

Factors that affect Student Learning

Students between the ages of 5 and 18 years of age are expected to learn in school. It is their primary job in society, and it's possibly the one thing that will prepare them to become productive members in their adult years. What they learn will also determine the choices they'll make when they enter the workforce or continue onto higher education. In order for students to learn there are several factors that must be considered. Most of these factors are external; they deal with social or cultural values. Also, it may be determined by the school's environment as well as the teachers and administrators that teach them. Still, another important factor falls upon the student's ability and willingness to learn. Here are several factors that can affect the way a student learns during these formidable years.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC

FACTORS

Students come from various backgrounds. Some are poor while others come from affluent household. They may come from strong family structures in which the parents are professionals or are highly educated, while others students may come from a single parent household and/or have parents with limited educational background. Students from affluent neighborhood will most likely have more educational support and resources to help them through school. Often, these neighborhoods have more tutoring companies, afterschool activities, and education stores than the working class or poor neighborhoods.

Also, an affluent neighborhood will be filled with highly educated people. In many respects, students in these neighborhoods are expected to continue their education at college or university level. In struggling, impoverished neighborhoods, education may be seen more as a way to get a job after high school. In some cases, the idea of getting an education is secondary. Economically surviving is more important.

PARENT'S

EDUCATION

Often, the affluent parent will have access to educational resources for his/her child. Also, the parent in from this sector of society will most likely educate his/her child directly or indirectly. It is more likely that these parents will have higher regards for education, set

educational goals for the child and/or be models. Also, it is more likely a child with doctors as parents will end up pursuing higher education – and possibly medical school, than the child whose parents’ education stopped at a high school diploma. This is not to say that a child’s education is predetermined by the parents’ education; however, it is merely one factor that can affect the student’s desire to learn.

SCHOOL STRUCTURE AND RESOURCES

The condition and availability of resources at a school can play a major factor. One classroom this writer had comes to mind: It was small, cramped and its entrance was through another classroom. On top of that, it was near the train tracks on one side and the wood and metal shop on the side. It was noisy, and students were easily distracted. Teaching in this classroom was equally tough. A well equipped class with space and the least amount of distractions will usually help students – especially those with learning disabilities -- to focus on instructions.

SAFETY

Safety, or the sense of feeling safe, can affect student learning. Having taught at a school that was once plagued by riots, student fights, and gang problems, this writer had seen what happened when student safety has been compromised. While some students sought refuge in teachers’ classes during lunch or when these incidents occur, others simply stopped coming to school. If students feel safe, they will not have to worry about conflicts on campus. If they are the target of bullying, afraid of being caught up in an upheaval such as school-wide fights or riots, then they will be more worried about these problems rather than what’s being taught in English or Math class.

LEARNING

DISABILITIES

Learning disabilities can affect the way a student learns. A disability may affect a student’s ability to either learn visually or audibly. Also, a student’s memory, attention and capacity to retain information can be greatly affected.

LANGUAGE

BARRIERS

If students’ language abilities are affected, they will have trouble retaining the lesson. In

many cases, students labeled as English Language Learners may not grasp the language well enough to understand what is being taught. Sometimes, this refers to students who have had the ability to acquire the language but have not learned the rules associated with it. Communication between the teacher and students can be greatly hindered by this particular factor.

TEACHERS/ADMINISTRATION

A teacher's skills, expertise, and willingness can help students learn. In the art of teaching, anything a teacher does is going to be scrutinized by the students. If the teacher serves as an ideal role model, demonstrates competence, as well as confidence, in the subject he or she is teaching, the students will respond positively. This rule applies to administrators as well.

Still, there's another factor that doesn't always get raised. In secondary schools (high school and middle school), in which teachers are expected to teach a particular subject – and be an expert in it -- administrators will often place these teachers in unfamiliar subjects. Sometimes, a math teacher discovers one year he has to teach social science, or English must teach Science. This can cause confusion and unfamiliarity among these teachers. On top of that, it can affect students' abilities to learn the subject if the teacher is not an expert in it.

STUDENT'S WILLINGNESS TO LEARN

Up to this point, most of the factors that may affect student learning dealt with external causes, language barriers, and learning disabilities. However, a very critical factor – some may say the most important one – is the student's willingness to learn. If a student is eager, motivated, or goal oriented, the likelihood is that student will learn. If not, the student may regurgitate the education given to him or her but not retain it. Student learning is a multi-faceted system. A student may prosper when several of these factors are in play. Even if one factor is missing, he or she will be able to learn. However, in the long run, the willingness to learn may trump all other factors, for it is up to the individual to overcome difficulties and reach the educational goal that he or she wants.