



Position Paper:
CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN POVERTY: THE PUBLIC SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITY

Poverty and doing poorly in school often go hand-in-hand. Children and youth who do poorly in school often do not finish their education. They become less employable. They are more apt to become a social burden and are more apt to perpetuate the cycle of poverty.

1. Children and youth in poverty frequently live in cities or rural areas, and where there is a high concentration of poor families. Schools with a higher poverty level tend to have lower achievement statistics. These school districts often do not have local resources to provide anything more than minimal services for their low achieving population.
2. Children and youth in poverty often receive fewer educational resources; are taught in overcrowded, dilapidated surroundings; and are sometimes taught by less-qualified teachers who maintain lower expectations, use developmentally and culturally inappropriate curricular materials, and have little resource or time or energy to address the needs of these children and youth.
3. Many children and youth are educationally disadvantaged. One in five public school students in the State of New York live in poverty. Lower performing schools tend to have higher concentrations of minority students and children and youth in poverty.

New York State PTA believes that schools reflect our democratic heritage and must take a leadership role in breaking the cycle of poverty. New York State PTA accepts the opportunity and the responsibility to advocate for the educational needs of all children and youth and their families in today's demanding world. In collaboration with other organizations, we can impact public policy to address the human and financial resources needed for each child to achieve his or her potential.

New York State PTA requests that its membership:

Urge school board members and school administrators to:

1. Foster community-wide expectations that schools have a responsibility to teach all children and youth;
2. Set policy to protect children and youth from discriminatory discipline or educational placement;
3. Develop and recommend budgets that equitably allocate resources for all programs and in all schools within the school district;
4. Set policies to provide information to parents regarding the educational program of their children and youth and to provide for parental input in the decision-making processes;
5. Develop programs to meet the needs of all children and youth keeping high expectations for each child;
6. Develop and monitor individual student achievement with sensitivity to individual learning modes, cultural and economic backgrounds.

Expect principals to:

1. Structure the school's organization and encourage the teaching staff to address the many different learning situations for the child who is educationally disadvantaged;
2. Emphasize in-service education in the areas of classroom management and the development of instructional skills for working with children and youth who live in poverty and are educationally disadvantaged;
3. Provide and support opportunities for parents to understand their responsibilities for their children's education;
4. Develop active outreach programs to include parents of children and youth in poverty and of emancipated youth.

Ask teachers to:

1. Hold consistent, high expectations for all children and youth;
2. Recognize the individual needs of all children and youth;

3. Respect student diversity;
4. Communicate with parents on a regular basis and encourage their cooperation.

Encourage parents to:

1. Hold consistent, high expectations for all children and youth;
2. Be active education partners by communicating, advocating, and supporting programs for children and youth in poverty.

Call upon legislators to:

1. Provide equitable distribution of funds, employing the “leveling up” concept;
2. Provide financial incentives to maintain funding for successful programs and maintain the physical plant to meet the program needs;
3. Urge an increase in federal dollars to supplement and not supplant state and local intervention programs.

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