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Education 449
Community and Culture Photo Essay Individual Analysis

The community of Lewisburg, PA is one that is unique in that though it could be easily deemed as “rural” at a quick glance, a deeper look reveals a much more complex composition. Children in this community emerge from a range of socioeconomic status backgrounds, creating a variety of implications for each individual child’s life and education experience.

While on our fieldtrip, we visited homes within the community of Lewisburg that exemplified both high and low socioeconomic statuses of members of the community. Seeing the variation in socioeconomic status as represented by the appearance of the homes in different neighborhoods we visited has made me reflect upon some of the general implications different home life situations could have for some of the students in my classroom. Is a child from a lower socioeconomic status background worried primarily about when they will get their next meal, detracting from their ability to focus on learning during the school day? What sorts of pressures may children of Bucknell Professors face in regards to heightened expectations about optimal performance in school? Although these questions are just generalizations and will not apply to all children of one socioeconomic status background or another, they are examples of some important issues that may arise within my own or other classrooms at Kelly Elementary in Lewisburg as a result of a child’s socioeconomic background. Having observed these differences and after talking to my cooperating teacher I think it is also important to be aware of how my students are interacting with one another, especially those who come from very different backgrounds and home situations for whatever reason, as children (especially those who are younger) are less likely to have a "filter" and may not view others differences positively. Through my efforts to create a warm and inviting classroom environment I think doing things

like having the students share something about themselves during circle time are important so students can learn to value each others differences. Modeling appropriate behaviors is also another great way to teach students how to interact with one another. Teaching students appropriate ways to respond when conflicts or disagreements arise, and how to work out these conflicts independently of adult assistance, is a key aspect of helping children develop to be good citizens and people.

I think one important specific issue also related to socioeconomic status that my cooperating teacher hinted at in my early discussions with her pertains to the divide that exists to a certain extent between the children of Bucknell professors and/ or other individuals in the Lewisburg community of higher socioeconomic status and children from working class families and lower socioeconomic status families. This divide was re-affirmed as we explored Lewisburg more in-depth and gathered photos for our photo essay. We began by viewing the mansion-esque homes located out behind the Bucknell golf course including those owned by the founders of Playworld Systems. We also drove by lower-income homes located in neighborhoods back behind Walmart including an apartment complex, and although it appeared to be neat and decent housing at a quick glance, there is a huge discrepancy between these and the homes we had only minutes before viewed near the Bucknell golf course. Pictured below is a home we passed located closer to route 45 than to the historic homes in down town Lewisburg or those out behind the Bucknell golf course. I choose to include this particular house because it appears to be very different than the mansion-esque homes we viewed just a half hour earlier behind the Bucknell golf course. Those homes and the one pictured below couldn't have been more than a ten minute drive apart, and yet they are very different in appearance and location. Children growing up in a home like this located so close to many other homes might have more opportunities to interact

with other children apart from a parent/guardian organized "play date" that might be more necessary to organize for children living in huge homes spaced fairly far apart. Also the outward presentation of this home in comparison to some of the homes we saw behind the Bucknell golf course is very different. Not as much care to outward appearance was taken with this home (or may have been able to be taken) yet it is important to remember that a nice outward appearance of a home does not necessarily guarantee a conflict free family life. In this regard it is important for a teacher to remember once again not to make judgments about a students life based purely upon the outward appearance they present when they come to school but instead take the time to get to know students as unique individuals from a variety of backgrounds.



One important connection we made during our field trip was the integration of Bucknell University in Lewisburg community life. This varies from community attendance at University sporting events to the patronage of Bucknell students at locally owned shops and restaurants in downtown Lewisburg. This also made me think about all the ways Bucknell students of all majors impact these children's lives through volunteering at places like the Donald Heiter Community Center, for Bucknell Buddies, etc. Although Lewisburg does contain a historic

downtown area mostly on and around Market Street, more rural, agricultural influences also make themselves known in Lewisburg as they are surely presented in the surrounding areas like Mifflinburg. The Lewisburg Farmer's Market is a good example of this and just goes to show once again the diversity of ways people make a living in Lewisburg, PA, from farming and working in agriculture to employment at Bucknell to owning or working at a store or restaurant in downtown Lewisburg.



One implication difference in socioeconomic status might have for Kindergarten is that although my students are still fairly young, either five or six years old, they are entering school with a wide range of abilities and experiences that will ultimately have implications for their learning and therefore should be taken into consideration as I plan my lessons. For example, some children may have already had the experience of traveling to another country, while others may have yet to leave Pennsylvania.



Although this field trip has made me largely consider the differences in and implications of socioeconomic status that children may bring in to my Kindergarten classroom, I also must remember to take what I have seen with a grain of salt. Socioeconomic status does not make a guarantee about stable or unstable home life of a child, and I must remember to take information I learn about a child as it is, never adding to it/ making more of it than it is. What I mean to say is that one fact about a child's life doesn't always have certain resulting implications linked to it; every child's life is unique and has a number of factors working to shape it. It is important for me to recognize my own biases as I take a step back and reflect on who I am as a teacher and how this may or does affect my students. For instance, growing up on the outskirts of a decent sized city (Rochester, NY) was a very different environment than that of Lewisburg, PA, as it is much more urban and the area in which I grew up can not really be considered a "college town" or relying on one single institution for much of its growth and development. Keeping this in mind, especially reflecting upon how the environment I grew up in specifically shaped some of my experiences and opportunities in school, is essential to my ability to then reflect upon my student's differing home and community environments, experiences, and opportunities.