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Juliana Maffea

Lack of Resources in Classrooms

School is a place where children spend hours a day in different classrooms expecting to learn new ideas and topics. It is a place where the teachers are expected to teach kids history, math, science, or English. The students are expected to receive the information, and use it to decipher what it is they want to do when they get older; however, how are students meant to learn when their classrooms are not filled with the resources they need? All over the world, classrooms are not supplied with sufficient resources. Teachers must teach the students different subjects without the proper resources in their classrooms to do so. This problem is a wicked problem - a problem that has many solutions but will ultimately take a while to be solved (Rittel 1973). The wicked problem at hand is the lack of resources in classrooms. This problem affects students and teachers, which in turn can affect the parents of the children. The lack of resources in classrooms can cause extreme distress on the students and teachers. Not only are the students and teachers in distress, but they are unable to learn to their fullest potential because they are not being given the proper resources. Once we realize these problems, we then can investigate solutions for this wicked problem.

In different areas around the world, school districts are struggling to find enough money to spend on resources in their schools. Areas with high poverty rates are typically the areas where the schools are struggling the most. The people living around the school don't pay as much for school taxes. The schools in high poverty areas are scrambling to find resources. The lack of resources affects the students in different ways. It means they are not getting the most out of their education. They are learning

parts of topics and lessons, but they are not getting the full picture like they deserve. According to The Commonwealth Institute(2017), “Students in high poverty schools do worse on standardized tests, are more likely to be chronically absent during the school year, more likely to be held back in their grade, and less likely to graduate on-time.” This goes to show that students in high poverty areas are being extremely affected by the lack of resources. They are getting lower grades on standardized tests versus students who come from wealthier areas. This is because they do not have the means to a better education. Students who get bad grades are more likely to be held back. Not everyone is graduating, and this leads to higher class sizes which means the teachers will need even more resources.

Like many other schools around the world, low poverty schools in Virginia are struggling. Their schools have a lack of resources and a lack of highly educated teachers. The students in these schools are the ones receiving an education, but it's not the education that they deserve. Schools located in Virginia with high poverty rates have less experienced teachers. This results in the teachers getting lower salaries and not having the best education in order to teach students. This means that the school will not have advanced courses, and the students in the end are going to struggle in classrooms.(Duncombe, C. 2017) No parent wants to send their child to a school that can't provide for them. They want to send their child to a school that will give them the best education possible. Every parent wants what is best for their child, but they won't get the best education if they continue to let schools get away with this.

Teachers are being thrown into classrooms filled with students of different races, ages, genders, and abilities. Some teachers are not equipped to deal with children from

different cultures or different disabilities. It takes a lot of training and learning to be able to know how to work with different students. If teachers are not getting the proper education to teach these students, the students will not be getting the proper education or attention they deserve. It takes a really strong and educated teacher to be able to teach students from all over and students with disabilities. On the other hand, it takes a really educated teacher to understand how to teach students with great abilities. There are going to be students who excel at school and students who don't do too well, and teachers need to be able to assist both types of students. However, this will not happen if the teachers aren't getting the proper education themselves.

A lot of teachers who go into the field of education have a passion for teaching students. They want to make a difference, and they want to help those who need extra help; however, studies show that teachers can begin to feel burnt out after some time because of the stress that comes with teaching in a school with insufficient resources. "Even for teachers who are highly skilled and have a myriad of personal resources, decision making, and teaching practices may be hindered by stress and burnout arising from high demands and low organizational resources." (Bottiani, J. 2019) Teachers stand in front of a class of around 20-30 students a day, and they have to deal with the children themselves, the lesson plan, and the lack of resources. The job itself can already take a toll on them, but if you add the stress of teaching in a classroom with not enough resources, it can lead the teachers to lose their passion. Once this happens, the students are the ones dealing with the consequences.

The lack of resources is not only evident in high poverty areas, but it's evident in middle class areas as well. It's hard for schools to be able to afford brand new laptops

for each individual student, which then means that the teachers in the classrooms have to come up with a way to compensate for that. That could mean they turn to textbooks, if they have enough, or they turn to using a projector to allow the students to see the teacher's screen. Regardless of what it is they must do, the lack of resources in schools is extremely detrimental to the students learning and the teachers instructing a class. A majority of students learn better by being hands on in classrooms. Students will be able to focus more if they have a screen right in front of them. If the teachers are using projectors and screens to show students the work, many students will be either unable to see the screen or unable to understand what is going on. It's easier to have the screen at a table a few feet away rather than across the room at the board. The students then can work at their own pace, and they can take more time looking at the screen. Teachers are not the ones responsible for the computers, but they are the ones that feel as though they are. They have to deal with the consequences of not having enough computers. Teachers go through enough as it is, and dealing with teaching a classroom of 30 students on one screen can negatively affect how the students learn.

Teachers do not get paid enough as it is, but if you add the lack of resources in a classroom onto that, they are going to lose their will to teach. Teachers spend their own money to supply books, pencils, paper, or any other supplies they can get their hands on for their students. "U.S. Department of Labor data reveal that ECE teacher salaries fall in the 19th percentile of all U.S. wages. ECE teachers also earn, on average, two-thirds of what comparably educated kindergarten teachers earn, and their wages have been stagnant for over two decades"(Johnson, A. D., 2021) ECE teachers are early care and education teachers who usually teach from preschool to third grade

classrooms. They are making two thirds of what other kindergarten teachers are making, and if they are in high poverty areas, they most likely will have to pay for the majority of the resources in their classrooms because the school is unable to do so. This means that teachers must pay for resources, bills, clothing items, groceries, and other necessities. This stress will change the demeanor and the attitude of the teachers which will ultimately affect the students.

This wicked problem is evident all over the world, but it's also happening down the street. The severity of this problem may range, but regardless of how bad it is, the lack of resources is evident. Once something affects the students, it can have a domino effect onto the parents and family members. The parents are the people who deal with the students once they come home from school. After hearing about the insufficient number of resources at schools, the parents then can become stressed. They can question the reliability of the school, and they will begin to question if their child is getting the attention/help they need. The second guessing can lead to phone calls and emails to the school. The phone calls and emails to the school can lead to phone calls to the superintendent. The stress from the parents is only going to make matters worse. This is happening all around the globe. It may not be realized right away, but it is happening in neighborhoods down the street.

This wicked problem does have solutions. The solutions can start within your community. Schools can't do a lot on their own, and the teachers surely can't help an entire school. The community can come together to recognize this and help. The lack of resources in schools correlates back to the lack of funding. The schools in areas with high poverty are in dire need of resources and help as well as support. As a community,

make a change. Do what you can even if it's donating paper or pencils to schools. Children in towns with high poverty rates would appreciate whatever it is the community has to offer. Schools or teachers could post what supplies they are in need of, and they can ask the community for donations of money or supplies. Communication is key here. The school needs to communicate to the people around them if they want to expect help. The superintendent can hold fundraisers for their school districts. They could get the parents involved. As a community, it's extremely important to make everyone feel as though they are included. Everyone must come together as a unit to ensure that they are doing what they need to do for the children in their neighborhoods.

Not all of the solutions to this problem are going to be nice and easy like fundraisers. There are some solutions that people may not agree with. For example, schools get money from property taxes. If the taxes go up, schools will receive more money. However, nobody ever wants to pay more in taxes. That will be a sacrifice some are willing to make, but others won't want to. Another solution that people may not agree with is to make cuts around the school. This could mean to increase class sizes, cut different after school programs, or even sacrificing a new turf field for newly updated computers. There are other ways to go about this, but primarily people have to be willing to make some sort of sacrifice.

One thing teachers can use to their advantage is the internet. The internet is forever, and it's only going to continue to evolve. There are numerous amounts of resources that are available to teachers and students that can be used in the classrooms. For example, many colleges provide Office 365 for their students, and that can save students a lot of money throughout the years. Not only will it save money, but

it makes many things easier for the teachers. “In History, ‘Research on the Internet has yielded a vast potential source of improved resources, both text and visual, including unprecedented access to archive material’”(Ruthven, K., Hennessy, S., & Deaney, R. 2005) By integrating technology into classrooms, the teachers will no longer have to worry about a lack of resources. Everything they need will be online, and this will help with decreasing their stress. With one less thing to worry about, the moods of the teachers will increase, and this will create a better atmosphere for the students to learn in.

Technology in the classroom will also help the students tremendously. They can learn new tricks and new ways of researching online. Students can now find up to date research in seconds, which means that their schoolwork will be done faster and more efficiently. Overall, integrating technology into classrooms will benefit everyone. Students and teachers will have an easier time communicating when it comes to their assignments, and the parents won’t have to worry about buying as many books for their children. That’s one thing less to worry about, and everyone wins.

Another major solution to this wicked problem is money. Money plays a key part when it comes to schools getting their resources. A lack of funding is correlated directly with the resources in schools. “Schooling resources that cost money are positively associated with student outcomes. These include smaller class sizes, additional instructional supports, early childhood programs,(02) and more competitive teacher compensation (permitting schools and districts to recruit and retain a higher quality teacher workforce).”(Baker, B. 2018) This means that the ways schools spend money needs to change. Rather than giving the students a brand new turf field when the one

they have now is appropriate, use the money where it will make a significant change. The funding that schools get should be used in a smarter way. The class room sizes, technology, and greater pay for teachers will create a significant positive change in the schools. Students will have more resources thus meaning they will learn more, and they will want to actually stay in school. Students will perform better, and they will be able to get into better colleges. “Researchers have found that ‘increasing per-pupil spending by 10% in all 12 school-age years increases the probability of high school graduation by 7 percentage points for all students, and by roughly 10 percentage points for low-income children.’” (Baker, B. 2018) The research is there to prove that by changing where schools direct their funds, the outcome of performance among children will increase and get better. Children will attend school more, they will get better test scores, the teachers will perform better, and the graduation rates will increase.

As a parent, a teacher, or an employee in the school district, you want to see the children in the community succeed. You want to see them perform to their best abilities, but this can only happen if the school is able to give them what they deserve. The lack of resources in schools need to change. Not one single person can change this on their own. It’s going to take a community to make a change. Even a small change such as donations or smaller class sizes can create a domino effect. The change will be noticed, and soon people are going to want to continue to make this positive change. They’ll feel motivated to continue to create a better school for their children. By getting everyone on board to fix this wicked problem, there is now a credible side. At the end of the day, not everyone wants to spend money on education. Some would rather spend it on a new turf rather than new books for everyone. By having a strong side, you then are more

credible. You want to show people that there are areas in the world where schools don't have the resources to teach children. There will only be a change when people begin to work. The lack of resources in a classroom can have negative outcomes on children, but now you know what must be done. Be the start of a change in your community and work hard to ensure that the children in your neighborhoods are getting the proper education that they deserve.

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