American Poverty and The Effect on Student Education: Analytical Essay

America, the land of opportunities. Our founding fathers traveled across the ocean to find the freedom and riches that lay in the land undiscovered. The relentless history that towered the country made it one of the most developed countries. “But regardless of being one of the most advanced countries in the world, the United States has one of the highest rates of childhood poverty.”[1] Children who are born into poverty suffer a clear disadvantage in their education. Poverty decreases a child's readiness for school since it causes poor motor skills and physical well-being, reducing child’s capacity to remember and focus on information. Indigence diminishes mindfulness, interest, and avidity.

One of the most relentless effects that poverty has for children in the United States is that children living in poverty enter school with a “readiness gap”[1]. In the US alone, “40% of children living in poverty are not prepared for primary schooling” [4]. As children grow, this gap only gets bigger, causing students to feel like they don’t belong, losing motivation and suffer the high chance of dropping out. The gap also produces the cause of bullying in the children’s educational years. They experience insecurities due to their social ill-being causing them to fear the consequences that their poverty produces. “Children from lower-income families are more likely than students from wealthier backgrounds to have lower test scores, and they are at higher risk of dropping out of school.” [1] It’s clear that poverty contributes to significant educational setbacks, but why is this happening? It’s simple: children who come from homes that provide less attention, resources, and care to them cause them to have a lower chance of success. Therefore, children are really paying the price.

Poor children coming into school are welcomed with a “readiness gap”. This readiness gap develops into many disadvantages that the child has to endure through. Biochemically speaking, elevated levels of cortisol were found in newborns born into poverty. A study was done to test the difference between newborns in rich families and meager families, research showed that “cumulative time in poverty and cumulative household chaos were significantly related to a flatter trajectory for cortisol change and to an overall higher level of cortisol”[7] Children living in poverty risk constant cortisol, which can create higher chances for depression, anxiety, and anger. Factors that cause cortisol for young children can include unhealthy living conditions, violence or drug abuse in the home, which can be typically found in poverty filled homes. These factors can cause a limited understanding of complex language, listening and responding, restrict the brain to handle processing, like rapid speaking. A kid's home life altogether impacts their school performance, unsteadiness, hunger, psychological malady, language troubles, addiction, abusive behavior, and carelessness at home, which all affect a kid's brain. How is a child supposed to focus on a math test, when he’s concerned about what he’s going to eat, or if he’s even going to get to eat? Poverty creates poor motor skills and limits a child’s capacity to remember information. Children living in financial difficulty can experience a restrained ability for physical development. “Children that live below the poverty line are 1.3 times more likely to have developmental delays or learning disabilities than those who don’t live in poverty”[4] These undeveloped physical skills can be caused by a lack of nutrients and food, an absence of physical movement, and a shortfall of basic hygiene, which can all fall under the consequences of poverty. Poor physical prosperity and motor skills

diminish a child's ability to center and recall certain educational activities leading them to lose hope for a better life.

As children grow up, they start to get hope for the future. They dream about their right to independence and parental freedom, hoping that their future will be better than their parents. Post-Secondary education is almost essential to avoid falling in cyclical poverty. In fact, in "2020, 65 percent of all jobs in the economy will require postsecondary education and training beyond high school."[3] And right now "dropout rates of 16-24-year-old students who are coming from low-income families are seven times more likely to drop out than those from families with higher incomes."[4] Education and poverty have a strong connection; educational failure is an immense contribution to poverty. Low-income children are predestined to numerous hardships, resulting in limited educational opportunities. "Every year, millions of children fall through the cracks of a broken system and lose hope for a fulfilling, prosperous life." [2] Fewer opportunities create a lower chance of a low-income student to pursue a secondary education, which can result in a generational poverty cycle, decreasing the hope of their children for a better life.

However, some people might argue that the whole idea of poverty is vastly overrated. Walter Williams, a professor of economics at George Mason University, states his view on poverty saying, "While 'poor' Americans don't live in opulence, they are surely not poor either by international or historical standards in our own country."[5] and, "...low income is largely a transitory experience for those willing to work." [5] But, these ideas are highly misrepresented, you can't compare the poverty in America to poverty in other international countries like Africa, because they have different economic statuses. For example, the average cost of a 3 bedroom apartment in the city center in Africa, averages about $700 to $1200, while in America the avenge ranges from 3,400 to 6,500.[8] There is a clear difference between "international" and American standards, so it's not logical to compare standards between America and the rest of the World. Continuing, the idea of poverty being a "transitory experience for those willing to work." might be true, but a lot of children born into poverty aren't able to support themselves, relying on their parents to provide for the necessities needed for living. When their parents aren't able to provide, sometimes due to reasons like addiction, language differences, or legal issues, the kids can't go out and provide for themselves at an early age. And even sometimes parents working 12 hours at minimum wage can barely keep up to the high and rising prices of food, basic necessities, and housing. Children born into poverty can't work themselves out of it until a certain age. During the years in poverty, children suffer many disadvantages, adding on to their tribulation in their educational success.

A recent study done by southern education concluded that a majority of children enrolled in the U.S public school system come from insufficient financial funding housing, meaning they qualify for the Federal Free or Reduced Lunch Program. We as students are highly affected by this, your school is filled with students who suffer from the disadvantages that poverty enforces on them. "With one in five children in the United States living in poverty, it's critical to identify and scale the solutions that work."[2] Poverty and the effects on education is a reality in America. So what can we do? Speaking out to all the teachers. Teachers should expand their empathy, before assuming a student's readiness or ability to work. Kids don't get to choose their mother or father. Teachers need to work with students who come to school from a low-income home, working individually with those students, building relationships to help with the disadvantages that that student has due to low-income.