



THE VOTER

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF CENTRAL YAVAPAI COUNTY

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The League of Women Voters of Central Yavapai County
April General Meeting

Education's Impact on Poverty

Is Education Still the Ticket out of Poverty?

Saturday, April 5, 2014
9:00 – 11:30 a.m.
Las Fuentes Resort Village, Prescott

Guest Speakers



Gerry Garvey,
Executive Director
Prescott Area Shelter Services



Duane Howard,
Superintendent, Chino Valley School District



Kathleen Murphy
Executive Director
Yavapai Big Brothers Big Sisters



The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.



President's Message

Behind the scenes the board has been very busy putting the final touches to our two final general meetings of the year, April 5th and May 3rd, after which we will be on summer recess until September. In April we are turning to a panel of local experts that deal everyday with the correlation between education and the underprivileged. This meeting has been in preparation for many months and is very worthy of your time. We encourage you to bring friends.

In May, we are having our **Annual Business Meeting** with a special keynote speaker and a celebration of our **20th Anniversary!** You will be receiving an information packed invitation via email soon. You will also receive your Annual

Packet by regular mail thirty days in advance, to bring to the meeting. It is so important that you attend. We must establish a quorum and changes for the upcoming year must be voted on by the membership. There is also a new slate of nominees for the 2016-2015 Board of Directors. This meeting is not open to the public.

At the February and March general meetings we covered program business. In February we gathered in a workshop to determine if any of national or our local positions needed updates or elimination, and whether we are willing to begin a new study that might bring us to a new position. In March, we returned to the Agricultural study update done by representatives of the national league. We selected two parts of what is an enormous study, and reviewed them and then had questions and discussion before mostly coming to consensus on the study questions. There will be more on this at the Annual Meeting when the Program report will be given. Thank you to all who participated. We gained a lot by going through the process and receiving the information. I'd like to give a special thank you to Terri Farneti for gathering and presenting so much information on the Food Safety part of the workshop, and to Alice Harris for asking and taking the consensus questions.

I hope you are all taking some time to observe what is happening in our state legislature. It is the time of the session that bills are fast-tracked and striker bills are used, as the legislators often want to push controversial bills through without too much or any review. The results are sometimes foolish or even devastating, and often overturned by the courts, costing Arizona taxpayers far too much in legal fees. Please be careful for whom you vote in the upcoming elections and encourage others to do the same.

News just came out as I am writing this that the courts have agreed that Arizona and Kansas can enforce proof of citizenship when registering to vote. One can only wonder how many of Arizona Native Americans and the very elderly will be kept from voting.

I'm looking forward to seeing all of you on April 5th, same time and place.

Vicky O'Hara, President

**Yavapai County:
% in Poverty, 2011: 18.4, % Children in Poverty, 2011: 28.9**

11 Facts About Education and Poverty in America

<http://www.dosomething.org/tipsandtools/11-facts-about-education-and-poverty-america>

1. What is the Poverty Line, anyway? According to the 2011 U.S. Census Bureau, it is a family of four (two adults, two children under 18) that earns less than \$23,021.
2. The basic-needs budget for a U.S. family of 4 is \$31,080 (rural Nebraska) to \$64,656 (Boston, Massachusetts).
3. In 2011, nearly 46.2 million Americans were living in poverty.
4. Children living in poverty have a higher rate of absenteeism or leave school all together because they are more likely to have to work or care for family members.
5. Dropout rates of 16 to 24-year-old students who come from low income families are seven times more likely to drop out than those from families with higher incomes.
6. A higher percentage of young adults (31 percent) without a high school diploma live in poverty, compared to the 24 percent of young people who finished high school.
7. 40 percent of children living in poverty aren't prepared for primary schooling.
8. Children that live below the poverty line are 1.3 times more likely to have developmental delays or learning disabilities than those who don't live in poverty.
9. By the end of the 4th grade, African-American, Hispanic and low-income students are already two years behind grade level. By the time they reach the 12th grade they are four years behind.
10. The nation's lowest-performing high schools produce 58 percent of all African-American dropouts and 50 percent of all Hispanic dropouts, compared to 22 percent of all white dropouts.
11. Less than 30 percent of students in the bottom quarter of incomes enroll in a four-year school. Among that group – less than half graduate.

Source: [Alliance For Excellent Education](#), [U.S. Census](#), [National Center for Education Statistics](#), [The New York Times](#), [American Graduate](#)

Op-Ed Contributors

Class Matters. Why Won't We Admit It?

By HELEN F. LADD and EDWARD B. FISKE

Published: December 11, 2011 New York Times

NO one seriously disputes the fact that students from disadvantaged households perform less well in school, on average, than their peers from more advantaged backgrounds. But rather than confront this fact of life head-on, our policy makers mistakenly continue to reason that, since they cannot change the backgrounds of students, they should focus on things they can control.

No Child Left Behind, President George W. Bush's signature education law, did this by setting unrealistically high — and ultimately self-defeating — expectations for all schools. President Obama's policies have concentrated on trying to make schools more "efficient" through means like judging teachers by their students' test scores or encouraging competition by promoting the creation of charter schools. The proverbial story of the drunk looking for his keys under the lamppost comes to mind.

The Occupy movement has catalyzed rising anxiety over income inequality; we desperately need a similar reminder of the relationship between economic advantage and student performance.

The correlation has been abundantly documented, notably by the famous Coleman Report in 1966. New research by Sean F. Reardon of Stanford University traces the achievement gap between children from high- and low-income families over the last 50 years and finds that it now far exceeds the gap between white and black students.

Data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress show that more than 40 percent of the variation in average reading scores and 46 percent of the variation in average math scores across states is associated with variation in child poverty rates.

International research tells the same story. Results of the 2009 reading tests conducted by the Program for International Student Assessment show that, among 15-year-olds in the United States and the 13 countries whose students outperformed ours, students with lower economic and social status had far lower test scores than their more advantaged counterparts within every country. Can anyone credibly believe that the mediocre overall performance of American students on international tests is unrelated to the fact that one-fifth of American children live in poverty?

Yet federal education policy seems blind to all this. No Child Left Behind required all schools to bring all students to high levels of achievement but took no note of the challenges that disadvantaged students face. The legislation did, to be sure, specify that subgroups — defined by income, minority status and proficiency in English — must meet the same achievement standard. But it did so only to make sure that schools did not ignore their disadvantaged students — not to help them address the challenges they carry with them into the classroom.

So why do presumably well-intentioned policy makers ignore, or deny, the correlations of family background and student achievement?

Some honestly believe that schools are capable of offsetting the effects of poverty. Others want to avoid the impression that they set lower expectations for some groups of students for fear that those expectations will be self-fulfilling. In both cases, simply wanting something to be true does not make it so.

Another rationale for denial is to note that some schools, like the Knowledge Is Power Program charter schools, have managed to "beat the odds." If some schools can succeed, the argument goes, then it is reasonable to expect all schools to. But close scrutiny of charter school performance has shown that many of the success stories have been limited to particular grades or subjects and may be attributable to substantial

outside financing or extraordinarily long working hours on the part of teachers. The evidence does not support the view that the few success stories can be scaled up to address the needs of large populations of disadvantaged students.

A final rationale for denying the correlation is more nefarious. As we are now seeing, requiring all schools to meet the same high standards for all students, regardless of family background, will inevitably lead either to large numbers of failing schools or to a dramatic lowering of state standards. Both serve to discredit the public education system and lend support to arguments that the system is failing and needs fundamental change, like privatization.

Given the budget crises at the national and state levels, and the strong political power of conservative groups, a significant effort to reduce poverty or deal with the closely related issue of racial segregation is not in the political cards, at least for now.

So what can be done?

Large bodies of research have shown how poor health and nutrition inhibit child development and learning and, conversely, how high-quality early childhood and preschool education programs can enhance them. We understand the importance of early exposure to rich language on future cognitive development. We know that low-income students experience greater learning loss during the summer when their more privileged peers are enjoying travel and other enriching activities.

Since they can't take on poverty itself, education policy makers should try to provide poor students with the social support and experiences that middle-class students enjoy as a matter of course.

It can be done. In North Carolina, the two-year-old East Durham Children's Initiative is one of many efforts around the country to replicate Geoffrey Canada's well-known successes with the Harlem Children's Zone.

Say Yes to Education in Syracuse, N.Y., supports access to afterschool programs and summer camps and places social workers in schools. In Omaha, Building Bright Futures sponsors school-based health centers and offers mentoring and enrichment services. Citizen Schools, based in Boston, recruits volunteers in seven states to share their interests and skills with middle-school students.

Promise Neighborhoods, an Obama administration effort that gives grants to programs like these, is a welcome first step, but it has been under-financed.

Other countries already pursue such strategies. In Finland, with its famously high-performing schools, schools provide food and free health care for students. Developmental needs are addressed early. Counseling services are abundant.

But in the United States over the past decade, it became fashionable among supporters of the "no excuses" approach to school improvement to accuse anyone raising the poverty issue of letting schools off the hook — or what Mr. Bush famously called "the soft bigotry of low expectations."

Such accusations may afford the illusion of a moral high ground, but they stand in the way of serious efforts to improve education and, for that matter, go a long way toward explaining why No Child Left Behind has not worked.

Yes, we need to make sure that all children, and particularly disadvantaged children, have access to good schools, as defined by the quality of teachers and principals and of internal policies and practices.

But let's not pretend that family background does not matter and can be overlooked. Let's agree that we know a lot about how to address the ways in which poverty undermines student learning. Whether we choose to face up to that reality is ultimately a moral question.

Helen F. Ladd is a professor of public policy and economics at Duke. Edward B. Fiske, a former education editor of The New York Times, is the author of the "Fiske Guide to Colleges."

A version of this op-ed appeared in print on December 12, 2011, on page A23 of the New York edition with the headline: Class Matters. Why Won't We Admit It?.

Education Gap Grows Between Rich and Poor, Studies Say

By SABRINA TAVERNISE

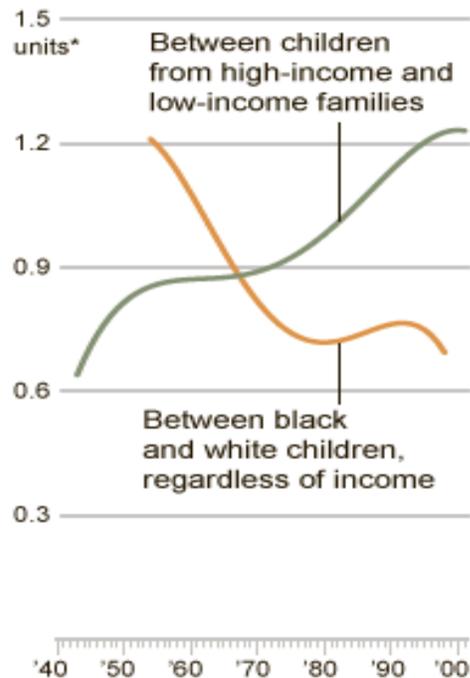
Published: February 9, 2012 New York Times
[545 Comments](#)

WASHINGTON — Education was historically considered a great equalizer in American society, capable of lifting less advantaged children and improving their chances for success as adults. But a body of recently published scholarship suggests that the achievement gap between rich and poor children is widening, a development that threatens to dilute education's leveling effects.

Educational Divide

The achievement gap between rich and poor children is double the gap between black and white children, according to a study by a Stanford University sociologist.

Average difference in standardized reading test scores, by birth year of students



*A difference of one unit is roughly equal to the difference in test scores between a fifth grader and an eighth grader.

Source: Sean F. Reardon, Stanford University

It is a well-known fact that children from affluent families tend to do better in school. Yet the income divide has received far less attention from policy makers and government officials than gaps in student accomplishment by race.

Now, in analyses of long-term data published in recent months, researchers are finding that while the achievement gap between white and black students has narrowed significantly over the past few decades, the gap between rich and poor students has grown substantially during the same period.

“We have moved from a society in the 1950s and 1960s, in which race was more consequential than family income, to one today in which family income appears more determinative of educational success than race,” said Sean F. Reardon, a Stanford University sociologist. Professor Reardon is the author of a study that found that the gap in standardized test scores between affluent and low-income students had grown by about 40 percent since the 1960s, and is now double the testing gap between blacks and whites.

In another study, by researchers from the University of Michigan, the imbalance between rich and poor children in college completion — the single most important predictor of success in the work force — has grown by about 50 percent since the late 1980s.

The changes are tectonic, a result of social and economic processes unfolding over many decades. The data from most of these studies end in 2007 and 2008, before the recession’s full impact was felt. Researchers said that based on experiences during past recessions, the recent downturn was likely to have aggravated the trend.

“With income declines more severe in the lower brackets, there’s a good chance the recession may have widened the gap,” Professor Reardon said. In the study he led, researchers analyzed 12 sets of standardized test scores starting in 1960 and ending in 2007. He compared children from families in the 90th percentile of income — the equivalent of around \$160,000 in 2008, when the study was conducted — and children from the 10th percentile, \$17,500 in 2008. By the end of that period, the achievement gap by income had grown by 40 percent, he said, while the gap between white and black students, regardless of income, had shrunk substantially.

Both studies were first published last fall in a book of research, “Whither Opportunity?” compiled by the Russell Sage Foundation, a research center for social sciences, and the Spencer Foundation, which focuses on education. Their conclusions, while familiar to a small core of social sciences scholars, are now catching the attention of a broader audience, in part because income inequality has been a central theme this election season.

The connection between income inequality among parents and the social mobility of their children has been a focus of President Obama as well as some of the Republican presidential candidates.

One reason for the growing gap in achievement, researchers say, could be that wealthy parents invest more time and money than ever before in their children (in weekend sports, ballet, music lessons, math tutors, and in overall involvement in their children’s schools), while lower-income families, which are now more likely than ever to be headed by a single parent, are increasingly stretched for time and resources. This has been particularly true as more parents try to position their children for college, which has become ever more essential for success in today’s economy.

A study by Sabino Kornrich, a researcher at the Center for Advanced Studies at the Juan March Institute in Madrid, and Frank F. Furstenberg, scheduled to appear in the journal *Demography* this year, found that in 1972, Americans at the upper end of the income spectrum were spending five times as much per child as low-income families. By 2007 that gap had grown to nine to one; spending by upper-income families more than doubled, while spending by low-income families grew by 20 percent.

“The pattern of privileged families today is intensive cultivation,” said Dr. Furstenberg, a professor of sociology at the University of Pennsylvania.

The gap is also growing in college. The University of Michigan study, by Susan M. Dynarski and Martha J. Bailey, looked at two generations of students, those born from 1961 to 1964 and those born from 1979 to 1982. By 1989, about one-third of the high-income students in the first generation had finished college; by 2007, more than half of the second generation had done so. By contrast, only 9

percent of the low-income students in the second generation had completed college by 2007, up only slightly from a 5 percent college completion rate by the first generation in 1989.

James J. Heckman, an economist at the University of Chicago, argues that parenting matters as much as, if not more than, income in forming a child's cognitive ability and personality, particularly in the years before children start school.

"Early life conditions and how children are stimulated play a very important role," he said. "The danger is we will revert back to the mindset of the war on poverty, when poverty was just a matter of income, and giving families more would improve the prospects of their children. If people conclude that, it's a mistake."

Meredith Phillips, an associate professor of public policy and sociology at the University of California, Los Angeles, used survey data to show that affluent children spend 1,300 more hours than low-income children before age 6 in places other than their homes, their day care centers, or schools (anywhere from museums to shopping malls). By the time high-income children start school, they have spent about 400 hours more than poor children in literacy activities, she found.

Charles Murray, a scholar at the American Enterprise Institute whose book, "Coming Apart: The State of White America, 1960-2010," was published Jan. 31, described income inequality as "more of a symptom than a cause."

The growing gap between the better educated and the less educated, he argued, has formed a kind of cultural divide that has its roots in natural social forces, like the tendency of educated people to marry other educated people, as well as in the social policies of the 1960s, like welfare and other government programs, which he contended provided incentives for staying single.

"When the economy recovers, you'll still see all these problems persisting for reasons that have nothing to do with money and everything to do with culture," he said.

There are no easy answers, in part because the problem is so complex, said Douglas J. Besharov, a fellow at the Atlantic Council. Blaming the problem on the richest of the rich ignores an equally important driver, he said: two-earner household wealth, which has lifted the upper middle class ever further from less educated Americans, who tend to be single parents.

The problem is a puzzle, he said. "No one has the slightest idea what will work. The cupboard is bare."

A version of this article appeared in print on February 10, 2012, on page A1 of the New York edition with the headline: Poor Dropping Further Behind Rich in School.

A Poverty, Not Education, Crisis In U.S.

Oliver Thomas December 10, 2013 USAToday

New studies show that the number of poor children is rising and the impact it has on learning.

Story Highlights

- One study reveals that nearly half of all American public school students live in poverty.
- Another shows poverty and not race or national origin is best predictor of college attendance.
- As a nation, we need to move beyond treating the symptoms to addressing root causes.

The latest results of the Program for International Student Assessment — which measures the knowledge and skills of 15-year-old students in math, reading and science — were released last week, and once again Finland is near the top. True, this time students in Asia claimed many of the top spots. But Finland's system remains one of the world's highest-performing, with its universal preschool program, site-based management and dislike of standardized testing often cited for its success.

By comparison, U.S. student scores remained in the middle of the pack. But the most telling difference between Finns and Americans when it comes to education is child poverty.

Poverty is the most relevant factor in determining the outcome of a person's educational journey, and in Finland, the child poverty rate is about 5%. In the U.S., the rate is almost five times as high. Unlike us, the Finns calculate the rate of poverty *after* accounting for government aid, but the differences remain substantial.

As researchers Michael Rebell and Jessica Wolff of the Campaign for Educational Equity at Teachers College, Columbia University, have noted, there is no general education crisis in the United States. There is a child poverty crisis that is impacting education.

Here's one data point worth remembering. When you measure the test scores of American schools with a child poverty rate of less than 20%, our kids not only outperform the Finns, they outperform every nation in the world.

Half of students in poverty

But here's the really bad news. Two new studies on education and poverty were reported in *Education Week* in October. The first from the Southern Education Foundation reveals that nearly half of all U.S. public school students live in poverty. Poverty has risen in every state since President Clinton left office.

The second study, conducted by the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, reveals that poverty — not race, ethnicity, national origin or where you attend school — is the best predictor of college attendance and completion.

Chew on that. The causes of poverty are complex and varied: excessive immigration, tax policy, and the exportation and automation of manufacturing jobs. Yet the list of solutions is strikingly short. Other than picking a kid's parents, it amounts to giving all children access to a high-quality education.

Here's the catch-22. While the only long-term solution to poverty might be a good education, a good education is seldom available to children living in poverty.

One reason is that spending on education has not kept pace with the rise in child poverty. While poverty grew by 40% in the Midwest and 33% in the South from 2001 to 2011, educational spending per pupil grew by only 12% in these regions over the same 10-year period.

Still, we don't know enough about the future to be totally pessimistic:

- In Tennessee, for example, a program called tnACHIEVES is aspiring to provide last dollar scholarships to every needy high school graduate who wishes to attend one of the state's 13 community colleges or 27 technology centers.
- In Atlanta, the East Lake neighborhood has turned a crime-laden slum with the city's lowest performing school into a prosperous neighborhood with one of the highest-performing schools in the state.
- Philanthropists, such as Bill and Melinda Gates, are helping to send low-income students to college.

Beyond the symptoms

But such efforts are ad hoc and episodic. And it's not that our nation isn't trying.

We have spent billions of dollars on food stamps, welfare, Medicaid, Head Start and all the rest. Yet until we move beyond treating the symptoms to root causes, this rising tide of child poverty threatens to turn the world's most prosperous nation into its largest banana republic.

That doesn't mean the solution must come from Washington.

To the contrary, Tennessee Achieves happened because a former mayor and four businessmen decided to do something about the fact that fully two-thirds of Tennesseans lacked post-secondary training and were ill-equipped for meaningful employment in today's economy.

East Lake happened because a wealthy businessman partnered with the head of the housing authority and a neighborhood leader to turn a struggling neighborhood into one of the best. Their efforts to replicate the East Gate model in other parts of the United States through Purpose Built Communities has garnered support from the likes of Warren Buffett and Tom Brokaw.

The point is this. America can still work. If not in Washington, then in Tennessee, Atlanta and anywhere else people decide to get serious about a problem.

These two new studies about child poverty tell us that the time is now.

Oliver Thomas is a member of the USA TODAY's Board of Contributors and the president of the Great Schools Partnership.

Further Online Readings: Copy and Paste into your Browser

Poverty and Education by Servaas van der Berg

UNESCO Education Policy Series, 2008

http://scholar.google.com/scholar_url?hl=en&q=http://unesco.atlasproject.eu/unesco/file/7ccb1dde-ab76-4631-94de-2f5f7088c0cf/c8c7fe00-c770-11e1-9b21-0800200c9a66/181754e.pdf&sa=X&scisig=AAGBfm2BRnNpk794N9brCR99THAq1Dl1yw&oi=scholar

The Effect of Poverty on Child Development and Educational Outcomes

PATRICE L. ENGLE^a AND MAUREEN M. BLACK^b

http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=3&ved=0CEEQFjAC&url=http%3A%2F%2Fdigitalcommons.calpoly.edu%2Fcgi%2Fviewcontent.cgi%3Farticle%3D1002%26context%3Dpsycd_fac&ei=iQcZU5a7M4HxoASVvYDoAQ&usq=AFQjCNEypRtMYq6_mYYj0at8kvxSXHtGDQ&bvm=bv.62578216,d.cGU

Poverty and Education: Finding the Way Forward

Copyright © 2013 by Educational Testing Service.

<http://www.spotlightonpoverty.org/EducationAndPovertyResearch.aspx>

March 20, 2014

Dear Nancy,

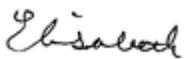
Despite the seemingly never ending winter storms, today is the first day of spring and there is a lot going on this month.

March is [Women's History Month](#) and a good time to remember that the League has played a big part in advancing causes important to women. [Eleanor Roosevelt](#), a League member, credited the League with teaching her the importance of civic participation. That is a message we all take to heart when we engage our elected officials and work to insure that every eligible voter has free and fair access to the polls.

That access was [dealt a blow yesterday as a judge in Kansas](#) ruled that requirements in the states of Arizona and Kansas that voters provide documentary proof of citizenship when registering to vote are not preempted by the National Voter Registration Act. The ruling is contrary to that of the United Supreme Court in [Arizona v. Inter Tribal Council of Arizona \(ITCA\)](#). Rather than consider new factual and constitutional issues as directed by the Supreme Court, the judge in Kansas chose to reopen the issue of federal preemption. [While we are disappointed, we are confident that the ruling is erroneous and will not hold up on appeal.](#)

On a much brighter note, this is [Sunshine Week](#). [Leagues work hard to shine a light on state and local government](#) and this week gives us a chance to highlight the work we are doing to remind our communities of the importance of transparency in government. On Sunday, we will mark the anniversary of the [Affordable Care Act](#). Despite many challenges, including those involved with the roll out of the Health Care Exchanges, the ACA has been of vital importance in improving access to health care for millions of Americans. League members have and continue to fill an important role in helping communities understand the impact of this legislation.

So on this first day of spring, as we enjoy or hope for warmer weather, let us bask a little in the sunshine we bring with the good work that we do.



Working to Protect Our Planet (NEW)

The LWVUS Climate Change Task Force (CCTF) encourages League members to put climate action on their League's agenda. Climate action can take many forms, ranging from one event to a longer-term initiative. Earth Day celebrations, for example, provide a good opportunity to enlist support for climate solutions, such as the EPA's [proposed carbon pollution standard](#) for new power plants. Find more information and ideas for Earth Day 2014 -- April 22 -- [here](#).



**League of Women Voters
of Central Yavapai County
P.O. Box 11538
Prescott, AZ 86304-1538**

A nonpartisan membership organization, the League of Women Voters neither supports nor opposes political parties or candidates, but encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.