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Reflection

There are many problems that pertain to education inequality. Education inequality has still been impacting students across the country. There are several factors such as race, socioeconomic status, and gender that affect education inequality that should not have to produce a gap. There were many different themes that were portrayed throughout the research that were conducted on solving education inequality. Some of the themes that were presented were gender inequalities, second generation segregation, and socioeconomic status effects. However, the themes that were mostly highlighted consisted of differences in school discipline among race, special education inequalities, and ways to close the achievement gap. Not only were these themes mostly highlighted, but they also provided the most effective strategies on reducing education inequality.

Firstly, school discipline is important for schools to implement to have social order in place and to prepare students for the real world. For example, most schools have zero tolerance for drugs and alcohol on their property. Therefore, students have to learn that there are consequences for their actions when breaking policies and rules. However, there are issues when school discipline is unfair to students based off of race. According to “Race Is Not Neutral: A National Investigation of African American and Latino Dis-proportionality in School Discipline”, the authors discuss how African Americans and Hispanics are more likely to get suspended or expelled than their counterparts for the same offense. Their way of resolving this issue is by taking a different approach when disciplining students. Instead of punishing them for misconduct, they suggest enforcing teachers to state expectations and reward students for good behavior. By doing this, it can influence other students to do the same when they know what is expected from them when they are getting rewarded. Another article by Shollenberger (2015), named “Racial Disparities in School Suspension and Subsequent Outcomes”, looked at a longitudinal study that was conducted by interviews that further discusses how African Americans are more likely to get suspended. Shollenberger discussed moving away from suspension and using other tactics to punish for behaviors. This can help by reducing grade retention and the chances of dropping out to further encourage students that although they are being held accountable, it will not affect their learning. Even my article that I researched called “The Punishment Gap: School Suspension and Racial Disparities in Achievement” by Morris and Perry, confirmed that African Americans are more likely to receive suspension based on prior discipline records. Morris and Perry suggested conducting more research to look into other factors, such as the behaviors that are causing students to get suspended, teachers bias, and looking at how students are affected after being suspended. Being able to change the way punishment is delivered, changing teacher’s perceptions and implementing their expectations, and rewarding good behavior, are ways to reduce education inequality in discipline based off of race. The reason for this is because we want the student to be in a classroom setting as much as possible. A student getting suspended will not benefit the teacher nor the student because it will only put the student behind. In addition, if teachers state their expectations and reward good behavior, it will serve as a model for students to follow. Every student wants to feel important and seen. Therefore, when rewarding good behavior, they could be less likely to misbehave. These strategies would be effective in changing punishments and teacher’s bias.

Secondly, another theme that was highlighted was special education inequality. This is when students face inequality when they participate in special education classes. In “Disability and the Education System” by Aron and Loprest (2012), they discussed that males are more likely to be placed in special education classes than females. Furthermore, African Americans are more likely to be placed in these classes than their counterparts. Also, a student that comes from a low socioeconomic status is likely to be placed in these classes. The issue of these results is that sometimes they are wrongfully placed because of trends in the past. In order to solve this, they mention taking early interventions to access more funding and further research. With funding and research, they can reduce the inequalities in the classroom by providing resources. In another article by Duncan and Magnuson (2005), they mention the lack of funding special education classes face. They believe that parents should receive welfare checks to be able to afford special education classes, as well as providing families with additional benefits before students even began school. In “Learning Disabilities and Inequality” by Shifrer (2013), it mentions how having a learning disability can lead to the labeling theory, thus causing inequality. Students believe they are not good enough in school, which reflects in their grades. Shifrer mentions being more aware of learning disabilities to understand how to help a student with a learning disability. Nonetheless, increasing funds, being aware of patterns, and being more educated on learning disabilities are ways to reduce education inequality for special education classes. These are most effective because students will receive the adequate resources in special education classes. Moreover, conducting more research will prevent students from getting misplaced in these classes. In addition, individuals being informed about learning disabilities could best help the student by meeting their needs.

Thirdly, the last theme that was mostly highlighted than the rest was about narrowing the achievement gap. Zhao (2016) mentioned that teaching should be delivered in a way that the student can comprehend. That way learning is individually based. Zhao mentions different ways to combat this. One way is by letting students have their own weaknesses and deficits and working with the student’s strengths. Moreover, their passions should be supported in order to further encourage what students want. Zhao believes that standardized testing should not define a student. Therefore, by motivating, encouraging, and praising students for what they are good at can allow teachers to find different ways to deliver information. Not only can teachers help their students, but parents can too. Penner (2018) mentions that parents should take time to spend with their children for educational engagement, performing extracurricular activities together, and improving their parental style. This can all increase student achievement because they are receiving support from their parents to do better. In “Race, Inequality and Educational Accountability: The Irony of ‘No Child Left Behind’” by Darling-Hammond (2007), it mentions how certain reauthorizations can affect the achievement gap, such as NCLB. The reason for this is because students are supposed to get a certain score to pass. However, the problem was that scores were being changed to produce the results that were needed. In order to reduce the achievement gap, Darling-Hammond mentions that teachers should be trying their best to let their students learn and understand curriculum. In order to solve this, Darling-Hammond mentioned that schools should hire teachers that are willing to appreciate child individuality. In addition, teachers should receive professional preparation to be able to handle students that need more help. Lastly, Darling-Hammond mentions that teacher retention is important to be able to keep the teachers that are helping students succeed. To narrow the achievement gap, being able to appreciate the student’s individuality, having parents take part in student’s achievement, and having teachers that care about their students are ways that can help. This would all be effective because teachers along with the parents’ help would focus on what the student lacks to best help them perform better.

Overall, I learned that there are many issues that are prevalent in education. As a nursing major, I did not realize the amount of inequality in education. I did not know how where you lived impacted the amount of funding schools receive, or that some students receive more punishments than their counterparts, or that students get misplaced. In addition, the statistics on African American students getting to receive harsher punishments and getting placed in special education classes. Moreover, about the achievement gap beginning before a student starts kindergarten due to a number of different factors. It breaks my heart that these issues are going on today in education because it should be available for everyone in a fair manner. The fact that race, gender, and socioeconomic status are all factors that play into education inequality are reasons that we should all be aware of. Because we are contributing to this inequality with not being informed of these issues and not doing anything about it. If I were to become a teacher, I would take all these different strategies into consideration when teaching because a teacher truly makes an impact on students. All of the strategies mentioned can be effective to an extent if teachers implement them. I know I will be keeping myself updated because one day it will affect me when I become a mother or even a nursing professor. In order to reduce education inequality, using the strategies above can help make a change in a student’s life and future.