

The Economics of Stress and Education for the Low Income Area
Schools of the USA

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The way that the United States funds its schools has a direct effect on the people who live in those school districts. This is especially true for those still in US public schools. This essay will show that students who live in low-income areas suffer greatly both biologically and economically because of stress from their economic status. Parents and guardians working with minimum wage have constant financial worries while supporting their families. This stress in turn affects children, as well as their performance in school. Graduation rates in low-income schools are low; where dropout rates are four times higher than in high income areas (Firestool, 2014). Low graduation rates and high dropout rates means no college education, and these low income areas remain with stagnant economic mobility. In addition, these schools are poorly funded and lack the resources they need to raise graduation rates and lower dropout rates—and low income area schools ultimately don't prepare students to advance out of their low socioeconomic status. By fixing this problem of low funding and high stress, we can adjust these low economic areas, low stress rates and improve these areas from within.

Many of the problems tied to high stress in a low income areas come from financial difficulties. For instance, states with the highest percentage of low-income students in public schools have the least economic mobility for people in their state, and the people living in these same states were also the most stressed (Dews, 2016). What this means is that there is a direct correlation between economic mobility, low income, and stress. As Gary Evans, professor of Human Ecology at Cornell University states, “children born into low-income families lag behind their middle- and upper-income counterparts on virtually all indices of achievement [...] a national study of elementary school children shows that children in the poorest quarter of American households begin kindergarten nearly 10 percent behind their middle-income and

affluent classmates in math” (Evans, 2011). Financial pressures on low income families affect how children are able to learn, and these stressors show themselves in both physical and psychological ways. Low income affects children educationally, as well as medically, and of course, economically. To fully understand how this has become possible, we have to look backwards into history to see why these inequalities exist.

In my own experiences as a student teacher through SUNY New Paltz in the Long Island area, I have been able to teach in both an underfunded school district, Central Islip High School in Suffolk County and Levittown Wisdom Lane Middle School in Nassau County. My experiences could not be further from each other, where Levittown has a white population of 90%, as stated before, Central Islip has a white population of 22% a, hispanic population of 50% and a black population of 25% (city data. com). I began my student teaching at Central Islip, and it was a more difficult classroom structure than in Levittown. My class sizes were often 35 or more, and this was in elective classes, which are usually smaller than general education courses. The absences were constant, and I had several students on parole, some students had children of their own, and one student who was in their 20s still finishing high school. While all of my students were intelligent and were hardworking in their own way, there were students who partook in drug use (marijuana, cigarettes).

In other words, it was obvious that these students had a severe level of stress in their lives. It was evident that students struggled more in their relationship with school because of their low socioeconomic backgrounds. Many students had to work jobs on the side to support their families, and some had gang affiliations. In other words, many students were overworked and overstressed and school added to the many pressures they experience in life. Central Islip as

town is an example of this segregated community. The town has low property value, and a large percentage of the students were on free or reduced lunch. On delayed days due to snow, the school wouldn't have shortened periods, it would start its day 4th period—the first lunch period, and be full periods from 4th until the end of the day. This was so that students could have full time to eat their lunch.

Luckily for Central Islip, the teachers' union is very strong and provides well equipped supplies for the teachers, however the stress levels for the students were still obvious, and the school was still underfunded in the Special Education Department and in the ESL department. I noticed this as none of the teachers I observed nor the classes I taught had integrated classrooms neither with an ESL or Teacher's Aid. Some students in my classes had obvious language difficulties, and their reading levels were lower than expected. These students often relied on just their one teacher to provide for their needs or to assist them in their disabilities. Though students applied themselves and enjoyed classes, it was obvious that school sometimes took a second priority due to the stress in the lives of the students. As mentioned before, stress levels in these low income area schools are so much higher than in districts that benefited from redlining, such as Levittown, and caused many issues such as absences, disinterest in school, and drug or gang affiliation.

On the other side of Long Island in Nassau County, I have experienced a different world from Central Islip. Of course it is Middle School, and some issues will not be as common, such as drug use, gang affiliation, or pregnancy, the students obviously have more resources at their fingertips. Out of five classes that I taught at Levittown, three were inclusion classes (students with IEPs and 504 plans), having at least one aid in the room to help these particular students.

This took pressure off of me, the teacher. Students benefited from the aids in the classroom as it was another educational professional to keep the students on track and understanding the lessons. Students also had infrequent absences and a very high rate of homework completion, unlike in Central Islip, where homework was almost unanimously not completed on a day to day basis. overall Levittown was better taken care of, had higher test scores, and more funding for athletics and school maintenance than Central Islip. In addition, parent interaction and involvement is higher in Levittown, as its socioeconomic advantages are noticed in the communities surrounding the school. Levittown is in direct benefit due to its redlining history, and its racist origins. This is not to say the town itself approves of its racist history, however the advantages of its past actions are clear.

To understand further how and why these low income area schools (LIAS) came to be in such a bad state, one has to analyze the history of schools in the United States. From the beginning of public schooling with Horace Mann, schools have been built for and focused on white populations. As public education expanded out of Massachusetts and into other states in the northeast in the latter half of the 19th century, schools were built into white neighborhoods. Non-whites did attend schools, however, they received little to no economic support from their communities. As schools expanded and Normal Schools were created, white students continued to benefit from continued and increased public funding, while schools of non-whites, considered “separate but equal” lacked proper facilities (Library of Congress, 2004). As the US entered the 40s and 50s and enforced Jim Crow laws, these racist educational separations only become more obvious, as well as federally enforced.

According to the Population Reference Bureau, many low income areas have high minority populations, African-Americans and Latinos, which started in the 1950s when fair housing laws were not in existence (PRB, 2014). The lack of housing laws allowed for segregation in communities, which helped decide which portions of the community gained federal funding for home loans and which portions were left to fend for themselves. The minority populations were left underfunded and without the means to purchase homes. This increased minority debt which thus restricted financial advancement in communities. The job opportunities were fewer, income was lower (also due to unequal pay and racism), and these areas suffered from a lack of with public services such as public education (Lipsitz, 1995). This causes a negative chain reaction: due to racist housing laws, minorities couldn't apply for loans, which put these communities into debt. Because public schools are paid through property taxes, and these communities experienced high debt, the schools became underfunded and undersupplied. These factors led to more difficult economic conditions, which created stagnant economic growth, which in turn created high stress.

Housing policies in the 1930s-50s were very accessible to white people while targeting minorities. This is called redlining. For instance, home loans were given to white people and denied to many minorities. As mentioned before, white neighborhoods benefited from home loans and thus more easily payed for their homes. Because of this, whites were able to save more of their money and began to spend and invest in the local economy. This attracted businesses, companies, and stores. Because of these additions to white neighborhoods, property values in these communities sprang up which increased property taxes, which then funded these white schools (Conover, 2017). On the other hand, this redlining segregated minority communities and

caused economic segregation and increased debt. Property values remained low, and thus school funding stagnated (Madrigal, 2014). These same neighborhoods lacked economic growth and social mobility. As Alana Semuels, reporter for The Atlantic states, “education is paid for with the amount of money available in a district, which doesn’t necessarily equal the amount of money required to adequately teach students (Semuels, 2016).” In other words, due to terrible housing laws of the 30s-50s, schools are still suffering from these old policies as property values in high minority populations remain low, and thus, schools still lack the tools to adequately teach an increasing population. These communities have remained segregated since the beginning of redlining.

Such redlining and segregation was openly enforced in communities such as Levittown, NY on Long Island where the sales of homes were strictly restricted to white families. “Ignoring the law of the land [...] Levitt continued adhering to its racial bar. Levittown quickly filled up with young white families (Lambert, 1997).” In other words, racist housing policies were advantageous to whites and segregated, both physically and economically, minorities from economic success. Because minorities faced a more difficult economic path when both purchasing houses and renting homes, the wealth in these areas began to stagnate, while the economic success in white neighborhoods attracted businesses and economic growth. Property values of white neighborhoods rose, and thus white families’ wealth grew, meaning schools and public works in these districts got more funding and more economic resources. This directly affects school funding and graduation rates in these neighborhoods. And though these racist practices were eventually made illegal, the damage had already been done. Minority families in low income areas had not been able to develop enough wealth to escape their circumstances, and

the cycle repeated itself. To this day, Levittown is approximately 90% white. This housing segregation of course causes school segregation as well.

Redlining has had a continued affect on education, specifically in the northeast. When analyzing desegregation, it is the south, not the north that has the most integrated classrooms. The south was the focus of desegregation in the 50s and 60s, however, this has left segregated sections of the north to continue unchanged. New York State, specifically, New York City is among the most segregated school districts of the USA. This segregation is caused by a school decision-system in place in the city (where city residents must apply and choose which high schools they'd like to attend), however, this enabling of segregation in the school districts has a direct affect on school life, home life, and stress levels for the communities of these segregated schools. This system has continued a tradition of segregation which directly affects minority students. Students in schools with less than 1% white students have lower graduation rates, more inexperienced or unqualified teachers, and much less funding available for modern resources. Segregation in school causes the funding of high minority schools to be lower and thus can be very harmful for students' preparedness for college, work, and even high school graduation (Kucsera, 2014).

Because of this underfunding and lack of resources to these LIAS, graduation rates declined, while dropout rates increased. This problem became larger and larger from the 1950s onward as the US moved from an industrial economy to a service economy. Unskilled jobs became harder to come by, and it continues to become more difficult to get a job without some sort of college degree. Jim Tankersely, an economic journalist for the Washington Post, says in his article, "The American economy has stopped delivering the broadly shared prosperity that the

nation grew accustomed to after World War II. The explanation for why that is begins with the millions of middle-class jobs that vanished over the past 25 years, and with what happened to the men and women who once held those jobs” (Tankersely, 2014). LIASs fail to produce students ready to go into the service economy because of their lack of resources and the low economic statuses of its community. Because of this, many low income citizens are forced to work more than one unskilled job which can lead to increased stress and raise health risks. Therefore, low income areas suffer from a negative feedback loop such as follows: low income areas have high stress from underfunded schools and from unskilled jobs —> students are underprepared for the service economy —> They can’t afford to leave these areas or go to college —> their children go to LIAS etc. LIASs truly affect the outcome of its students’ future.

When analyzing this future, it is important to analyze the issue of stress itself. Where does this detriment of stress come from? Can we stop stress? The answer lies in many places. As stated before, low income areas have high rates of stress because of financial pressures (which is measured by analyzing academic achievement, life expectancy, and areas health of high health risk). But what does this stress mean for the actual low income family? High stress in a mother of a low income area with less resources than those with middle or high income, can cause high anxiety, creating pregnancy anxiety and state anxiety which affects directly both the birthweight of the child and its delivery date. Studies found that, “a composite including perceived stress, state anxiety, and distress about life events independently predicted both earlier delivery and lower birth weight, controlling for medical risk.” What this means is that low income children are already at a higher risk of medical ailments than their higher income peers. Stress affects them at birth and raises the “risk of infant mortality to lifelong disease and disability” (Schetter,

2009). In other words, the stress of low income creates a long lasting negative effect for children, who enter underfunded schools that lack the resources to take care of these disabilities. In fact, for these same reasons, the child will experience more stressors at school.

This brings into question, what about low-income makes it so stressful? As Tankersley goes on to discuss, the value of the American unskilled laborer has gone down tremendously since the rise of the service economy. A factory job or “middle-class” job (manufacturing or construction) was more valuable 25 years ago than it is today. “Today, a shrinking share of Americans are working middle-class jobs, and collectively, they earn less of the nation’s income than they used to” (Tankersely, 2014). What this means is that those that relied on unskilled or middle-class jobs cannot rely on them like they used to. They are forced to work longer hours and, in many cases, more than one job in order to survive. This increase in weekly work hours makes the individual prone to stress, overwork, and medical problems. Most often, these unskilled jobs rely on repetitive or physical work, which “research indicates that job strain and repetitive and hazardous work conditions may have detrimental effects on physical health. Stress experienced and perceived can affect one’s psychological well-being” (APA, 2017). Furthermore, the stress that this environment can create on a child greatly inhibits their ability to succeed in school, and thus decreases their future economic mobility.

Many LIAS are filled with stressors of their own, as Evans points out, “the stressors that poor children face take both a physical and psychosocial form. The physical form is well documented; poor children are exposed to substandard environmental conditions including toxins, hazardous waste, ambient air and water pollution, noise, crowding, poor housing, poorly maintained school buildings, residential turnover, traffic congestion, poor neighborhood

sanitation and maintenance, and crime.” Evans goes on to showcase how low income students face so many more obstacles because of their high stress environments that it causes high blood pressure in these students (Evans, 2011). This shows that schools that are unable to fully care for its children create many of the stressors that come with having a low income. If you can improve education, you can improve the outliers surrounding these stressors. The stress that those in low income areas first experience comes from school. As Evans showcases, these school environments are often not the most welcoming nor beneficial to a developing mind. These stressors go on to raise the probability of heart disease, asthma, obesity and depression. All of which are seen in LIASs.

Now that we understand the severity of stress and its effects on students and low income citizens, there must be some attempt to end or reduce this stress. In order to stop the stress in schools and in low income areas, we have to stop its causes. Some of these causes include low wages themselves, economic stagnation, a lack of academic resources. As stated previously, low income has a strong source of stress for many families. To look at an example sample, Cincinnati Ohio is in the top 10 in terms of child-poverty in the nation, as well as having a high level of stress. One in three children live in poverty. Ohio’s median salary is \$30,000; this income decreased from 2012 into 2013 by 2% and has continued to decrease since (Curnette, 2013). If child poverty and stress rates are increasing and minimum wage is remaining stagnant while prices inflate, this needs to change. Minimum wage in Ohio was the federal minimum, \$7.25 an hour in 2013. Today, four years later it is less than a dollar more, at \$8.15. States such as Ohio that have such low minimum wages, create financial pressures on its low income citizens. The value of minimum wage has decreased exponentially with rising inflation rates of today. Families

simply cannot survive on minimum wage “data shows that in 1968, the federal minimum was equivalent to \$10.90 in 2015 dollars, nearly \$4 higher [per hour] than today's rate” (Rogers, 2016). Minimum wage has become increasingly more difficult to live on, as the majority of families in low income areas rely on the federal wage “One in four Americans are in working households trying to get by on low wages that are not keeping pace with the rising costs of the things necessary to a family: rent, heat, clothes, medicine, food, and transportation” (EPI, 2014). Other studies find that by increasing minimum wage, these financial stressors decline and improve society, and can even positively affect LIASs (Krisberg, 2015).

Ironically, the cause for such a large reliance on minimum wage is due to students that go through LIASs and come out unprepared and lacking economic resources to get those better jobs and higher education. For many families in these low income areas, parents lack the resources for improvement, and struggle in supporting their families because of the multiple jobs and many hours they are forced to work (Woolfolk, 2009). By stopping or putting an end to this difficult lifestyle of being overworked and underpaid, parents can be more available for their children and can support them. Too often because of reliance on minimum wage jobs, there is a strain on families in low income situations which can create stress for the student, such as “family violence, abuse, neglect” (Lynch, 2014). In other words, those who live with high rates of stress have a higher probability of acting in violent ways. This violence can create even more stress for the victim and the aggressor. This cycle of of stress for parents could be stopped by increasing minimum wage in these areas. By increasing minimum wage, the stress of low income would be reduced, which would thus help reduce stress and the negative side effects of that stress.

If these same low income areas were to receive more federal funding for their schools or more support in programs such as Parents as Teachers (PAT), these families would see improvement in their child's home life and school life. The PAT program is a company which offers support from the home to the school, and connects the home life to the school life from an early age. Programs like this try to focus on low income areas in order to create as many supports for high-stress-low-income families. If programs like this had more economic support, stress on families would decline, due to increased financial and educational support. For instance, the Parents as Teachers Program has helped 123,468 families, helped 83% of those families with immunizations, has helped develop support for those with high needs within school (PAT, 2016). This program and others like it help families with the many struggles of raising a child in high stress, low income communities. Support from programs like this for low income families take the strain off of financial struggles and can reduce poverty-related stress, "social support may buffer against poverty-related stress by serving several functions. Often social support provides tangible help and resources such as family members helping with child-care or lending money in a time of need" (Woodsworth, 2011). The stressors associated with low income come from the financial discomfort itself and spread outward. It is noted that low income has a large negative effect on families and on wages and resources, but what is at the root cause of these low income wages and low income areas? The history of a racist society which has segregated people into low-income-high-stress communities. Because of this past, the schools suffer. Increasing minimum wage will help these communities for a time, but costs will inflate—it cannot be the only solution. The core problem, the issue at the heart of low income areas are the lack of

credited, resourceful, and well-funded schools. Well funded schools in low income areas would help lift the strain on these communities.

LIASs rely on minimum funding while having to deal with increasingly crowded classrooms. Classrooms are growing as the wage gap between the rich and poor is increasing. Class sizes are larger, anxiety and depression rates are high among low income students, and these schools already lack funding and resources to appropriately take care of its children. One article exclaims how the classroom size has increased dramatically in a short amount of time. In a period of just a few years, teacher Erica Oliver has seen her classroom grow from, “16 students, and then to 24 or 25 kids per class. She found it harder to manage her classroom, properly supervise reading groups, and encourage her students to complete projects efficiently” (Jerkins, 2015). Students, not to mention teachers, are negatively affected when they are forced to deal with larger classroom sizes. These stressors for teachers are also numerous which can affect how they run and manage a classroom, which in turn can negatively affect how students learn and participate in school. When a classroom is overpacked, the individual becomes less prioritized, and in a low income area where depression and low self esteem are common, this is a negative outcome. Teachers who have to deal with overcrowded classrooms cannot be fully active in each students’ lives and academic performance, and the year long attempt to succeed in these interactions can be overly stressful and harmful to the teacher, as well as the students. As Stember states, “We lack quality teachers and the means to keep them. Our system, and especially those schools and districts in impoverished areas of our country, lack the resources to deal with the realities of their students’ lives” (Stember, 2017).

In addition, large classrooms lack discussion and participation. These educational concepts are crucial in advancing critical thinking and tolerance in a classroom. Large classrooms don't allow for exchange of ideas between students the way that smaller classrooms could with efficiency. In many cases, students in large classrooms don't speak up nor participate because of fear of judgement by their peers (Wilsman, 2017). It is proven that classrooms with smaller population are much more beneficial to both the students and the teachers. A smaller classroom would allow the teacher to have more of an effect on classroom behavior, while having a stronger relationship with students, decrease distractions, while also allowing for discussion and exchange of ideas (Jerkins, 2015).

In addition to overpopulated classrooms, LIASs are underfunded and lack numerous resources for students. Most public schools are funded through property taxes, and this resource is lacking abundance in low income areas. Furthermore, most states have done little to find another source of funding for LIASs. This lack of funding affects more than just students. As is the purpose of this essay to point out, LIASs directly affect their communities as, "unemployed teachers and administrators have less to pump back into the economy and the vicious cycle of K-12 underfunding is furthered" (Lynch, 2014). When schools lack funding it only reiterates the negative feedback cycle, where students are unable to succeed in the future because of their underfunded school.

In 1965, there was actually a federal bill created to allocate federal funding to schools of low income communities. It was the The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). It was pushed forward by President Lyndon B. Johnson in his War on Poverty campaign. Title I of the Act provided that a school with more than 40% of its students classified

as low income by the US government qualified for increased federal funding, however, the bill continuously faced law changes and stringent code adjustments, making it more and more difficult to qualify for this funding. The bill eventually became modified and has strayed very far from its original purpose. It has transformed into 2001s No Child Left Behind Act, which actually expands the academic gap between rich and poor. Because the ESEA only existed for three years before it received major changes, it cannot be stated that federal funding to low income schools is a completely failed concept. In fact, it attempted to reduce the gap of underachievement in low income communities and help those in economic need. Federal funding like this could have been used to increase school supplies, teacher quality, and support programs that connect the school to the household (such as PAT).

Those who oppose the idea that federal funding could help low income and high stress communities argue that underfunded schools are not the issue. They argue that there is a larger systematic racism that exists in the laws of the United States which go back to the beginning of educational practices, and that this systematic racism needs to be stopped. Though I do not disagree with the argument of systematic racism because it is substantially evident and true when studying minority populations and their relation to low income areas and community segregation, I disagree that increasing school funding would have no positive or little impact in these communities. To completely change and eradicate systematic racism in the US society is a daunting, difficult task. To pass a bill that would increase federal funding to low income schools is a more realistic possibility, as it has already been done in 1965. Though the bill was changed quickly, it had potential to positively affect LIAS and low income Americans. I wish to renew this issue and bring it to the forefront of educational inequality.

Today, one argument to solve the issue with underfunded schools lies with Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos' charter school plans. Basically, DeVos plans to create options of charter schools for parents (charters are schools that are publicly funded but independently operated. They aren't part of the traditional school system in which they are located, and they are not subject to the same rules that apply to traditional public schools), as explained by the Washington Post:

“1. All parents should have a right to choose the school that their students attend; 2. Many traditional public schools, especially in cities, are failing kids, especially students of color, and can't be saved; 3. Poor and middle-class parents should have the right to escape failing neighborhood schools in the same way that wealthy people do by paying for private schools; 4. Public schools should be run as if they are businesses, subject to competition from other educational institutions and subject to closure if they don't work.” (Strauss, May 2016)

These ideas seem forward thinking and progressive, however there may be an issue with them. Though DeVos advocates for options of schools for low income and poor America, she ignores the problem that is at the very core of the issue: funding. When honing in on low income areas, it may be true that educational options are few and sparse, and it might seem better to create charter schools that use public funds to create more options; however, where will the funding for the creation of these schools, teachers, supplies and transportation come from? Because creation of multiple charter schools cannot strictly be based on private funding, public funding is always acquired to fund these schools, which then recreates the issue that is already at hand: there will be more schools that are underfunded with even fewer resources in low income areas, and the

quality of these schools, because they are not under federal control, will be lower. Here, Stephen Henderson from Free Press, writes about charter school problems in Detroit: “[at the] charter school, Hope Academy, [...] test scores have been among the lowest in the state throughout two decades; in 2013 the school ranked [...] the absolute bottom for academic performance. Two years later, its charter was renewed” (Strauss, Dec. 2016). With charter schools, there is only a continuation of underfunded schools for low income areas, and less resources split between more schools. Furthermore, these charter schools would use federal funding that could go towards the LIASs.

Charter schools may not be the answer, but neither is keeping with the status quo. Devos is at least trying to provide options for low income families, however backwards those options may be. Another study finds inequality among public schools comes not only in its funding but in its resources. The US Department of Education found that more than 40% of low-income schools don't get a fair share of state and local funds. Meaning that the little that LIASs are supposed to receive is often not received. This directly affects students' ability to learn and advance in education. Usage of outdated equipment along with the overcrowding of public schools increases stress and and increases dropout rates. When resources are lacking, teachers lack the tools they need to better the classrooms for these impoverished students, and schools lack the teachers (USDE, 2011). These schools need funding, teachers, and resources in order to diminish the high stress of its community and students, and to increase economic mobility from the inside out. The laws of No Child Left Behind (NCLB 2001) and Race to the Top (RTTT 2010) are both examples of laws created by the US government which actually increase the gap between low income, low achieving schools and high income, high achieving schools. NCLB

rushes students through the school system without them attaining the knowledge the need to, it reduces children retaking grade levels while increasing the gap between what these individuals know and what their classmates know. RTTT rewards schools with high test scores with federal funding. Schools that have high achieving, high income students receive more and more funding annually because they have the resources needed to advance scores, while LIASs remain stagnant in both their academic achievement and school budget, meaning the rich schools continue to get more money annually and high scores, while LIAS continue to receive little funding and low scores.

Not only are LIASs underfunded due to minimum wage, little federal attention, and lack of resources, but government programs seem to go out of their way to assure these negatives. Programs like NCLB and RTTT with their Common Core testing components stagnate LIASs' improvement and actually make their situations more difficult. The purpose of these programs is to reward schools that do better on state tests with federal grant money. Those schools that improve their scores year after year will receive more federal funding annually (Kovacs, 2012). The plan has support from corporate sponsors (like Pearson) tied to the charter school movement due to its reward-style features (charter schools may receive federal grant money that could be going to LIAS). NCLB and RTTT put such an emphasis on tests that it hurts LIAS. For instance, continually, low income students do worse on state tests than their higher income peers (Onosko, 2011). These school districts, which undeniably need the most federal funding and support, will lack these very things because of these programs, and will continuously score lower on standardized tests (Cheney, 2014). Furthermore, as stated above, low income areas have high minority populations, (PRB, 2014) and it is proven state tests segregate minorities from whites;

“rather than advancing toward equal opportunity for a high-quality education, high-stakes tests exacerbate racial inequalities and decrease the quality of education for all students.” Students of higher income, with larger percentages of white students, always do better on the tests because those schools are given the attention and funding they need unlike LIASs (Johnson, 2001).

So why implement NCLB and RTTT? This program aims to hold teachers accountable and improve schools from the outside looking in. It holds teachers accountable for their classes, and holds them accountable for the test scores. It wants to analyze schools and reward those that improve scores, while removing those public schools and teachers that don't. It sounds like a charter school plan; however, it is enforced federally (Kovacs, 2012). Of course teachers have to be held accountable if they are bad teachers. In most cases bad teachers don't make it through to tenure. However, standardized tests look at only one issue in a long line of problems. It doesn't take into account the size of the classroom, the school's lack of funding, the little pay the teachers receive, the home lives of these low income students, nor the lack of resources the schools themselves may or may not have. It only looks at tests, and this is no way to hold a school or a teacher accountable when so much more is at stake and affects how the school runs (Popham, 1999). Programs like NCLB and RTTT add to the negative feedback loop that keeps the poor in poverty struggling, and the upper classes succeeding. Though treating schools like a private business may seem to make education a more productive machine, it ignores so much about the education system and its surrounding outliers. These underfunded schools need simpler answers than abstract testing policies and funding based solely on property taxation. Today, these same underfunded LIASs produce low graduation rates, which forces citizens to receive

underpaying jobs, which in turn creates high stress and limits economic mobility. This leads to the cycle repeating over and over again.

What would it take to end this cycle? Rather simply, funding low income schools and providing them with the resources they need to treat the symptoms of high stress areas, as was done with the ESEA in 1965 (though unsuccessfully, as the bill was too quickly edited). It already has been done to a smaller degree. The Every Student Succeeds Act gives “50 school districts nationwide the opportunity to combine and distribute federal, state and local funds through one formula that allocates resources based on student needs” (Brown, 2015). In other words, this act focuses on low income schools by directing money towards them. It was put in place in 2015, and these 50 school districts received more funding through a federal means. It is reported that student learning and achievement increased due to this increase in funding. This Act led to better income and education for these school districts; “student learning in reading and math increased, with gains driven largely by low-income students” (Boser, 2016). When federal funding is allocated to the schools in need and provides productive funding that help LIASs get the resources they need, students improve, and their world starts to improve. The chance of economic mobility increases, and the stressors in these communities start to dwindle. Acts like the Every Student Succeeds Act needs to be implemented on a larger level.

Today the large disparity between majority white populated schools and minority schools shows where the federal budget spends its education money. However, it is not the students’ fault this is occurring. It has much to do with the history of inequality in this country. Something needs to be done at a federal level (Ladson-Billings, 2006). The answer seems clear that the more federal funding a LIAS receives, the better its students do in all aspects of testing and subjects.

As shown by the Center of American Progress, “ Investments in low-income schools produce significant positive outcomes for economically disadvantaged students” (CAP, 2015). Since the answer is so clear, why hasn’t the government acted on this? There are many differences in philosophies of education, as proven by current Secretary DeVos’ methods. Even though the Every Student Succeeds Act succeeded in a bipartisan level, this was only one small victory for equal funding in education. Ideas for funding LIAS come in a variety of ways from very alienated viewpoints; either private charter schools, or statewide progressive funding; not all concepts of funding are rooted in the federal budget. In other words, where should the money come from? This brings up the issue, should the money for LIASs come from highly funded schools? Should those schools of high income receive less funding—in order to balance the equilibrium so that all schools are relatively equally funded? Or should the budget be rearranged to find funds from another place?

The federal budget allocates 598.5 billion dollars towards the military annually, whereas public education receives only 70 billion (Jaeger, 2016). The US military budget is much larger than military spending in countries from around the world. This is not to say that we should make the largest cuts to military spending, but there is definitely room to spare. Writer Frida Berrigan from the education advocacy organization, Dream of a Nation, states in her article “if half of the military budget was reallocated to provide more benefits to veterans and to pay for other domestic needs, [...] the US would still have the largest military budget in the world three times over. But, we would also have the funds to invest in the education [department].” In other words, the money is in the American budget already, it is a matter of prioritization. By increasing federal funding to LIASs, or even increasing advocacy and federal attention for these schools

they would greatly improve, and thus would their communities (CAP, 2015). By increasing funding to LIASs, graduation rates increase, which means chances for higher education increase, which allows for economic growth in these low income sectors, as higher achieving students can bring job opportunity to those communities, and low income could slowly become ruled out. This with the addition of increasing minimum wage in low income areas would allow for an increase in economic mobility and would reduce stress, and thus health risks, in these areas.

Overall, LIASs suffer because of historic inequalities which segregate high income from low income segments of society. These two segments have grown in opposite directions: low income areas have deteriorated due to a rise in dependence on higher education and a lack in industrialized jobs, while this has brought growth and progress to higher income areas. Because of the reliance of property taxes to fund public schools, high income areas receive much more funding while the LIASs are left behind and suffer. Not to mention, LIASs already don't receive more than 40% of the funds that they are supposed to (USDE, 2011). This leaves LIASs stagnant behind on an educational level, which negatively affects all other aspects of these communities, driving away business, job opportunity, increasing poverty rates and dropout rates, while decreasing graduation rates, all of which maximize stress levels, which increases multiple health risks.

If we as a society were to place more value in education, and reallocate funds from the federal budget for these LIASs, then these communities would begin to experience higher school achievement and reduced stress, and population integration in these communities would then occur naturally. Instead of relying on the private sector, or failed federal education acts or strictly property taxes to fund schools, it is necessary to use federal funds for those suffering from a

racist and difficult past which has caused so much economic inequality today. It is proven that LIASs don't have low graduation rates due to low intelligence, but simply a lack of resources. Programs like the Parents as Teachers program and laws like the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and the Every Students Succeeds Act of 2015 are prime examples of what can be done to better LIAS and high stress communities. In addition, it is proven that the US has the funds to create these types of laws and programs for these communities. However, it is simply a matter of allocating these funds to better the schools which need them. Doing this can and will improve the society from the inside out.

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