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Book Review “Star Teachers of Children in Poverty” by Martin Haberman

Abstract. This paper takes a deep dive into how all educators should teach. This book is not only one that can be applied in the United States, but the strategies discussed in this paper (and the actual book) should be used all over the world. The world is ever changing, and some people are unable to change at the same pace leaving them behind, however as educators we should not leave anyone behind, but rather encourage everyone to move forward. Encouraging students of less fortunate circumstances is what educators should do at all times and this book reminds educators of that, but it also reminds all educators what it takes to be a star educator.

I chose to read the book, Star Teachers of Children in Poverty and then I completed this report on it. Some brief background on the authors, it was originally written by, Martin Haberman, and then Djanna Hill and Maureen Gillette updated it. Hill and Gillette believed that the book had some key ideas in it and was good for educators to read, but felt the book had to be updated to be able to have educators be able to apply the strategies in today’s society. I think this book is a good book and most teachers should have to read it at some point in their education or even during their career. I found this book brought up a lot of key characteristics and points that are necessary for ALL teachers to read about and think about as they pursue this field. What I found so controversial about this book was that it is highlighted for teachers who work in low-income areas, when I feel most of this information is applicable to all teachers, not simply just for teachers who are teaching children in poverty. I agree with the idea that teachers who teach children living in poverty need to factor so many different thoughts into their work when planning or teaching because what these children are suffering through is different than most.

To start my reflection, I would like to reflect on the idea that in the American schools, schools are set up from administration rather than from the teachers, which is in a sense how part of the system needs to be fixed. Teachers are the ones with the students each and every day, the teachers are the ones who help the students when the students are struggling not only in the classroom, but also when struggling at home. Teachers are the ones who talk to the parents each and every day, while the administrators are in meetings all day or trying to offer support where they can, but still not spending their time with the students. A lot of schools are set up from the administration down and in my opinion, it should not occur that way, it should be set up so the teachers are the ones who are making the rules because the teachers are again the ones who know the students, the teachers know what will benefit the students in order to help the students be able to learn from their mistakes. I think in low-income schools this rings true, but I think is also true for all types of schools in all different types of income areas.

What I also thought rings true for not only low-income areas, but all different income schools were the characteristics that make a star teacher. I found that almost every characteristic that was described in this book are the characteristics that should be in every teacher. The book talked about how star teachers have to show up everyday not only for the students but for themselves as well. That quote stuck out to me because growing up I thought about my teachers and how some of them were just there to be there and get the paycheck, while other teachers were there to make sure we were understanding and truly learning the concepts. I feel if my teachers had read this book then maybe they would have been able to show up not just for us and to be present there, but the teachers would have shown up and realized they were not committed to themselves and their jobs. Also the idea that

teachers should be in a constant cycle of planning, teaching, and reflecting is an idea that I think some teachers do not understand. I believe all teachers regardless of the income level the teachers are working in, all teachers should be in this constant cycle. During my own clinical experience (when I go into classrooms and take on the role of the teacher) it was clear to see that some teachers would not follow this cycle and would sometimes skip the planning step or would skip the reflection part, or even the worst of all forget the teaching part. This idea of the constant cycle is something that should be mandatory of all educators rather than just star teachers teaching children in poverty.

Another idea that I believe needs to be understood it is mandatory for all types of students and not just low-income students is the idea that work has to have meaning. I agree this is especially important for children living in poverty because they see no meaning and going to school everyday because they already believe they cannot go to college or get anywhere in life. In my first clinical rotation I got to see firsthand what students in a low-income school think of school when they feel they have no hope in the future and it is truly heartbreaking, but I also got to see this in my second clinical rotation which was in a middle-income school. I saw kids who struggled with learning and just decide not to do work because there was no purpose behind it in their eyes. No meaning behind schoolwork allows for students to feel they do not have to do the work because why, the work will never be used again in his/her life in their eyes. As a teacher we have to make sure that we pull into the lessons the students interest to help give the students a reason as to why this work is important. For example, with a reading lesson a student might say this does not matter to me I am going to be a plumber, so as a response the teacher should say it is important to be able to read because as a plumber one will have to read which pipe is which or read to see which pipe leads to which pipe. Reading is important for everyone to be able to get a job not just someone who wants to become an author later in life. Putting the meaning behind work or assignments is what gives students a reason to complete the work and to want to complete the work.

The last main idea that really rang true to me was that we cannot punish kids by constantly sending them to the office (this is a normal type of punishment in American schools, which is sending students to the principal's office). In both my own schooling along with my clinical placement I have seen students getting sent to the principal's office or have the security guards come down and escort students to the office. If teachers continue to punish students that way children will be out of the classroom more than they are in it, which is only hurting the child rather than helping. Instead of sending the child out of the classroom teachers should have conversations with the child and create a reward system when the student avoids the negative behavior. Struggling students need to be in the classroom as much as possible rather than getting sent out to be punished because while they are being sent out to think about their actions, they are missing the important class time. When teachers also send students out to the principal it just allows for the student to feel good about themselves and know that what they are doing is getting under the teacher's skin and their goal is accomplished. As a teacher instead of calling a student out or sending the student out of the room ask the student to work with you or wait until the end of the lesson and have a discussion with the student, but you want to stop punishing the students unless they are endangering others. Instead of yelling at students reward them when they engage in the proper behavior because the more the students are rewarded the better, they feel about themselves. Sometimes students just act out because they want attention and do not think of the consequences, and in some situations the students think there is only negative attention and never any positive so as teachers we have to allow the students to understand that there is good attention.

Overall I really liked the book and thought that so many key points were brought up throughout the text. I like how throughout the book it kept emphasizing how teachers need to be dedicated and motivated to both themselves and the students because it is beyond true. The fact that it was one of the main themes that kept getting brought up throughout the book just made it that much more important. There were so many other key ideas that were brought up all throughout the book such as the administration issue mentioned earlier in my paper, as well as how children should be punished.

This book is important for all teachers to read to see what qualities one should have before getting into this profession. This book should not only apply to teachers working in low-income areas, but teachers across the country. The book was a very interesting read and definitely opened my eyes to some characteristics I did not think about.

Work Cited

Haberman, Martin, et al. (2018). *Star Teachers of Children in Poverty*. 2nd ed., Routledge.