in the lowest-income quintile read to their children daily, compared to 62 percent of parents in the highest-income quintile. Low-SES students enrolled in programs that encouraged adult support exhibited "higher levels of effort towards academics."<sup>4</sup>

School environment can impact academic development even more significantly than family resources, according to a 2008 study on how SES affects student reading skills.<sup>5</sup> Challenges for schools serving low-SES communities include high unemployment rates, lack of highly-qualified teachers, and low educational achievement. The American Federation of Teachers

<sup>1</sup> "Education & Socioeconomic Status." American Psychological Association.

<http://www.apa.org/pi/ses/resources/publications/factsheet-education.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Engle, P. and M. Black. "The Effect of Poverty on Child Development and Educational Outcomes." *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1136, 2008. p. 243.

[http://digitalcommons.calpoly.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1002&context=psycc\\_d\\_fac](http://digitalcommons.calpoly.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1002&context=psycc_d_fac)

<sup>4</sup> "Education & Socioeconomic Status." Op. cit.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

(AFT) suggests that the most important school factor in a child's education is effective teaching, making high teacher turnover, inexperience, and training key issues for improving low-SES student achievement.<sup>6</sup> The APA highlights the following factors as key foundations for improving the school environment for low-SES students:<sup>7</sup>

- A focus on improving teaching and learning;
- Creation of an information-rich environment;
- Building of a learning community;
- Continuous professional development;
- Involvement of parents; and
- Increased funding and resources.

The National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP), a division of the Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University, recognizes professional development and "intentional curriculum" as important for effective instruction in schools.<sup>8</sup> Intentional curriculum is defined as content-driven, research-based instruction that is directive, interactive, culturally sensitive and developmentally appropriate. Furthermore, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) for the state of Washington, supported by similar research studies, suggests that schools with high-poverty demographics are more successful when they have "principals and faculties that believe in their students, set high goals for them, and engage in professional development activities that promote supportive and nurturing classroom environments."<sup>9</sup>

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHING LOW-SES STUDENTS

Although professional development is recognized as a vital part of improving the effectiveness of instruction for low-SES students, many school districts' professional development programs remain "unplanned and haphazardly implemented," or have become outdated.<sup>10</sup> According to Pamela Grossman, professor at Stanford University's Graduate School of Education, there is "little evidence" that concretely correlates whether external professional development groups actually improve achievement within schools.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>6</sup> "Intensive Assistance to High-Poverty Schools." American Federation of Teachers.  
<https://www.aft.org/pdfs/teachers/highpoverty0310.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Bulleted points quoted from: "Education & Socioeconomic Status." Op. cit.

<sup>8</sup> Klein, L. and J. Knitzer. "Promoting Effective Early Learning: What Every Policymaker and Educator Should Know."  
 National Center for Children in Poverty. Retrieved at [http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub\\_695.html](http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub_695.html)

<sup>9</sup> Moore et al. "Professional Development and Student Achievement in High Poverty Schools: Making the Connection." *International Studies in Educational Administration*, 39:2, 2011. p. 66.  
<http://christyhiett.wiki.westga.edu/file/view/Professional%20Development%20and%20student%20achievement%20in%20high%20poverty%20schools.pdf/342868410/Professional%20Development%20and%20student%20achievement%20in%20high%20poverty%20schools.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Smith, S. "In One California School District, Teachers Help Teachers Get Better." *The Hechinger Report*, February 19, 2013. [http://hechingerreport.org/content/in-one-california-school-district-teachers-help-teachers-get-better\\_11202/](http://hechingerreport.org/content/in-one-california-school-district-teachers-help-teachers-get-better_11202/)

There is no shortage of colleges, universities, industry associations, and private companies offering guidance and programming in professional development for K-12 teachers in general; however, there is currently no accreditation body for professional development programs outside of baccalaureate and post-baccalaureate degree programs.<sup>12</sup> In July 2013, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) consolidated into the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) as the sole accrediting body for educator preparation.<sup>13</sup>

The body of rigorous research definitively establishing a relationship between professional development and student achievement is somewhat limited, but growing. A National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance report (examining nine such research studies) found that studies in which teachers received more than 14 hours of professional development saw a “positive and significant” impact on student achievement (not isolated to a particular SES subpopulation).<sup>14</sup> However, meta-analyses focused specifically on the relationship between targeted professional development initiatives and low-SES student achievement appear largely absent from recent literature, despite the fact that several authorities, including the National Center for Children in Poverty and the American Federation of Teachers, recognize professional training as a key component to effectively educating students in poverty.

Best practices standards for professional development programs provide further guidance on selecting a high quality program. Learning Forward, formerly the National Staff Development Council, is a professional learning association focused on increasing student achievement through the implementation of effective professional learning.<sup>15</sup> Learning Forward proposes the following standards for professional development programs that can be applied by school districts to create their own high quality programs for teachers:<sup>16</sup>

- **Learning Communities:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students occurs within learning communities committed to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment.
- **Leadership:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires skillful leaders who develop capacity, advocate, and create support systems for professional learning.

<sup>12</sup> “Initial Teacher Preparation and Advanced Preparation.” Council for the Accreditation of Education Preparation. <http://www.ncate.org/Accreditation/ScopeoftheAccreditationReview/PreparationLevels/tabid/292/Default.aspx>

<sup>13</sup> “History.” Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation. <http://caepnet.org/about/history/>

<sup>14</sup> “Reviewing the Evidence on How Teacher Professional Development Affects Student Achievement.” National Center for Educational Evaluation and Regional Assistance, 2007. pp. 3, 6. [http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/southwest/pdf/REL\\_2007033.pdf](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/southwest/pdf/REL_2007033.pdf). See also “Effects of Teacher Professional Development on Gains in Student Achievement.” CCSSO, June 2009. [http://www.ccsso.org/documents/2009/effects\\_of\\_teacher\\_professional\\_2009.pdf](http://www.ccsso.org/documents/2009/effects_of_teacher_professional_2009.pdf). The CCSSO meta-analysis found evidence of positive relationships between teacher professional development and student achievement in math across 16 qualifying studies.

<sup>15</sup> “The Story of Our Name Change.” Learning Forward. <http://learningforward.org/who-we-are/our-history/the-story-of-our-name-change#.Ut7TXBAo7IU>

<sup>16</sup> Bulleted points quoted from: “Standards List.” Learning Forward. <http://learningforward.org/standards/standards-list#.Ut7SRRAo7IV>

- **Resources:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires prioritizing, monitoring, and coordinating resources for educator learning.
- **Data:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students uses a variety of sources and types of student, educator, and system data to plan, assess, and evaluate professional learning.
- **Learning Designs:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students integrates theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcomes.
- **Implementation:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students applies research on change and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long term change.
- **Outcomes:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students aligns its outcomes with educator performance and student curriculum standards.

## STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING LOW-SES STUDENTS

The Francis Marion University School of Education houses a special unit, the Center of Excellence to Prepare Teachers of Children of Poverty (COE), which is devoted to improving the academic achievement of low-SES students through teacher preparation degree programs and professional development.<sup>17</sup> The program's resource library draws on publications from a variety of authors and organizations, including Ruby Payne, Eric Jenson, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), and the ASCD (formerly the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development), to inform its standards and strategies for teaching low-SES students. These strategies are meant to increase brain development, investment in learning, and thus student achievement and likelihood of success.<sup>18</sup> Figure 1.1 presents the COE-recommended strategies for teaching low-SES students.

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<sup>17</sup> "Goals of the COE." Center of Excellence to Prepare Teachers of Children of Poverty.  
[http://www.fmucenterofexcellence.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=48:goals-of-the-coe&catid=35:goals&Itemid=55](http://www.fmucenterofexcellence.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=48:goals-of-the-coe&catid=35:goals&Itemid=55)

<sup>18</sup> "Standards and Star Strategies." Center of Excellence to Prepare Teachers of Children of Poverty.  
[http://www.fmucenterofexcellence.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=97&Itemid=119](http://www.fmucenterofexcellence.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=97&Itemid=119)

**Figure 1.1: Standards and Strategies from the Center of Excellence to Prepare Teachers of Children of Poverty**

STANDARD	STRATEGIES
<b>Life in Poverty</b>	<p>The educator will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Apply current research to interpret the life in poverty as it relates to educational environments; and</li> <li>▪ Apply current research-based knowledge, skills, and dispositions to generate and implement classroom strategies designed to support the unique needs of children of poverty.</li> </ul>
<b>Language and Literacy</b>	<p>The educator will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Apply current research to explain the nature of language deficits frequently registered by children of poverty;</li> <li>▪ Generate and implement appropriate strategies for facilitating language learning in the home; and</li> <li>▪ Create effective instructional environments that support the growth of language skills of children of poverty.</li> </ul>
<b>Family and Community Partnerships</b>	<p>The educator will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Apply current research to explain how family structures of children of poverty impact home-school-community partnerships;</li> <li>▪ Generate and implement of a plan for partnerships between home, school and community stakeholders; and</li> <li>▪ Successfully generate and implement a service-learning activity with children and/or their families living in poverty.</li> </ul>
<b>The Classroom Community</b>	<p>The educator will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Apply current research to compare the social, emotional, and cognitive development abilities of impoverished students with those of their more affluent peers; and</li> <li>▪ Create and implement classroom strategies that cultivate a positive classroom community that recognizes children of poverty as capable learners and that implements explicit instruction in success-oriented strategies.</li> </ul>
<b>Curriculum, Instructional Strategies and Assessment</b>	<p>The educator will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Apply current research to explain the importance of accessing students' background knowledge prior to planning instruction;</li> <li>▪ Explain how alignment of state mandated curriculum with instruction and assessment impacts achievement of children of poverty;</li> <li>▪ Analyze state content standards with planned instruction and assessment, explaining appropriate types of assessment methods for use with children of poverty;</li> <li>▪ Explain elements of age- and developmentally-appropriate curriculum design appropriate for children of poverty; and</li> <li>▪ Apply research-based knowledge, skills, and dispositions to create and implement results-driven instructional strategies and assessments.</li> </ul>

STANDARD	STRATEGIES
<p><b>Teachers of Children of Poverty as Learners, Leaders, and Advocates</b></p>	<p>The educator will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Apply current research to generate an appropriate plan for life-long learning that includes the elements of self-reflection and self-evaluation, especially as they relate to personal qualities;</li> <li>▪ Exemplify professional leadership through participation in a variety of professional activities that focus on the issues that impact children of poverty; and</li> <li>▪ Advocate for children of poverty by creating and executing appropriate advocacy activities designed to illuminate their needs and improve their academic success.</li> </ul>

Source: Center of Excellence to Prepare Teachers of Children of Poverty<sup>19</sup>

A 2010 study of successful low-SES students attending Deakin University, an Australian higher education institution, provides further guidance on effective teaching strategies.<sup>20</sup> The study involved interviews with 53 first-generation university students from low-SES backgrounds, with questions addressing learning environments and teaching strategies that helped these students learn and succeed.<sup>21</sup> Considering the age demographic this study focuses on, its findings may be most useful for informing teaching strategies for older K-12 students; however, the advice is broad enough to be applicable for all educators.

First, the study suggests that while identifying low-SES students is important at a policy level, it is “very difficult, and potentially undesirable” to single out individual students for educational support at the institutional level.<sup>22</sup> Rather, they suggest that instructional methods should focus on inclusivity; all students can benefit from varied methods of teaching, not just those in particular target groups like low-SES.

The Deakin study identifies four qualities of effective teachers for low-SES students. Effective teachers ...<sup>23</sup>

- **Are approachable and available to guide student learning.** These qualities tend to improve students’ understanding of teacher expectations, especially for assessments.
- **Are enthusiastic, dedicated, and have rapport with students.** Teachers can demonstrate enthusiasm by varying the pace and type of teaching method, focusing on a small group of 5 to 6 students during each lesson, ... and asking for student feedback on presentation methods.

<sup>19</sup> Figure contents quoted from: “Poverty Resource Articles by COE Standards.” Center of Excellence to Prepare Teachers of Children of Poverty.

[http://www.fmucenterofexcellence.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=65&Itemid=75](http://www.fmucenterofexcellence.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=65&Itemid=75)

<sup>20</sup> Devlin, M. and H. O’Shea. “Teaching Students from Low Socioeconomic Backgrounds: A Brief Guide for University Teaching Staff.” Higher Education Research Group, Deakin University, 2011.

[http://www.jcu.edu.au/teaching/public/groups/everyone/documents/information\\_about/jcu\\_093850.pdf](http://www.jcu.edu.au/teaching/public/groups/everyone/documents/information_about/jcu_093850.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>23</sup> Bulleted points adapted from: Ibid., pp. 5-9

- ***Use language and examples that students can understand.*** Students value clear communication using familiar and straightforward vocabulary; this avoids feelings of exclusion when explanatory language is not easy to interpret. Real world examples and multiple delivery methods (auditory and visual aids) also improve information retention.
- **Provide clear expectations in relation to assessments.** Some low-SES students are unfamiliar with the student role and academic expectations. Teachers are more effective when students feel informed about the content, structure, format, and grading criteria.

## SECTION II: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

The Education Industry Association defines professional development as “any services of training that enhances the professional skills of educators while they are on the job.”<sup>24</sup> Professional development service formats can vary by provider. Organizations may offer **consultation** services to assess a district’s needs and current programming and recommend improvements; **training** on a particular skill or competency; **guidance** on implementing a professional development program; or **graduate-level continuing education** courses.<sup>25</sup> Under this broad definition, professional development services can be provided by several types of organizations, including regional education service centers, nonprofits such as college or universities, independent consultants, and for-profit companies.<sup>26</sup>

This section presents research-based professional development opportunities for teaching low-SES students currently offered by private consultants and companies or through institutions of higher education (or partnerships resulting in credits from such institutions). It should be noted that many professional development providers offer courses that emphasize teaching for student diversity or equity in learning; however, the programs featured here have a specific emphasis on low-SES students or “children of poverty.”

### PRIVATE COMPANIES AND CONSULTANTS

There are many private companies and consultants that offer general professional development resources to educators. In the area of poverty and teaching low-SES students, however, fewer options are available. Figure 2.1 presents four professional development providers currently offering courses, workshops, and/or conferences on the topic of teaching low-SES students. The first two programs are supported by experts particularly prominent in the field for educating low-SES children: Ruby Payne and Eric Jensen. Alternatively, the EdChange program was founded by Paul Gorski, a critic of Payne’s framework. The final program is offered by the School Improvement Network, featuring education and psychology scholar Dr. Mary Montle Bacon.

<sup>24</sup> “Professional Development.” Education Industry Association. p. 1.  
<http://www.educationindustry.org/assets/documents/NewBusinessOpportunities/eia%20prof%20develop%20facet%20sheet%20webinar.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>26</sup> Keller, B. “Staff Development Providers Eye New Opportunities.” *Education Week*, November 10, 2010.  
[http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2010/11/10/11pd\\_business.h30.html](http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2010/11/10/11pd_business.h30.html)

**Figure 2.1: Professional Development for Teaching Low-SES Students Offered by Private Companies and Consultants**

PROGRAM	DESCRIPTION	AUTHOR/ORGANIZATION
<b>aha! Process</b>	Professional development through on-site workshops or national training events to educate on teaching children of poverty based on nine essential resources such as support systems, relationships, finances, cognitive and emotional resources.	Ruby Payne
<b>Teaching with Poverty in Mind</b>	Three-day workshop and educational resources for teaching low-SES students through understanding differences in middle-class and low-income students using “brain-based” learning strategies.	Eric Jensen/ASCD
<b>EdChange</b>	Tailored workshops and consultations based on each organization’s unique circumstances, with a focus on equitable learning. Provides specific strategies and principles for teaching low-SES students.	Paul Gorski
<b>Working With Students from the Culture of Poverty</b>	Resource guide and DVD set that trains teachers and administrators to recognize differences between middle class and low SES students’ learning styles and potential cultural differences.	Mary Montle Bacon/ School Improvement Network

Source: Organization websites

### *AHA! PROCESS—RUBY PAYNE*

The aha! Process, Inc. is a Ruby Payne company offering training and educational resources aimed at school-wide improvement through building a variety of resources.<sup>27</sup> The company offers on-site workshops, national training seminars, online resources for educators, and a trainer certification.<sup>28</sup> Training resources developed by the aha! Process, Inc. have received awards from several publishing associations and from *USA Today*.<sup>29</sup> Dr. Payne also conducts her own training and conferences at schools, communities, and businesses.<sup>30</sup>

Payne received her Ph.D. in Educational Leadership and Policy from Loyola University, and is known as “an expert on the mindsets of economic classes and overcoming the hurdles of poverty.”<sup>31</sup> Her research and training goes beyond a focus on academic success, including training for professional and personal success as well.

The foundation of Payne’s approach to reaching low-SES children is an integrated approach that reaches across all sectors of a community to build resources.<sup>32</sup> The **Resource Builder**

<sup>27</sup> “K-12.” aha! Process, Inc. <http://www.ahaprocess.com/solutions/k-12-schools/>

<sup>28</sup> “Events and Resources.” aha! Process, Inc. <http://www.ahaprocess.com/solutions/k-12-schools/events-resources/>

<sup>29</sup> “Award-Winning Publisher.” aha! Process, Inc. <http://www.ahaprocess.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/aha-Award-Winning-Publisher.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> “Ruby K. Payne, Ph.D.” aha! Process, Inc. <http://www.ahaprocess.com/who-we-are/dr-ruby-payne/>

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> “The Model.” aha! Process, Inc. <http://www.ahaprocess.com/the-model/>

**Model** trains educators to understand the causes of poverty, develop resources, engage the community, and focus on continual improvement. Payne details nine essential practices which form the basis of her framework for improving achievement in low-SES students:<sup>33</sup>

1. Build relationships of respect.
2. Make beginning learning relational.
3. Teach students to speak in formal register.
4. Assess each student's resources.
5. Teach the hidden rules of school.
6. Monitor progress and plan interventions.
7. Translate the concrete into the abstract.
8. Teach students how to ask questions.
9. Forge relationships with parents.

### *TEACHING WITH POVERTY IN MIND—ERIC JENSEN*

Teaching with Poverty in Mind is a “brain-based” program offered by Jensen Learning, a company run by Eric Jensen.<sup>34</sup> Jensen Learning offers a three-day summer workshop, one-day on-site professional development with Eric Jensen, a DVD series, books, and PowerPoint templates. Jensen's DVD series and book are also supported by the ASCD through its store and an online course.<sup>35</sup>

Jensen has 20 years of experience in educational neuroscience, which informs the foundation of his model for teaching low-SES students.<sup>36</sup> Jensen's program is grounded in “brain-based learning principles” that connect theories of neuroscience to classroom practice.<sup>37</sup> With regard to low-SES students, Jensen suggests that poverty causes chronic changes to the human brain and offers teaching methods that can effect positive change in low-SES student learning at the neurological level.<sup>38</sup> However, Jensen's critics argue that “a great divide remains between knowledge derived from basic research and how those findings might be effectively applied in the classroom,” suggesting that Jensen may stretch the “brain-based” nature of some of his claims.<sup>39</sup>

Jensen's most recent publications center on increasing academic engagement for low-SES students. Engagement strategies are a key component of Jensen's three-day workshop on Teaching with Poverty in Mind. A new article by Jensen published in the ASCD's *Faces of Poverty* journal describes seven differences Jensen has identified in middle-class and low-

<sup>33</sup> Taken verbatim from headings in: Payne, R. “Nine Powerful Practices.” *Poverty and Learning* 65:7, pp.48-52.

<http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/apr08/vol65/num07/Nine-Powerful-Practices.aspx>

<sup>34</sup> “Home.” Jensen Learning. <http://www.jensenlearning.com/index.php>

<sup>35</sup> “Teaching With Poverty in Mind DVD Series: Elementary and Secondary.” ASCD Store.

<http://shop.ascd.org/Default.aspx?TabID=55&ProductId=5381>. See also: “Teaching with Poverty in Mind, PD Online Course.” ASCD Store. <http://shop.ascd.org/ProductDetail.aspx?ProductId=61148747>

<sup>36</sup> Eric P. Jensen.” Jensen Learning. <http://www.jensenlearning.com/who-is-eric-jensen.php>

<sup>37</sup> “Principles of Brain-Based Learning.” Jensen Learning. <http://www.jensenlearning.com/principles.php>

<sup>38</sup> “Teaching with Poverty in Mind.” Jensen Learning. <http://www.jensenlearning.com/workshop-teaching-with-poverty-in-mind.php>

<sup>39</sup> Zardetto-Smith, A. “A New Formula for better Learning: A Cup of Common Sense and a Dash of Neuroscience?” *CBE Life Sciences Education* 5:2, Summer 2006. pp. 126-127. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1618515/>

SES student preparation and engagement.<sup>40</sup> Low-SES students show differences in health and nutrition, range of vocabulary, level of effort, a hope and growth mindset, cognition, relationship skills, and distress.<sup>41</sup> Jensen’s instruction offers science-based teaching strategies to address each of these differences in low-SES students.

### *EDCHANGE—PAUL GORSKI*

EdChange is an organization founded by Paul Gorski, with consultants based in the Washington, D.C. metro area, Baltimore, Maryland, and Minneapolis, Minnesota. The program offers issue-specific workshops, presentations, assessment, and training opportunities for P-12 schools with the goal of supporting diversity, equity, and multicultural education.<sup>42</sup> EdChange develops individualized workshop content for each of its clients, rather than utilizing “canned” workshops or presentations.<sup>43</sup> The company also provides school climate assessments. Previous clients include community and healthcare organizations, P-12 schools, and colleges and universities.<sup>44</sup>

Gorski received his master’s degree and doctorate from the University of Virginia, and currently works as a professor at George Mason University.<sup>45</sup> Gorski is a known critic of Ruby Payne’s educational framework for low-SES students,<sup>46</sup> which he believes unnecessarily focuses on “understanding vague and often stereotypical notions of ‘culture’”<sup>47</sup> Instead, with regard to teacher training, EdChange provides workshops designed to broaden teachers’ understanding of poverty, help them critically examine their role in contributing to or challenging socioeconomic inequity in the classroom, and develop practical strategies for the classroom.<sup>48</sup>

The core of EdChange’s methodology lies in the concept of “equity literacy,” defined as “an approach for creating and sustaining an equitable classroom and school environment that...foregrounds the abilities and consciousness that prepares educators to recognize, respond to, and redress subtle and not-so-subtle inequities that hamper student engagement.”<sup>49</sup> Gorski proposes 10 principles that are central to equity literacy in educators of students of poverty, presented in Figure 2.2.

<sup>40</sup> “How Poverty Affects Classroom Engagement.” *Faces of Poverty* 70:8, May 2013. pp. 24-30.  
<http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/may13/vol70/num08/How-Poverty-Affects-Classroom-Engagement.aspx>

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> “Consulting and Workshops.” EdChange. <http://www.edchange.org/consulting.html>

<sup>43</sup> “Examples of Our Workshops and Consultations.” EdChange. [http://www.edchange.org/consulting\\_examples.html](http://www.edchange.org/consulting_examples.html)

<sup>44</sup> “Some of Our Clients.” EdChange. [http://www.edchange.org/consulting\\_clients.html](http://www.edchange.org/consulting_clients.html)

<sup>45</sup> “Paul Gorski.” George Mason University. <http://ncc.gmu.edu/people/pgorski1>

<sup>46</sup> “Our Publications.” EdChange. <http://www.edchange.org/publications.html>

<sup>47</sup> Gorski, P. “Principles for Equity Literacy for Educators of Students in Poverty.” EdChange.  
<http://www.edchange.org/handouts/Equity-Literacy-Principles.pdf>

<sup>48</sup> “Consulting and Workshops.” Op. cit.

<sup>49</sup> Gorski, Op. cit.

**Figure 2.2: EdChange Program Principles**

10 PRINCIPLES OF EQUITABLE LITERACY FOR EDUCATORS OF STUDENTS IN POVERTY
1. The right to equitable educational opportunity is universal.
2. Poverty and class are intersectional in nature.
3. Poor people are diverse.
4. What we believe, including our biases and prejudices, about people in poverty informs how we teach and relate to people in poverty.
5. We cannot understand the relationship between poverty and education without understanding biases and inequities experienced by people in poverty.
6. Test scores are inadequate measures of equity.
7. Class disparities in education are the result of inequities, not the result of cultures.
8. Equitable educators adopt a <i>resiliency</i> rather than a <i>deficit</i> view of low-income students and families.
9. Strategies for bolstering school engagement and learning must be based on <i>evidence</i> for what works.
10. The inalienable right to equitable educational opportunity includes the right to high expectations, higher-order pedagogies, and engaging curricula.

Source: EdChange<sup>50</sup>

### *WORKING WITH STUDENTS FROM THE CULTURE OF POVERTY—MARY MONTLE BACON*

This program is offered through the School Improvement Network, a Utah-based online professional learning company that began by producing teacher training videos in 1991.<sup>51</sup> The company offers an extensive online library of on-demand professional development resources through its PD 360 platform.<sup>52</sup> Through membership, educators gain access to award-winning training videos, classroom resources, and premium courses offering continuing education units (CEUs).

Mary Montle Bacon, who holds an M.A. in Guidance and Counseling and a Ph.D. in Social Psychology from Stanford University, developed the professional development unit on working with low-SES students.<sup>53</sup> The program is available through PD 360 or a DVD series supplemented with a guidebook and CD soundtracks.<sup>54</sup>

“Working with Students from the Culture of Poverty” is a professional development program for teachers and administrators, with an emphasis on acknowledging the middle class values that frame schools and the differences that shape students from a culture of poverty.<sup>55</sup> Throughout the program, educators learn to understand the variations in learning

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> “School Improvement Network—Our Company.” School Improvement Network. <http://www.schoolimprovement.com/company/>

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> “Mary Montle Bacon.” School Improvement Network. <http://www.schoolimprovement.com/experts/mary-montle-bacon/>

<sup>54</sup> “Working with Students from the Culture of Poverty.” School Improvement Network. [http://www.schoolimprovement.com/store/product.php?p=Working\\_With\\_Students\\_From\\_The\\_Culture\\_Of\\_Poverty\\_1405DVD](http://www.schoolimprovement.com/store/product.php?p=Working_With_Students_From_The_Culture_Of_Poverty_1405DVD)

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

readiness and preparation for low-SES students and accommodate these differences through varied instructional approaches. The program also focuses on building connections between families and schools, low-SES family value systems, and bridging the home and school environments. This program trains educators to use real world examples and high expectations for all students to close the “economic achievement gap.”

**PROGRAMS AFFILIATED WITH INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

Several colleges and universities have a special academic unit devoted to professional and continuing education; these units offer for-credit and non-credit courses that may serve as professional development for educators. Additionally, some colleges and universities house research centers or institutes that offer specialized resources, courses, and workshops for particular topics. As is the case with companies and consultants, while many institutions offer professional development courses for teachers, few focus specifically on low-SES students. Figure 2.3 presents courses, workshops, and certifications emphasizing strategies for teaching low-SES students offered by five institutions of higher education or affiliated units.

**Figure 2.3: Professional Development for Teaching Low-SES Students Offered by Postsecondary Institutions or Affiliates**

PROGRAM/CENTER	DESCRIPTION	CREDITING INSTITUTION(S) OR PARTNER
<b>Center of Excellence to Prepare Teachers of Children of Poverty</b>	Provides short- and long-term professional learning opportunities through conferences, workshops, graduate courses, and service projects. Its mission is to increase achievement in children of poverty by improving the quality of teacher preparation.	Francis Marion University
<b>The CLASSroom Project</b>	Intensive one-day workshops and consultation offered at UGA and UMN or on-site, with the goal of working toward practices and policies that “create powerful, empowering, creative spaces for working-class and poor students, their families, and the larger community.”	University of Georgia and University of Minnesota
<b>Siedow Teacher Education</b>	Offers two 3-credit semester graduate course (distance learning) on improving the performance of economically disadvantaged students through instructional methods.	Colorado State University-Pueblo
<b>School of Education Online Professional Development</b>	Offers an online course for graduate or professional development credit on working with students in poverty, based on the work of Ruby Payne and Eric Jensen.	University of Wisconsin-Stout
<b>Teacher Education Institute</b>	Offers a 3-credit course for graduate or professional development credit on combating the effects of poverty in the classroom, based largely on Jensen’s work.	Madonna University

Source: Organization websites

### *CENTER OF EXCELLENCE TO PREPARE TEACHERS OF CHILDREN OF POVERTY—FRANCIS MARION UNIVERSITY*

As mentioned in Section I, the COE at Francis Marion University is a special academic unit within the School of Education which focuses on improving the educational outlook for low-SES students through high quality teacher preparation. The COE was founded in 2004, and provides pre-service and in-service teacher training for educators interested in improving teaching strategies for children in poverty.<sup>56</sup>

The COE has received the Partnership Organization Award from the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) at Johns Hopkins University six years in a row for its progress in helping schools develop community and family partnerships.<sup>57</sup> Francis Marion University's initial teacher preparation and advanced preparation programs are accredited by NCATE through 2019; however, this accreditation does not consider professional development or re-licensure programs.<sup>58</sup> The institution is also accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.<sup>59</sup>

The COE offers a course in educational programs for children of poverty for graduate or professional development credit. There do not appear to be substantive differences in graduate and professional development course content based on available course descriptions.<sup>60</sup> The poverty course for credit draws on the six standards and strategies for teaching low-SES students outlined in Section I. The course includes face-to-face classes for four days over the summer, followed by seven asynchronous sessions throughout the fall.<sup>61</sup> The unit also offers half-day workshops in the fall and a two-day summer institute each year.<sup>62</sup>

### *THE CLASSROOM PROJECT—UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA AND UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA*

The CLASSroom project is a research and outreach program created to address classism and poverty, especially as related to education.<sup>63</sup> The program was founded by Stephanie Jones, an associate professor in the College of Education at the University of Georgia, and Mark Vagle, an associate professor in the College of Education and Human Development at the University of Minnesota.<sup>64</sup> The project offers professional development workshops and

<sup>56</sup> "History of the COE." Center of Excellence to Prepare Teachers of Children of Poverty.

[http://www.fmucenterofexcellence.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=47&Itemid=54](http://www.fmucenterofexcellence.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=47&Itemid=54)

<sup>57</sup> "FMU's Center of Excellence Wins National Award." Francis Marion University.

<http://www.fmarion.edu/news/article374788c6570121.htm>

<sup>58</sup> "State by State List of Accredited Institutions." NCATE.

<http://ncate.org/StatebyStateListofAccreditedInstitutions/tabid/539/Default.aspx#>

<sup>59</sup> "Accreditation." Francis Marion University. <http://www.fmarion.edu/about/accreditation>

<sup>60</sup> "Poverty Course Descriptions." Center of Excellence to Prepare Teachers of Children of Poverty.

[http://www.fmucenterofexcellence.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=119&Itemid=152](http://www.fmucenterofexcellence.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=119&Itemid=152)

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> "Fall Workshop/Summer Institute." Center of Excellence to Prepare Teachers of Children of Poverty.

[http://www.fmucenterofexcellence.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=83&Itemid=110](http://www.fmucenterofexcellence.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=83&Itemid=110)

<sup>63</sup> "Core Principles." The CLASSroom Project. <http://theclassroomproject.com/about/>

<sup>64</sup> "The Other Side of Poverty in Schools." University of Georgia College of Education.

<http://www.coe.uga.edu/events/files/2014/01/OSOP-Flyer.pdf>

consultations sponsored by both university campuses, and also offers on-site consulting, workshops, week-long institutes, and customizable programs for professional development.<sup>65</sup>

The CLASSroom project offers two one-day workshop options—The Other Side of Poverty in Schools and The Reading Turn-Around—which both teach what Jones and Vagle call “social class-sensitive pedagogies.”<sup>66</sup> The Other Side of Poverty in Schools instructs teachers and other educational staff in principles for meeting the needs of low-SES students and research-based teaching practices that are sensitive to SES.<sup>67</sup> The Reading Turn Around is targeted toward elementary level teachers, administrators, and literacy coaches, and examines how social class and poverty impact reading and language in the classroom.

The CLASSroom Project cites five core principles which guide its workshop on The Other Side of Poverty in Schools:<sup>68</sup>

- Exploring personal experiences of social class and situating those within larger social and political contexts;
- Locating and disrupting social classed hierarchies;
- Integrating social class and marginalized perspectives into curriculum;
- Perceiving classed bodies in moment-to-moment interactions; and
- Changing broader school and classroom policies and practices to reflect anti-classist and anti-poverty commitment.

### *SIEDOW TEACHER EDUCATION—COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY-PUEBLO*

Siedow Teacher Education was established in 1985 to offer graduate continuing education courses to teachers, administration, counselors and support staff.<sup>69</sup> Siedow Teacher Education has partnered with Colorado State University-Pueblo to offer graduate credit courses through a distance education format. Courses do not require face-to-face meetings; all materials are mailed and there are no online, Internet, or video requirements.<sup>70</sup> The course schedule is flexible, and a group registration option allows educators to work individually or with colleagues.<sup>71</sup> Colorado State University-Pueblo’s teacher education program is accredited by the TEAC through 2021,<sup>72</sup> and the institution is also accredited by the North Central Association Higher Learning Commission.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>65</sup> “Workshops.” The CLASSroom Project. <http://theclassroomproject.com/consulting-and-workshops/>

<sup>66</sup> “Mark Vagle.” University of Michigan Department of Curriculum and Instruction. <http://www.cehd.umn.edu/ci/People/profiles/vagle.html>

<sup>67</sup> “Workshops.” Op. cit.

<sup>68</sup> Bulleted points quoted from: “Core Principles,” Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> “About Us/FAQs.” Siedow Teacher Education. <http://www.siedowteachereducation.com/aboutus.sc>

<sup>70</sup> “Welcome to Siedow Education.” Siedow Teacher Education. <http://www.siedowteachereducation.com/main.sc>

<sup>71</sup> “Spring 2014 Continuing Professional Education.” Siedow Teacher Education. <http://www.siedowteachereducation.com/media/Spring.2014.Educ.pdf>

<sup>72</sup> “TEAC Members.” TEAC. <http://www.teac.org/membership/teac-members/>

<sup>73</sup> “Accreditation.” Colorado State University-Pueblo. <http://www.colostate-pueblo.edu/about/Pages/Accreditation.aspx>

Siedow Teacher Education offers at least two courses that would be relevant for informing teaching strategies for low-SES students. First, Course 500: “Educating Everybody’s Children: Strategies for Diverse Learners” offers strategies and techniques that address a wide spectrum of students from different cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds.<sup>74</sup> Also, Course 521: “Improving the Performance of Economically Disadvantaged Students” provides coursework that is more narrowly focused on meeting the needs of low-SES students. All materials are included in course fees. Detailed course syllabi are not available; however, content appears to draw on Jensen’s work, as another available course is entitled “Teaching with the Brain in Mind” – also the title of a Jensen workshop and book.<sup>75</sup>

#### *ONLINE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT—UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-STOUT*

The University of Wisconsin-Stout offers an online course on teaching low-SES students through its Online Professional Development unit within the School of Education.<sup>76</sup> Students receive two graduate credits, which can be used toward a degree program or as professional development credits.<sup>77</sup> The course is targeted toward a wide range of educators, including K-12 teachers, special education teachers, counselors and administrators, and those working with incarcerated youth outside the traditional K-12 system. The University of Wisconsin-Stout is accredited by the NCATE as well as the North Central Association Higher Learning Commission.<sup>78</sup>

The two major texts for the course are authored by Ruby Payne and Eric Jensen. The course includes examples of “high-performing high-poverty schools with emphasis on strategies to reduce the achievement gap and build community partnerships.”<sup>79</sup> The course is offered entirely online; no face-to-face classes are required, but the course relies heavily on interactions between students and the facilitator through required discussion postings, projects, and assignments. Participants analyze the ways in which SES influences student-teacher interactions; receive training in evidence-based strategies for improving student performance; and develop plans for improving the learning climate for low-SES students, incorporating the principles and strategies learned throughout the course.<sup>80</sup>

#### *THE TEACHER EDUCATION INSTITUTE—MADONNA UNIVERSITY*

The Teacher Education Institute is a professional development institute that offers graduate and professional development courses, with credit issued through one of four partnering institutions of higher education: the College of St. Rose, Madonna University, Notre Dame

<sup>74</sup> “Spring 2014 Continuing Professional Education.” Op. cit.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> “Poverty in Schools.” University of Wisconsin-Stout School of Education.  
<http://www.uwstout.edu/soe/profdev/poverty.cfm>

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> “Frequently Asked Questions.” University of Wisconsin-Stout School of Education.  
<http://www.uwstout.edu/soe/profdev/faq.cfm#accreditation>

<sup>79</sup> “Poverty in Schools.” Op. cit.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

College, and Carlow University. The content of professional development and graduate credit courses is identical; however, professional development courses are pass/fail. At the conclusion of the course, students receive a certificate of completion rather than a transcript.<sup>81</sup>

The College of St. Rose, Madonna University, and Notre Dame College are all accredited by the NCATE; Carlow University is not accredited by a teacher education association, but does hold accreditation from the Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools.<sup>82</sup>

The Teacher Education Institute offers a course entitled “Combating the Effects of Poverty in the Classroom” for three graduate credits or 60 hours of professional development credit; the course is offered completely online over the course of 13 weeks.<sup>83</sup> Readings for the course are primarily based on Eric Jensen’s book *Teaching with Poverty in Mind*, with supplementary reading from other sources. The course culminates in the creation of an “Action Plan” created by the teacher to support low-SES students in his or her own classroom, as well as a personal position paper on strategies for working with children in poverty.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> “Frequently Asked Questions.” Teacher Education Institute. <http://www.teachereducation.com/teacher-education-faq.html>

<sup>82</sup> “Academic Partners.” Teacher Educations Institute. <http://www.teachereducation.com/teacher-university-partners.html>

<sup>83</sup> “Combating the Effects of Poverty in the Classroom Online.” Teacher Education Institute. <http://www.teachereducation.com/courses/online/combating-the-effects-poverty-in-the-classroom.html>

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

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