

Teachers working with students who live in poverty may misunderstand or misinterpret what they are witnessing, and in doing so miss opportunities for powerful teaching and interaction.



Understanding poverty in the classroom

Students who come from homes that lack adequate supports for learning come to school with significant challenges.

Research has determined that the most prevalent emotion for children living in poverty is fear, and pervasive fear affects a child's ability to learn and engage in school.

Children living in poverty live in a world that is one of chaos. Things do not always move in a chronological order.

Children living in chaos may not develop a grasp of cause and effect because their behaviour reaps multiple effects. They never know what is going to happen when they walk into a room. Will you be ignored, hugged, scolded or hit?

The importance of relationships to children who live in poverty cannot be stressed enough. They depend on relationships to anchor them in their uncertain world.

WHAT IS POVERTY?

Poverty is having insufficient resources to meet what are typically seen as basic needs. It is more than a lack of money. It becomes a way of thinking, reacting and making decisions.

LIVING IN POVERTY v NOT LIVING IN POVERTY

There are significant differences between how a person living in poverty views and approaches the world compared to a person who has not experienced poverty.

WORKING WITH STUDENTS LIVING IN POVERTY

When we work with students who live in poverty, we need to put aside our value systems, moral systems, and decision-making-process.

Unfortunately, some of their relationships with people in their lives have not built them up but rather added layers of self-doubt, negativity and a sense of failure.

Students living in poverty need to be supported by teachers and school staff who understand the impacts of poverty in the classroom.

The above information is taken from [Understanding poverty in the classroom: Changing perceptions for student success](#), which was published in 2011.

It provides a number of practical practices and strategies for teachers to help students living in poverty to thrive in school.

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