Evelyn Hernandez

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Rural Poverty

More than 21% of the American population chooses to live in rural communities. The rest of the people that live in rural communities are most likely to be experiencing poverty. Before conducting research, speaking to an expert, and finding a book about rural poverty, I had no idea this issue even existed. I did not know how many people in a community there needed to be in order to be seen as rural. This presentation and the research that I made really made me open my eyes as a future teacher.

Prior to my presentation I did not know much about rural communities, but I did have an idea about poverty issues in California. Working for the mini-corps program has made me realize many things about poverty and those who work in the fields. In order to become part of the mini-corps program the students have to have parents who work on the fields and who are considered below the poverty line. I have a little more than a year working with children who need more than tutoring from me. They also need emotional support and positive feedback. The children that I work with sometimes do not have clean clothes, shoes that fit, or even clean faces and bodies. I have been learning a lot since I joined this program because I feel like I know what to expect in a classroom. At first, I wanted to buy children new shoes because they went to class with really tiny and old shoes. I felt like I had to do something for these children to help them, but my supervisor let me know that establishing a positive relationship with them and being there for them emotionally is what benefits children the most.

First and foremost, I can see many values, traditions, and beliefs held by rural communities in poverty in my own culture. I have to say that just because they are considered rural poor doesn’t make them any different from any other person. Families that live in rural areas work really hard, and that is one of the many things how I can relate rural poverty to my own culture. In my research I learned that there are not many jobs in rural communities, therefore a job is very valued by the people in those communities. My mother spent 14 years in the same job and she was very loyal to her company. Rural communities tend to have close relationships with the people around and that is what I also like to have with my own neighbors. I value close relationships and I try to be helpful with my community as well. It would not be fair to not mention that I consider myself just in the poverty line. I do not ask my mother for any money at all and we have always struggled with money. Ever since I could remember I am not able to have a lot of spending money and we never have family vacations or even own a home. I consider myself and my family part of the urban poor.

My experience at interviewing someone with expertise was great although it was not a very formal interview. I got bits and pieces from the school that I work at which is Durham Elementary. In this school they focus a lot on farming and growing crops. The teacher that I work with has been a teacher for a really long time and she has said many things to me that made me believe that she lowers children’s expectations just because they are poor. She is a wonderful teacher and has taught me a lot from just observing her teaching style in her classroom. Another way how I was able to get my information was from being in the staff room and hearing teachers talk about certain students. The teachers speak very badly of the “poor” students and they said that their parents must not care or love them that much since they send them to school with such dirty clothing. I am disgusted by all of the drama and stereotypes that these teachers have towards children in poverty.

Based on my new knowledge as a result of my research in rural poverty I believe I will be able to provide a more equitable educational experience for my students. Just like for other sensitive topics, I believe that I have to be sensitive to this topic as well. In my own classroom I plan to address my student’s culture, traditions, and also talk about poverty as well. While incorporating activities and reading about poverty I want to make my students know that being poor is okay. I feel like I will be able to relate to my students since I have experienced poverty to some extent. I am one of those people that try to do my best at everything that I do and I will definitely try to do my best at assuring my student’s well being. I will try and make sure that if I assign a project that requires materials or internet connection, I will leave materials available to them and I will also leave class time for them to access the internet in the classroom. These are only some of the ways in which I plan to make my classroom equitable for my whole classroom.