Use of Social Media to Increase Support and Awareness for Homeless Students

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Educators continue to address the issues faced by homeless students and the ongoing struggles they meet on a daily basis. "Not enough is known about who these marginally housed teenagers are, what their experiences with housing distress are like" (Vissing & Diament, 1997, p. 32). Also, the passage of the "No Child Left Behind" Act of 2001 reinforces the commitment to provide a quality education for children without stable homes. The community needs to get involved when resources become scarce and limited.

Homeless students are going through many challenges, whereas the community that helps to lessen a burden for them would be much appreciated. Students are facing a new living environment and have to make adjustments to accommodate for a stricter set of rules set by the shelter. Since it is a shared space, privacy reduced, the enjoyment of a quiet environment for studying is challenging and the lack of a good night rest. As a result, students' concentration in classroom suffers and students are trying to regain their much-needed energy during class time.

MacGillivray, Ardell & Curwen (2010, p. 389) interviewed with a 12-year-old boy and his mom to find out what is like to live in the homeless shelter and the impact it had on the student's education. Before residing at the shelter, the young boy was on the honor roll, but due to the constant mobility, his academic performance suffered. The student had a hard time adjusting to the classroom because each teacher expectation is different and the timeframe to adapt was not there to give him a comfort level to excel before he had to make the next move. For this particular scenario, the teacher needs to be involved with the help of clarifying the expectations of their rules and classroom procedures to help them smoothly transition into the classroom settings. Shelter's volunteer can also assist with the move-in process by offering a helping hand during the transition period. The daunting task for even an established organization to undertake without the support from numerous volunteers. Shelter wants to do more to help the

students feel at home, but with limited resources, such beautiful ideas are put on hold until resources and personnel are available to make it a reality. Director turns to the social media as a channel to bring on more awareness for the cause of educational support and to increase fundraising and donation efforts.

The shelter's committee places a significant time in designing the rollout to ensure their efforts will bring in the much-needed support. Superville (2017, p. 48) explained the specific needs of their community and to tailor the services to meet those needs and to develop a stronger bond between students, families, and the communities. Many resources are available to tackle the issues, but when the resources incorrectly implemented without undergoing a second view, the outcome will still show minor improvement as if the intervention did not happen. The ongoing efforts should address the intended objectives and goals.

The importance of a community involved "to serve the whole child. We are talking about social, emotional, academic learning – what we call the three pillars of education" (Superville, 2017, p. 50). Teachers are significant for students to learn, but mentors from their communities play a more substantial role in developing their esteem and challenging them to go beyond their set determined goals. A mentor is there to listen and to provide comfort in times when situations become too complicated for oneself to solve, a second opinion is needed to provide guidance and justification for directions. All have to come together including the teachers, counselors, mentors and the community to raise a student, without either one of them; it is going to be challenging due to the amount of energy and effort are required to maintain a quality level of services.

Berliner (2002, p. 51) explained different approaches to help homeless students keep up, while at the same time facing other complicating issues with their lives. Attendance is the key to success in education, missing too many classes will have a detrimental effort on the students'

learning. A good communication line established between the shelter and the schools. The shelter is the first line of defense when students are missing classes, helping them to get back on the right track. School officials will not always know what the students are facing or going through; students need to open up for administrators to find the right resources to address the issues. Simple overlooked items like transportation, school supplies, and additional educational materials can be arranged accordingly to boost the student performance when discussed. Mazza (2013, p. 14) explained the various Internet tools available like social media Facebook and Twitter to connect with parents that are not available physically, but the social media can bring a virtual connection. Teachers will find alternative methods to deliver the message to the loved ones involved in the student's education.

Teacher's time is limited, but stepping aside to listen is essential and helpful. Polakow (as cited in Walker-Dalhouse & Risko, 2008, p. 84) advised: "taking time to understand students and their hardships." Teachers need to play an even greater role with the homeless students. They need to assess the readiness of the students, since the students may not have fully mastered the information of the grade they are enrolled; additional resources are needed to give them time to catch up; otherwise, students will be overwhelmed, pressuring them to stay away from the classroom. Adjustment needed for the homework assignment that involves the parent, maybe to include the mentor as an alternative. Hunt (as cited in Walker-Dalhouse & Risko, 2008, p. 85) explained teachers could evenly go a step beyond by taking the additional initiatives "to study the poverty issues, and relevant literature can help develop empathy for homeless families and challenge associated stereotypes." Teachers involved to understand what students are going through and can modify their study plans to help them excel.

Students challenged with their current situations; teachers and the community needed to be more involved to support them to feel more welcome in the community they live. Grigsby et al.'s (as cited in Hyman, Aubry, & Klodawsky, 2011, p. 267) performed research and found a correlation between the students' disengagement and social exclusion due to a prolonged life of homelessness. As a society, we are facing a daunting task to eliminate homelessness, but the challenge is way too big for even a person to tackle and even a group to address; we need the entire community to come together and find appropriate solutions to overcome homelessness. Hyman, Aubry, & Klodawsky (2011, p. 267) did a study and found out that "youth with histories of homelessness who have attained stable housing appear to be using resources and opportunities as stepping stones to secure a more positive future." When students regain a permanent place to live; the allocated funds diverted to other means to promote their success and focus on their long-term goals to achieve a better outcome.

In conclusion, social media offers another channel "to network among the social workers, school and shelter personnel, can mean the difference between a family restabilizing or reentering the cycle of homelessness" (Whitman, Accardo, Boyert & Kendagor, 1990, p. 519). Social media is one of the better platforms to bring awareness to the community, since many may not be aware of this pressing issue, not much attention because of the sensitivity. Many delayed projects will move forward once the community comes together to tackle the problems. The shelter has a full plate of tasks to undertake, and if each is willing to contribute or to volunteer a piece of their time to help with the cause, we can strive to reduce the unnecessary burden faced with the homelessness students. It takes the entire community to be involved to have a drastic outcome for success. No matter what size of involvement, it all counts toward the bigger picture.

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