

Defies Measurement

Activity Guide – Poverty and Test Scores

Discuss the topic below and then make a presentation to the group. The presentation will be in the form of a proposal to the local school board. Using the information you learn about Poverty and Test Scores, be sure to state the problem that currently exists in the local school or district and then lay out the proposed solution. Or, if there isn't a problem, then propose a new plan that would add something positive to the school and/or district.

POVERTY AND TEST SCORES

In *Defies Measurement*, Ken Wesson says, "If we know that family income is driving the test scores, then these are not tests of intelligence. And if we say that race and socio-economic status impact the test scores, then maybe these aren't tests of intelligence, these are tests of other factors that we don't wish to acknowledge."

Linda Darling-Hammond adds that "If you look at the Pisa scores, our schools which have less than 10% of their kids living in poverty are number 1 in the world. And, the other countries we're being compared with have all of their schools with less than 10% of kids living in poverty. Even our schools with as many as 25% of kids living in poverty, which is by international standards...extraordinarily high rates of poverty, rank number 3 in the world. Even our schools with as many as 50% of kids living in poverty rank above international averages in reading. But, we have a growing number of schools where more than 75% of children live in poverty. One in five of our schools now have 75% or more children living in poverty. That is an international horror. No one in other countries can even imagine how a country could allow that to be the case."

Alfie Kohn says, "If you tell me for a given school how many kids are on free or reduced lunch, how many kids have two parents at home, what kind of car they drive if they drive, I can predict with chilling accuracy what the average test score will be."

For discussion:

What are the ways in which poverty can impact a student's test score?

How does poverty affect your local school and/or district as a whole?

What are some ways in which schools and districts can address the needs of students and families who live in poverty?