

**THREE KEYS TO STUDENT SUCCESS**

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## INTRODUCTION

There are many barriers which stand in between a student and their education. These barriers make it hard to impossible for students to receive a meaningful education. The goal of this research is to identify the three major barriers obstructing students from receiving a meaningful education. I call these three barriers the keys to student success because, if this research can shed light on these barriers, then educators and institutions can be better equipped to deal with the issues blocking students from receiving a meaningful education. The consequences of children not getting the education they deserve is damaging to society and our nation as a whole. From cyclical poverty and crime, to an ill-prepared workforce, these are just some of the negative outcomes that can occur when people aren't able to receive a meaningful education due to barriers in the classroom and in society.

The question powering this research is “What are the three main keys to student success?” I believe the three keys to student success can be achieved when, the socioeconomic burdens that students feel are lifted, and when educators use effective methods of teaching in the classrooms. The following research will point to the three keys to student success being, combating student hunger/poverty, parent/guardian home involvement, and pedagogy/effective methods of teaching.

“According to a survey by researchers at Temple University and the college affordability-focused Wisconsin HOPE Lab, more than a third of students are struggling with basic needs such as food and housing. Researchers surveyed 43,000 college students at 66 schools and found that 36 percent of students on U.S. college campuses are considered “food insecure,” meaning they do not get enough to eat” (Hess, 2018). This statistic points out the high rates of food insecurity amongst community college students. This issue is a core barrier to student ability to receive a

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suitable education. When a student is constantly having to think about where their next meal is going to come from or how they are going to be able to afford their meal, it understandably diminishes their ability to learn.

In the article *Family factors and student achievement: An avenue to increase students' success* the authors demonstrate the importance of family involvement in a student's education, highlighting five key family environmental factors that can help boost student achievement; raising parent/guardian expectations of the student, structure for learning, parent involvement, discipline, and home affective environment (Christenson, Rounds, & Gorney, 1992). This research points out how home involvement is key to helping a student succeed in getting an education. The research shows that students who receive help at home with their school assignments, and whose parents/guardians have clear expectations of their child, tend to get more out of their education. The use of this article is to show how teachers can enlist the help of parents, and school psychologists to create an education plan for students thus making their education more successful.

Another article found during the research stage is *Teaching and Student Success: ACUE Makes the Link*, the author Mangum (2017) describes the importance of teaching and its effect on student success. Most common efforts to increase student success are directed at parent/guardian involvement or classroom structural factors (Mangum, 2017). The author Mangum describes how there is an effective way to help students be more successful in attaining an education and it starts with the use of pedagogical methods of teaching. The Association of College and University Educators or ACUE have been working hard to also increase efforts to use effective teaching methods, which are engaging and interdisciplinary in order to further student success (Mangum, 2017).

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Unfortunately many students do not get the education they deserve because of socioeconomic and institutional barriers. The research provided within this work demonstrates the keys to unlocking student success by addressing the barriers which hinder student success. The goal of this research is to help educators understand the barriers to student success and how to use the three keys described within this research to unlock a higher level of student success, thus creating a better equip workforce and a more educated society.

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### **TERMS/DEFINITIONS**

Student Success- a favorable or desirable outcome in a student's education.

Pedagogy- the method and practice of teaching, especially as an academic subject or theoretical concept.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

This research proposal is being done because someday I hope to be a teacher and I think it is extremely important for educators to know how to help their students be successful in receiving an education. The research question I am posing is; what are the three main keys to student success? Although there are more than three factors to student success, this proposal will focus on the three main points I believe greatly influence a student's success in attaining an education. "The Webster's Dictionary defines "success" as "a favorable or desired outcome." (Cuseo, 2008) This means student success can be defined as a favorable or desirable outcome in a student's education. Student success can be broken down in to five subcategories, student retention, educational attainment, academic achievement, student advancement, and holistic development according to Joe Cuseo author of the article: *Student Success: Definition, Outcomes, Principles, and Practices*. (Cuseo, 2008) These five subcategories are the areas where student's success can and should be measured. This research proposal will highlight the three key factors an educator must evaluate and work to improve, in order to bolster student success. The three key factors influencing student success in my opinion are student hunger/poverty, parent involvement, and pedagogy/ effective methods of teaching. This proposal will highlight the importance of these three factors and how to implement strategies to improve upon them.

### Student Hunger

In the peer reviewed article "Feeding Student Success." the author Ed Finkel describes how many college students do not have access to proper nutrition and often can't afford their bills as well. (Finkel, 2016) Student success is dependent on nourishment and stability in the

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home life, when a student comes to school, they bring with them all the hardships they are feeling, hunger being one of these hardships plaguing many students of impoverished households. If a college student can't pay their bills or doesn't have enough food to eat, their basic needs are not being met. (Finkel, 2016) Some students don't know where their next meal is going to come from and often skip meals when they can't afford food. When a student worries about where their next meal is going to come from, they are not in a mental state to be able to retain information. Anyone would have a hard time doing tasks and completing assignments on an empty stomach, these things are hard enough, but when you are unsure if you will even eat today, these tasks and retaining information become impossible. This is why it is so important to academic success for a student to have access to proper nutrition. Finkel (2016) then goes on to highlight some ways colleges have taken initiative in solving this problem; by opening up food pantries and by engaging the community in food drives on campuses, schools are combatting student hunger. The article also describes how colleges, more and more are beginning to give grants to students for things such as food and utility bills. (Finkel, 2016) By providing students with proper nourishment and by lifting some of the financial burdens of college student life, colleges have seen some academic improvement and decreased dropout rates. (Finkel, 2016)

### **Home Educational Involvement/Culture**

In the article *Family factors and student achievement: An avenue to increase students' success* the authors demonstrate the importance of family involvement in a student's education, highlighting five key family environmental factors that can help boost student achievement; raising parent/guardian expectations of the student, structure for learning, parent involvement, discipline, and home affective environment (Christenson, Rounds, & Gorney, 1992). The authors touch on ways to get parents to be more involved in their child's learning, as well as, ways to be

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more effective in doing so. The collaboration between parents, teachers and school psychologists, and that the student's education is a shared responsibility. It is important to a student's academic success that school psychologists be involved in the task of training parents to help their child be more successful in their education. (Christenson, Rounds, & Gorney, 1992) This effort to involve the parents, teachers, and school psychologists, in a child's education is bogged down by underfunding, which hinders the start and progress of efforts to boost parent involvement. (Christenson, Rounds, & Gorney, 1992)

In the article *Changing the educational culture of the home to increase student success at school* Leithwood and Patrician describe how a child's family educational culture, affects their educational success at school. (Leithwood & Patrician, 2015) The authors describe how often children of lower socioeconomic status (SES) don't receive the same help, time, and resources, at home which can hinder their academic success. This socioeconomic problem leads to a cyclical occurrence, where difficult home life, can lead to poor academic success, which can lead to generations of achievement gaps amongst families. (Leithwood & Patrician, 2015) Generally speaking, families of higher SES tend to have an educational culture which places more emphasis on high academic achievement. These families tend spend more time working side by side with their children to do homework and other stimulating activities such as reading, which often leads to greater academic success. The authors describe ways in which home training can help families support their children's educational success by spending time working with their children. (Leithwood & Patrician, 2015) By offering ways to teach families how to support their child's academic needs, educators can help children be more successful and in turn shrink the achievement gap between families of different SES.



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There are links that can be drawn from the works of Finkel (2018), Christenson, Rounds, & Gorney (1992), and Leithwood & Patrician (2015), which are extremely influential to a student's success. Poverty can play a huge roll in a student's success, as demonstrated in these three works. Poverty can hinder a student's success on many different levels, such as hunger, access to resources, and parental involvement due to time restraints. These works draw the connections between poverty and its effect on student success.

### **Pedagogies/ Effective Methods of Teaching**

In the article *Teaching and Student Success: ACUE Makes the Link* the author Mangum (2017) describes the importance of teaching and its effect on student success. Most common efforts to increase student success are directed at parent/guardian involvement or classroom structural factors. (Mangum, 2017) The Association of College and University Educators or ACUE have been working hard to also increase efforts to use effective teaching methods, which are engaging and interdisciplinary in order to further student success. (Mangum, 2017) With all the structural and out of classroom factors influencing student success, there is also a more direct way for educators to help their students succeed; being a more effective educator by studying the methods of the ACUE Effective Practices Framework, can greatly improve student success. (Mangum, 2017) The Effective Practices Framework demonstrates five important areas of pedagogical practices, which are direct methods an educator can use to be effective at cultivating student success which are “establish a productive learning environment; use active learning techniques; promote higher order thinking; and assess to inform instruction and promote learning.” (p.2) (Mangum, 2017)

In the peer reviewed article *Enhancing student success: Taking the classroom success seriously* the author Vincent Tinto first highlights some statistical data, showing that even though

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college enrollment has greatly increased over the past forty years, completion / graduation rates have only increased marginally. (Tinto, 2012) Although there have been many state wide efforts to increase student success in colleges there has been little to no change in the percentage of students who finish their secondary education. (Tinto, 2012) Tinto attributes this partly to first year students poor classroom experiences. An effective way to teach, demonstrated in the work of Tinto (2012) is what he calls the “attributes of an effective classroom.” (p.1) The attributes Tinto (2012) highlights in his work are, expectations, timely support, feedback, engaging pedagogies, and enhancing teaching skills. (Tinto, 2012) He discusses the importance of each of the attributes and how to implement them into the classroom. Tinto also stresses that it is extremely important to create an effective classroom for first year students because the first year of secondary education is critical in determining a student’s attitude towards their own education and their attitude towards the institution. (Tinto, 2012)

In the works of both Tinto (2012) and Mangum (2017) the authors stress the importance of developing good teaching skills and effective ways of communicating expectations. The authors both dictate the importance of understanding pedagogies and effective methods of teaching. These two articles mirror each other in their efforts to inform educators of the tremendous influence they have over their students’ success, because many of the factors that affect a student’s success are out the teachers reach.

### **Conclusion**

There are many similarities which tie these works together and display the barriers blocking many students from getting the education they deserve. One such barrier being poverty, which is responsible for students not getting the proper nutrition they need in order to be successful in receiving an education and lack of resources and learning materials such as computers and up to

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date text books. Another side effect of poverty which can cause students to not be able to be successful is, lack of parent involvement. Often time's students of impoverished households do not receive the educational support at home because of parents having to work multiple jobs in order to pay the bills. Many of the problems that students face when trying to get an education can relate to poverty. One way to help counter the effects of poverty on a child's academic success is by using effective methods of teaching, and as an educator understanding the philosophy of pedagogy. Teachers have tremendous influence over the learning and levels of success of their students.

## RESULTS

Success in education does not come from for one specific area. Successful learning and successful teaching are a culmination of understandings. While sifting through the data, something became clear to me, the keys to successful teaching rely on the understanding of these three areas of education, socioeconomic injustices within the education system, academic support at home, and utilizing effective methods of teaching. The real key to successful teaching is to have an understanding of these three aspects of education.

It is imperative to understand as a teacher that there are socioeconomic injustices going on in the education system. Schools in affluent towns with higher taxes, have more money in the budget to buy crucial resources and technologies which help students learn. On the other hand schools in communities where poverty is at high rates, the funding for resources and technologies gets cut out of the budget, along with programs that are seen as less valuable like music and art. This is a social and political issue which cannot be solved in the classroom, but it can be addressed and brought into the spotlight by teachers. This is an issue where all teachers must stand together outside of the classroom to have our voices be heard. Funding for schools should not be based on tax revenues. Funding for public schools should be federally mandated that all schools receiving the same amount of money per student regardless of the town's socioeconomic status. Education must be equal for all, otherwise cyclical poverty and the classroom to prison pipeline continues.

The next area of education, which is vital for educators to understand is at home involvement in the education process. The data shows that students whose parental figures place education at the top of their priorities generally tend to perform better in school and place a higher self-importance on education. Also students whose parental figures spend time to work

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with them on their assignments and involve themselves in their student's educational process, receive a more encompassing education. Educators cannot directly make parental figures be involved in their student's education, but educators can and should offer workshops for parents on how to be involved in their student's education. By working closely with the guidance counselors, school psychologists, and the student's parental figures teachers can help to give their students a broader education drawing aspects and insight from all the people involved in a student's education.

Teachers have a tremendous amount of influence over their student's education. Despite all the distractions students face in the classroom and from their home lives, teachers can still provide their students with a meaningful education. Being able to deliver that information consistently on a daily basis is no easy task, especially when each and every student brings their lives and emotions with them into the classroom. But by using effective methods of teaching and understanding pedagogy, educators can provide a meaningful education to their students. One such method is understanding that all students learn in different ways and all students have different interests, by understanding a student's interest and academic strengths, you as an educator can tailor the assignments to their strengths and interests in order to help students to be engaged in an activity.

As educators it is imperative to understand these keys to education. Some of these aspects are not something that can be directly used in the classroom, but rather are ideals and values, such as the belief that students deserve a meaningful education and money or lack of money should not hinder that right. The keys to education are about being able to grasp the concepts tackled within this writing. Poverty is not an issue teachers can tackle alone, but when we stand

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together united against social and political issues our voice will carry and hopefully bring about a world where poverty doesn't exist and education isn't held back by socioeconomic ties.

## DISCUSSION

One thing I realized as I analyzed the literature and the data, is that there is not one key or three keys to student success but many different aspects of life which play important roles in someone's education. Often times there are barriers which hold students back from learning and receiving a meaningful education. As educators it is our job to understand the barriers in place which hinder student academic success. These barriers range from socioeconomic to purely educational barriers within the education system and everything in between. Going into this research I was hoping to find some method or solution which can just help student be more successful, what I found from the research is there is a host of barriers which hold students back from reaching their potential.

Socioeconomic issues such as poverty are among the most disruptive when it comes to delivering an education. If a school does not have money in the budget for new books, the students who are forced to use dilapidated books are the ones whose educations suffer. When a student is not receiving adequate nutrition and are coming to the classroom starving there is no possible way to teach that student, their basic needs are not being met and their mind is focused only on their next meal. Poverty also can hinder a student's home involvement in their education process, if a parent of a student has to work multiple jobs just to scrape by, there are multiple ways that can negatively affect a student's education. First if the parent is always working, they will not have much time to devote to their child's education. Also if a family is living in poverty, they might not have access to resources such as the internet or technologies such as laptops and expensive calculators. These two examples have a huge influence over a student's education. This is why it is so important for educators to understand how poverty affects education.

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Although, the barriers which hold students back seems to be insurmountable, by using effective methods of teaching and by understanding pedagogy, and by looking at education its self, as a discipline which can be learned, teachers can combat so of the barriers which hinder student success. Multidisciplinary education, social learning, hands on learning, and many other methods of teaching have been proven to be more effective at educating students than the traditional methods of teaching out of a textbook, and constant testing. Education is about preparing students for the future, for joining the workforce, and society. So rather than constant testing and quizzes, educators should focus on delivering meaningful knowledge that is useful and practical. Understanding the barriers between students and their education is the key to helping students succeed.



## **METHODS**

### **Introduction**

The question posed throughout the research was “What are the three main keys to student success?” This is a topic that is extremely important, the youth are the future and it is imperative that they receive the best education possible. By posing this question I hope to gather more insight into the ways in which educators, administrators, social workers, school psychologist, parent/guardians, and students themselves, can succeed in education; and one that is meaningful and preparatory, to student’s futures in the workforce.

One bias that I would like to point out is the fact that I am a Teaching Assistant in a public high school, therefore, I may be inclined to look outward when looking at the barriers to student success, and not realize the potential barriers teachers may pose to their students. Therefore, one of the topics I have chosen to research is how to make teachers better educators. My hopes are that this research will be useful in aiding student success and the research about this topic that follows.

### **Research**

Using the question, “what are the three main keys to student success?” the researcher gathered sources using the SUNY Purchase library system’s data base search, from home. In the discovery search bar under the dropdown “almost everything” the key words student success were typed. This search resulted in 1.5 million hits, from there the researcher narrowed down the

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field of information by putting the Peer Reviewed filter on the search of the key words, “student success” the results of this were 650,000 hits. Then narrowing down the search even farther by selecting scholarly journals, resulting in 600,000 results. From there the researcher began selecting articles and getting ideas to answer the research question, “what are the three main keys to student success?” the researcher began to formulate the three keys to student success. The three selected were, student hunger/poverty, parent-involvement/home culture, and pedagogy/effective methods of teaching. Once the three categories were established, there were individual searches using the key words “student success” paired with the keywords, student hunger, poverty, parent involvement, pedagogy, effective methods of teaching the researcher was able to narrow down the results even farther and then select the eight journals used to complete the annotated bibliography, and eventually narrowed down to six journals, to complete the Literature Review section of this research. The majority of the research was done through the dates of 10/1/19 through 10/22/19. The research conducted for this study is a strong platform for the coming analysis of the research in the Results section to come.

**WORKSCITED**

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