

Test Scores in Suburban/Urban Schools

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Students attend school for 180 days every year, spending 8 hours there Monday through Friday. Children learn basic life skills that set them up for success. Every year before children start a new year of school, the school sends a list of supplies that are going to be needed for the school year. Children who are born into low income families are set into a disadvantage.

These children who qualify for aids like free/reduced lunches are shown to have lower scoring test scores compared to students who don't qualify for them. The gap in students who needed extra financial assistance in suburban and urban schools propelled me into the arena of how test scores in general differed from suburban and urban schools.

When looking at schools in suburban and urban areas, a defining tool I used to measure the amount of children coming from low income families was the number of students who qualified for free or reduced lunches. Children who are in households that have an income of 185% below the poverty line are eligible for reduced lunch (Autor et al., 2022). A household of four, had an annual income of below \$44,863 to be able to qualify for reduced lunch (Autor et al., 2022). The poverty line is used to determine the amount of families that are eligible for federal aid programs like free and reduced lunch. Knowing this data, it put into perspective the percentages of students who qualified for these aids in school. Highcrest elementary school, a school in Wethersfield, had a percentage of 17.1 percent of students who qualified for free or reduced lunch in 2019. Dwight Bellizzi, An elementary school in Hartford, had a percentage of 89.4 percent of students who qualify for free or reduced lunch in 2019 (Edsight, 2019). These schools are miles apart from each other but have a 72.3 percent gap. Almost 90 percent of

students who attend Dwight Bellizzi are in low income families, 90 percent of their students are put into a disadvantage in school.

When comparing the test scores for the schools there is also a gap in test scores. The school performance index (SPI) is used to measure a school's average test scores. The SPI is the average performance on state assessments. Connecticut's target is to get a 75 in all three categories that consist of ELA, science and math. In Highcrest Elementary their SPI in ELA was 79.1, science SPI was 69.3 and math was 73.2 in 2019. Dwight Bellizzis SPI in ELA was 48.7, science SPI was 45.2, and math was 39.9 in 2019. Highcrests scores are either above or just below the state's target score while Bellizzi is below the state's goal in all three categories (Edsight, 2019).

When children are growing up, they thrive on a routine. They have their days organized around a schedule. This is to reduce stress on a child. When a child is in a family with a low income, the stresses of financial instability affect them as well. A child is not oblivious to their challenges in life, especially when they are in school. Students who can't afford the proper school supplies worry about their parents' finances when they compare themselves to their peers who can afford the supplies. This can cause harm to a child's mental health and cognitive functioning (Evans, Brooks-Gunn, and Klebanov 2011; Shonkoff and Garner 2011)

A family's income ties in with their child's educational performance. An increase of \$1,000 in a family's income coincides with an increase of up to 6 percent of cognitive testing (Evans, Brooks-Gunn, and Klebanov 2011; Shonkoff and Garner 2011). Increasing a parents income causes less stress on a child which would improve their cognitive testing. Students who qualified for free or reduced lunches from kindergarten through eighth grade were scoring .84

standard deviations lower than students who have never qualified for free or reduced lunches (Autor et al., 2022).

Income plays a part in every aspect of society. Every child in America has the right to an education but children who are from low-income families are put at a disadvantage. Young students shouldn't have to worry about the costs of school supplies. Hosting a school supply drive would reduce the stress students may have by providing extra supplies. I am hosting a school supply drive at Highcrest elementary school and donating the proceeds to Dwight Bellizzi. Donating to a school that has 89.4 percent of students who qualify for free or reduced lunch can create a less stressful environment for children to focus on their education. A child's sole focus in school should be about their performance. The school supply drive is to give the children who are at a disadvantage a fair shot at becoming the best student they can be.

Resources

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