

# Chapter 12

## Supporting Students Impacted by Poverty Through Literacy Methods, Resources, and Strategies

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter is based on supporting students impacted by poverty through literacy education. Specifically, it looks at literacy methods, resources, and strategies that offer students engaging opportunities to learn in safe and supported environments. Student-centered instructional examples provide both voice and choice through quality pedagogical practices. As the wealth gap continues to widen, it is more important than ever to be diligent in ensuring equitable access to educational resources available to all students regardless of income status. Within this chapter, the authors have offered ways in which educators can access some of these resources.*

### INTRODUCTION

Children across the world are living at various levels of poverty. The challenges and barriers faced by families living in poverty are important considerations for educators as they plan for instruction and create positive learning environments. Rodrigues (2020) highlights that families who live at or below the poverty level “often have to choose between sending their child to school or providing other basic needs. Even if families do not have to pay tuition fees, school comes with the added costs of uniforms, books, supplies, and/or exam fees” (para. 5). As families may struggle with decisions to send their children to

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school, it is critical that educators are prepared to support students while at school and not underestimate the challenges and sacrifices that families may endure. Positive communication with students is important; however, when educators also engage in positive communication with the family members they can build a relationship between home and school.

The effects of living in poverty can have a direct influence on learning. Poverty impacts on literacy in and out of the academic setting are numerous. However, Giovetti (2020) highlights that “literacy is a powerful tool against poverty. If all students in low-income countries had basic reading skills, 171 million people could escape extreme poverty. Illiteracy comes at a high price” (para. 9). This chapter will discuss educational challenges associated with poverty and will offer readers classroom resources, instructional materials, and out-of-school activities to utilize in the academic setting. The authors will specifically share examples of digital storytelling, fan fiction, mentor texts, and video game quests.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The theoretical framework for this chapter is based on three overarching constructs. The first is based on the importance of equitable access to educational opportunities and support. Second, the ideas encompassing Multiple Literacies Theory (Cope & Kalantzia, 2009; The New London Group, 1996) are explored. Third, “ideological rationale” (Marsh, 2008, p. 530), to support the use of popular culture in language learning is presented.

Equitable access as a theoretical foundation is supported by the International Literacy Association’s (2018) stance that K-12 education “has persisted for generations and is tied to long-standing historical marginalization of youth based on race, class, and gender” (p. 4). However, technology implementation “removes barriers to learning materials, supports students where they are across varied learning contexts and needs, and gives educators more insight into the learning environments they’re creating” (Anderson, 2019, para 1). Yet, impoverished students often have inadequate technology access outside the academic setting (Celano & Neuman, 2010; Collins & Halverson, 2009; Crawford, 2005; Judge, Puckett, & Cabuk, 2004; Light, 2001).

Multiple Literacies Theory (Cope & Kalantzia, 2009; The New London Group, 1996) offers the idea of a “variety literacy modes that differ based on culture and context and are constantly changing by and for users based on specific cultural purposes” (Haas & Tussey, 2021b, p. 258). This theory consists of four constructs which can be realized in any order and consist of situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, and transformed practice. Cope and Kalantzia (2009) offer that this theory changes the perspective of what should be required of students. They offer that students should be “required to be users, players, creators and discerning consumers rather than spectators, delegates, audiences or quiescent consumers” (p. 172).

Marsh (2008) provides four different rationales for incorporating popular culture into literacy education. Werner and Teege (2021) offer succinct overviews of each rational model provided in a bulleted list.

- Utilitarian model: pop culture is exploited as a means to lead to schooled literacy practices;
- Culture capital model: pop culture is acknowledged as an integral part of students’ lives and valued as a sole cultural experience in certain social environments;
- Critical model: learners are to be developed into critical readers and writers of both canonical and non-canonical texts;

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