

## **Jacob Javits Grant: Project North Star: Module Two**

### **Professional Learning Module Two: Creating Responsive Learning Environments**

#### **Introduction**

When combating the effects of rural poverty in the classroom, educators must adjust the learning environment to address the differentiated academic and socio-emotional needs of affected students. Whether it be addressing the distress of the student on a regular basis, the lack of resources of the family, or eroding student confidence, the best defense in the battle against poverty is a supportive and safe learning environment. Most importantly, educators must understand rural poverty and the negative influence it has on children and their education. In addition to awareness, the way teachers relate to students is as important as the strategies implemented during instruction in fighting the negative effects of poverty on students' daily lives. Landsman (2014) reminds us that consistently effective experiences in the classroom have monumental impact on students' success. Unfortunately, the reverse follows, and two years of classroom experiences that are not conducive to the unique needs of target students can repeat the cycle of poverty for a lifetime.

#### ***Rationale***

Once educators understand the impact of rural poverty on students, it is necessary to develop and support a responsive learning environment in the classroom. The classroom must acknowledge and support students' diversity due to the impact of poverty. Based on student diversity, differentiated teaching and learning must be sustained.

#### ***Professional Learning Goal***

To develop learning environments that support student diversity and differentiated learning

#### ***Learning Objectives***

1. Educators support student growth in personal competence and dispositions for academic and creative productivity, including: self-awareness, self-advocacy, confidence, motivation, and resilience.
2. Educators facilitate students' development of social competence through positive peer relationships and social interactions.

## Module Sessions

1. Warm-Up
2. Breaking the Cycle: Poverty is NOT a Life Sentence
3. Teaching to Student Interests
4. Using Books to Help Students Develop Coping Strategies and Problem-Solving
5. Creating Work Products that Reflect Students' Diverse Learning Needs
6. Final Reflection

## Required Resources

Directions: Place participants at tables (round preferred) in preparation for small group activities.

Part	Module Materials
1	Digital copy of the Family, Poverty and Homelessness Quiz ( <a href="#">see Appendix A</a> ) to project for participants to see or provide a printed copy for each small group
2	Digital copy of the Tokuhamma-Espinosa statement to share with participants Chart paper
3	Digital copies of the Student Interest Surveys ( <a href="#">see Appendix B</a> ) Digital copies of completed Student Interest Surveys Chart paper
4	Technology to project websites for poverty—themed book lists Technology to project Read-A-Loud Video
5	Digital copy of My Way Survey ( <a href="#">see Appendix C</a> ) Digital copies of completed My Way surveys, one each at elementary, middle, and high school levels Individual copies of the list of differentiated student work products ( <a href="#">see Appendix D</a> )
6	Digital copy of Obama's quote to project for all participants to see or post a copy on a white board.

### Part One: Warm-Up (20 Minutes)

1. Project a copy of the Families, Poverty, and Homelessness Quiz in Appendix A for participants to review. Each participant should take the quiz independently. In small groups, participants can share their results once the answers are provided. Ask groups to share with the entire group what they found most surprising about what they learned from taking the quiz.

Source: <http://www.almosthomethebook.com/assets/Resources/HomelessQuiz.pdf>

### Part Two: Breaking the Cycle: Poverty is Not a Life Sentence (120 Minutes)

1. Often families impacted by rural poverty feel despair. However, education can break that cycle and empower students to enter a pathway out of despair and keeping poverty from becoming an inter-generational life-sentence. It is the despair that is often responsible for off-task behavior, lack of interest or motivation, anxiety and concern about problems at home that disrupt learning, and other circumstances that challenge the job of the educator in the classroom.

Source: <http://amle.org/BrowsebyTopic/WhatsNew/WNDet/TabId/270/ArtMID/888/ArticleID/351/Leading-Learning-for-Children-From-Poverty.aspx>

However, educators have significant power in combating the effects of poverty. Share the statement below by Kati Haycock (2006).

- a. "Good teachers make good schools. Students who get several effective teachers in a row will soar no matter what their family backgrounds, while students who have even two ineffective teachers in a row rarely recover (Haycock, 2006)."
- b. Show a video that illustrates the message of the quote and shares the power of one positive educator in making a difference for students of poverty.

Source: <https://www.pbs.org/video/180-days-hartsville-generational-poverty/>

2. Present information on how teachers can support student success and build their confidence despite the challenges of poverty (Landsman, 2014).
  - a. Find Time for Extras
  - b. Zero Tolerance for Teasing
  - c. Connect the Curriculum to Student Interest
  - d. Listen
  - e. Use Visuals to Organize Assignments
  - f. Be an Advocate
  - g. Tell Students to Ask for Help
  - h. Imagine their Obstacles but See Their Strengths

Source: <http://www.ascd.org>

3. Provide information about the ways teachers can support the emotional needs and issues impacted by poverty. The audio clip talks about issues that arise while the video speaks to strategies for support.
  - a. Play the audio clip about addressing the emotional needs of students impacted by poverty. Start the clip two minutes and 15 seconds into the clip.

Source: <http://33igt8427g0w69zms33dqm48-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Payne-Ruby-Addressing-Emotional-Issues-In-Classroom-08-24-2011.mp3>).

- b. Play a video by Ruby Payne regarding the best way to create a supportive learning environment.  
Source: <https://youtu.be/Q-hEgbyabVU>

4. The existence of poverty is much like a disability when presented in a classroom (Tokuhama-Espinosa, 2010). Both require accommodations within the educational environment in order to attain academic success. Have participants turn to elbow-partners at their tables and discuss what this proclamation means in terms of creating supportive environments for their students impacted by rural poverty.
5. Disseminate common recommendations for creating supportive learning environments. Place participants in small groups with colleagues who teach at the same level (primary, elementary, middle, and high school). Give a group one of the 8 recommendations below and have them brainstorm ways to implement that suggestion. Groups write their ideas on chart paper. Participants complete a gallery walk around the room reading the ideas on all of the posted lists.
  - a. Provide extra materials for student work products and performance when necessary.
  - b. Teach procedures step-by-step, including for the completion of learning tasks and assignments.
  - c. Tell students what they are supposed to do, why it is important, and provide a strategy for how to do it.

- d. When children bring problems from home, help them put off worrying about a problem.
- e. Encourage positive self-talk to increase self-control.
- f. Teach students to set goals for themselves.
- g. Allow students to support one another in their work when appropriate.
- h. Find the strengths in every student.

Source: (<http://www.projectidealonline.org/v/student-needs>)  
<http://www.projectidealonline.org/v/disability-categories/>

### Part Three: Teaching to Student Interests (60 Minutes)

1. Share the importance of teaching to student interests with the participants. When students' learning is related to their interests, learning is more gratifying and less threatening to the student; thus, interest and motivation are positively related (Tomlinson, 2006; Tomlinson and Allan, 2000).
2. In order to introduce the topic of collecting information on student interests, share a video of a teacher demonstrating the process in her classroom.

Source: <https://youtu.be/AMu-zfujn7A>

3. Prior to the day, have one-two elementary, middle, and secondary students complete the appropriate interest survey in [Appendix B](#). Share two interest surveys (elementary and secondary) with the participants ([see Appendix B](#)). Have participants review the surveys in small groups and discuss possible interests that can be incorporated into their discipline.
4. Present strategies for teaching student Educators can differentiate on behalf of students' interests (Tomlinson, 2006; Tomlinson and Allan, 2000). Participants will brainstorm ideas for three of the teaching strategies suggested above. The small groups will share their ideas with all participants.
  - a. Student work products offer an opportunity to embed student interests.
  - b. Provide various ways for students to explore a topic.
  - c. Provide a variety of learning materials.
  - d. Connect content with students' experiences and strengths.
  - e. Use interest centers.
  - f. Great flexible grouping based on student interests.
  - g. Use jigsaw groups to find complementary strengths among student groups.
  - h. Offer choice in topics of reading materials.
  - i. Offer sub-topic choices in units of study.

### Part Four: Using Books to Help Students Develop Coping Strategies and Problem-Solving (90 Minutes)

1. Bibliotherapy is the use of books and literature to stimulate healing across all ages and has been used in educational and psychological disciplines (Regan & Page, 2008). In order to maximize the potential of bibliotherapy as an instructional practice, three criteria are necessary (Sridhar and Vaughn, 2000):
  - a. **Identification.** Assist the reader in identifying with the main character and the events in the story.
  - b. **Involvement.** Assist readers in relating to the story and feeling emotional ties to the characters.
  - c. **Insight.** Facilitate students' awareness of their connection to the story and ability to analyze the characters and situation and have opinions about the resolution of the problems and issues raised.

2. Show video of a read-a-loud of the book, A Chair for My Mother by Vera B. Williams (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wV1ege3jEFE>) In small groups, participants will discuss what about the character, events, environment, and other aspects of the story are relatable for students impacted by rural poverty.
3. Share book lists reflecting poverty for pre-K-12 classrooms.
  - a. Teens and Poverty (<http://www.teenlibrariantoolbox.com/2014/12/teens-and-poverty-an-updated-book-list/>)
  - b. Picture Books (<https://www.doinggoodtogether.org/complete-resource-collection/poverty-hunger-and-homelessness?rq=picture%20books>)
  - c. Read-A-Louds (<http://www.scholastic.com/browse/subarticle.jsp?id=3061>)
  - d. Teen Novels (<http://www.scottishbooktrust.com/reading/book-lists/12-teen-novels-about-poverty>)
  - e. Chapter Books (<https://www.doinggoodtogether.org/complete-resource-collection/poverty-hunger-and-homelessness?rq=chapter%20books>)
4. In a small group, brainstorm how some of the books on these lists would be integrated into your curriculum and instruction. Share your ideas with the large group.

## Part Five: Creating Work Products that Reflect Students' Diverse Learning Needs (45 Minutes)

1. Examples of strategies for differentiating products include the following (Tomlinson, 2000):
  - a. Giving students options of how to express required learning
  - b. Using rubrics that match and extend students' varied skills levels
  - c. Allowing students to work alone or in small groups on their products
  - d. Encouraging students to create their own product assignments as long as the assignments contain required elements
2. Present specific instructional strategies that support differentiated work products (by sharing the chart and an audio recording on the website). Click on the title of the strategy for detailed information.

Source: <https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/di/cresource/q2/p07/>

- a. Role, Audience, Format, Topic (RAFT) Instructional Strategy (differentiate prompts by row)

Role	Audience	Format	Topic
General	Soldiers	Speech	Life in Trenches
Soldier	Family	Letter	War Time Survival

- b. Tic-Tac-Toe (Differentiate Work Product by Interests, Work Preferences, or Learning Modalities)

<b>Poem</b>	<b>Speech</b>	<b>Essay</b>	<b>Short Story</b>
Letter	Historical Artifact	Play Scene	Dialogue for Comic

- c. Tiered Activities (promotes three different work products) each based on differences in work products, learning modalities, interests, etc.

<b>TIER 1</b>	<b>TIER 2</b>	<b>TIER 3</b>
Write a poem	Give a speech	Build a model

- d. Learning Centers can differentiate based on work product whereby each center represents a different work product based on students' different learning modalities, interests, or work preferences.
- Participants will be assigned one of the strategies to develop an example for application in the classroom. Each group will share with all of the participants.
  - In preparation for today's session, have 1-2 elementary, middle, and secondary students complete the My Way Survey located in [Appendix C](#).** Present a blank copy of the *My Way Survey* ([see Appendix C](#)) to the participants. This survey determines the ways that students prefer to express themselves and what they have learned. Thus, it is considered to be a work product tool. Share the list of differentiated work products ([see Appendix D](#)). Have participants work together in small groups to match the sample surveys to the list of work products to determine a fit. Groups should share their interpretation of the survey results and the selection of appropriate work products for the sample students with the full group of participants.

### ***Final Reflection***

Share the quote below with participants. Ask the participants to consider If a student's zip code dictates access to social and health services, equals fewer educational opportunities, and limited career choices, can we help? Discuss the quote with your 'elbow-neighbor' at your table. Do you disagree or agree? Why or why not?

*"A child's course in life should be determined not by the ZIP code she's born in, but by the strength of her work ethic and the scope of her dreams."*

*-President Obama (The White House, 2015)*

### ***Professional Learning Extensions***

- Allow teachers to hold "demonstrations" of teaching to student interests and work product differentiation across grade levels.
- At a faculty meeting, hold a Gallery Walk whereby teachers can move around to different classrooms to see demonstrations of teaching to student's interests and work product differentiation.
- Have media center specialists work collaboratively to create bibliotherapy lists based on themes related to rural poverty.

## References

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## Appendices

**Appendix A:** [Family, Poverty and Homelessness Quiz](#), by Deb Wood, Western Quarterly Meeting, July 8, 2015.

**Appendix B:** Student Interest Surveys [The Secondary Interest-A-Lyzer](#), by: Thomas Hebert, The University of Alabama; Michele Sorensen, Farmington, Connecticut Public Schools, and Joseph S. Renzulli, University of Connecticut.

**Appendix C:** My Way Survey: [If I ran the school, An Interest inventory](#) by Salay M. Reis and Del Siegle.

[My Way... An Expression Style Inventory](#) by K. E. Kettle, J.S. Renzuulli, and M. G. Rizza, University of Connecticut.

**Appendix D:** [Reproduced from How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms](#) by Carol Ann Tomlinson, 2001 page. 89.