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Best Use of Poverty Funds: Research

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Three Perspectives on Effectively Serving Economically Disadvantaged Students

- This presentation examines the effects of poverty and effective interventions from three perspectives:
  1. Community effects
  2. School-wide effects
  3. Schooling/classroom effects
     - Broader research-based strategies
     - Specific research-based programs/curricula

Effects of Poverty on Learning at the Community Level

- Studies show that poor children growing up in neighborhoods with concentrated poverty face greater challenges than poor children growing up in lower-poverty neighborhoods.

  – Reasons include social and economic isolation, lack of employment, and health risks.

  – Children in poor neighborhoods suffer from higher rates of social-emotional problems.

The Effects of Poverty on Learning at the Student Level

- Early language gaps caused by lower levels of child-directed speech among low income parents.

- Higher summer learning loss due to fewer enrichment opportunities during the summer.

- Lower attendance rates due to greater incidence of illness and other interruptions.

- Lower engagement and motivation due to sense of alienation and lower perception of the link between education and success in life.

Effects of Poverty on Learning at the School Level

- Academic performance correlates negatively with concentrations of poverty in schools.

- Higher concentrations of poverty seem to impact all students in a school, not only poor students.

- Factors influencing school performance may include lack of positive peer influences, low teacher motivation/morale, diluted curriculum, less parental involvement.

- Some research suggests school effects could start at concentrations as low as 25%, others at 50%.

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Improvement Depends on Multiple Strategies and Adjustments

- No single approach is assured of working in all situations. There is no silver bullet. Effectiveness varies by:
  - The specific context of the community, school, and student.
  - Capacity and motivation of district and school staff to implement with fidelity.
  - Availability of necessary resources and supports.
  - Ability to assess progress and make necessary adjustments.

Addressing Community Effects

- Wrap around services, e.g. providing non-academic supports for addressing physical health, mental health, economic stress, or family instability, may help to offset some of the effects of community and school-wide poverty.

- Community schools are one strategy for coordinating the provision of wrap around services.
  - Designed to bring together community resources to support social-emotional needs as well as academic needs.
  - Provide wrap-around services to children and their families
  - Examples are Baltimore City Schools; the Tulsa Area Community Schools Initiative; Bridges at Highland program, Bridges Elementary School, Palm Beach County School District

Potential Benefits of Community Schools

- Research indicates community schools can:
  - Improve student attendance
  - Increase graduation rates
  - Increase academic achievement
  - Reduce racial and economic achievement gaps.
- Cost-benefit research indicates ROI of up to $15 for every $1 invested in wraparound services for community schools.
- Evidence indicates strongest results when programs are implemented consistently across multiple schools and when districts are actively involved and supporting.

Components of Community Schools

Schools and districts partner with community organizations and agencies to provide expanded services to students. Four key components:

1. Wraparound services: Integrates academics with physical, mental & dental health services, social services, and community engagement.

2. Full-time coordinator is embedded in the school, assesses student need, coordinates provision of services, and collaborates with the principal to deploy resources.

3. Expanded learning time programs such as before and after school programming, and summer school.
   - Expanded time offers tutoring, academic support, and enrichment activities.

4. Engages adults with the school by offering classes, training, or other opportunities in the evening to make the school a community hub.

Addressing School-Wide Effects

- Research into the characteristics of effective schools, including "beating the odds" schools, dates back to the 1970s. While the number and form of these characteristics have evolved over time, certain characteristics continue to be featured in the literature.

    - Effective leadership – establishes a clear instructional mission and ensures the school has the resources, climate, and organizational structures to support high performance.

    - A strong teacher workforce – promotes communication and collaboration among teachers and provides high quality professional development focused on teaching and learning.

    - Implements high-quality curricula and instructional practices.

    - Uses data to drive instruction with frequent formative and summative assessments, within a continuous improvement framework.

Addressing School-Wide Effects

– Holds high expectations for all students – the belief that all students can achieve to high standards.

– Builds personal relationships – among staff, among students, and between staff, students, and parents.

– Provides ample opportunities to learn and relearn - students have access to high-quality instruction with additional targeted interventions (and time) available as needed.

Research-Supported Strategies and Programs

Research has consistently found the following strategies, or school features, effective in improving student outcomes, especially among at-risk, low income students.

- Full-day prekindergarten – longitudinal studies find that high quality programs lead to higher academic achievement over a child's school career, higher college attendance rates, and higher earnings as an adult.

- Full-day kindergarten – studies find that full-day programs have a positive effect on academic achievement compared to half-day programs, particularly with basic skills acquisition. The effect is especially strong for low income students.

Research-Supported Strategies and Programs

- Small class sizes – class sizes of no more than 15:1 in grades K-3 have been found to have a significant positive effect on student learning, particularly for low income/at-risk students.
    - No evidence that class sizes as small as this have statistically significant effect on achievement beyond 3rd grade.
- Tutors – research finds that tutoring programs that: a) employ certified teachers as tutors; b) work with students one-on-one or in very small groups; and c) are focused on the same content as is taught in the classroom are among the most effective interventions.

Research-Supported Strategies and Programs

- Extended learning time – this may consist of a longer school day or year. Some districts or schools have also creatively reconfigured their school day to provide remediation time within the school day. While some studies have found positive effects, others show mixed results. The reasons for this may include:
    - Extended day programs often have multiple goals, including academics, arts, socialization, and recreation.
    - Programs may be under-resourced, poorly implemented, or of poor design quality.
- Social-emotional learning – effective social-emotional learning programs have been found to increase academic performance, improve classroom behavior, and lead to better attitudes toward self, others and school.

Research-Supported Strategies and Programs

- In addition to these broader, research-based strategies, rigorous evaluations of specific curricula or interventions in literacy, mathematics, and other subject areas are available to help districts and schools choose the most appropriate and effective program from among many options.

- Employing cost-effectiveness analyses can also help to make the most effective use of scarce resources.

- One source of program effectiveness ratings, based on rigorous methodological standards, is the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) supported by the U.S. Department of Education:

See https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/

Research-Supported Strategies and Programs

- The WWC rates the effectiveness of programs for literacy, math, science, English language learners, children with disabilities, behavior, and other areas

- For example, WWC lists 57 programs that are proven or potentially effective in literacy, 17 programs in mathematics, 5 programs in the sciences, and 16 programs in social-emotional learning or behavior (in some cases a program may be listed under multiple areas).

Questions?

Appendix

Information on Examples of Community Schools

- Baltimore Public Schools: Family League of Baltimore:
  https://www.familyleague.org/community-schools-and-ost/

- Community Service Council's Center for Community School Strategies (Tulsa, OK)
  https://csctulsa.org/communityschools/

- Community Service's Council's Bridges at Highland program – Palm Beach County School District
  https://bridgesofpbc.org/highland/

What Works Clearinghouse Program Areas

Program Area	Total Number of Programs Reviewed	Number of Programs with Positive Results or Showing Promise
Literacy	231	57
Mathematics	152	17
Science	3	2
Behavior	54	16
Children with Disabilities	36	16
English Learners	33	10
Teacher Excellence	10	4
Charter Schools	9	2
Pre-K	84	16
K-12	456	94
Path to Graduation	46	22
Post-Secondary	13	9