

## Leadership Connection 2018 (15-18 September)

### Project Change the Curriculum: Addressing the Health Disparities in Education of Children With Learning Disabilities

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#### I. Introduction

Health disparities reflect the differences in health within different population groups due to sociodemographic factors such as socioeconomic status (SES), race, and gender. Health disparities exist also in academia as past research have shown a clear poverty-related trend of a higher dropout rate of children from low socioeconomic statuses. Despite the similar prevalence of learning disabilities affecting children from all income levels throughout all races and ethnicities, minority children of color and low-income children are more susceptible to being identified as having a learning disability and are three times more likely to dropout of school. This shows that combined factors of low socioeconomic backgrounds, lack of resources provided by many school districts, and bias in the underrepresented students create a notable influence on this particular population.

With the clear health disparity present in education, this study focuses on a new academic curriculum called Project Change Curriculum, otherwise known as Project CC. Project CC is a modified curriculum designed to provide the additional accommodations in learning skills to students with LD. This curriculum is considered to be a preliminary experiment that is targeted at elementary students as they could be provided the skills for academic success early on as they progress into higher education. During this preliminary round, our goal to find the ideal curriculum that aids the improvement of educational success in this certain population and to alleviate the drop-out epidemic.

#### II. Method

Twenty participants in the age groups 6-8 were selected to undergo a 4 week study in order to see the effects of Project CC on their academic performances. All participants were identified by their guardians or by themselves with LD that ranged from dyslexia, ADD, ADHD, or difficulty in learning. Participants attended the study with twice a week for 3 hours each with 15 minute breaks in between each session.

The curriculum includes using activities that specifically targets a particular learning disabilities with the focus of math, writing, and reading. We will conduct weekly tests to assess the progress of the students with learning disabilities and track the effectiveness of the Project CC. By assessing the Curriculum's impact on these students, we can discover the learning techniques and education style that caters to their needs, ultimately reducing the health disparity within education.

#### III. Conclusion

The overall impact of Project CC is to close the gap prevalent in education and to end the stigma around learning disabilities present in minority communities. By having a curriculum that is more inclusive of students with learning disabilities, education will become more equitable for all students and may address further issues such as the low employment rate of adults with LD.

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#### **Title:**

Project Change the Curriculum: Addressing the Health Disparities in Education of Children With Learning Disabilities

**Keywords:**

education, health disparities and learning disabilities

**References:**

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**Abstract Summary:**

This study created the Project Change the Curriculum (Project CC), which is an academic curriculum designed to provide the resources to children with learning disabilities from low SES. Our goal to find the ideal curriculum and to end the stigma around learning disabilities in minority communities.

**Content Outline:**

1. Introduction

Health disparities are evident in education as past research shows a clear poverty related trend for learning disabilities (LD) and a higher dropout rate of children with LD than their white counterparts despite the similar prevalence of learning disabilities among all of the racial groups (NSCH, 2012).

1. Body

With the clear disparity in education present in low SES children with LD, the National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD) found that a small group of students are identified with learning disabilities, even though the prevalence of children with learning disabilities is more widespread. This indicates that elementary schools do not possess the resources to support these children in academic settings. This creates challenges for these students as studies show that they are three times more likely to dropout of school (NCLD). These challenges they face are influencing students for all ethnic groups. However, it is notably prevalent within students from low socioeconomic statuses. This calls for the need to address the health disparities prevalent in academia.

In this study, we have created Project Change the Curriculum (Project CC), which is a new academic curriculum designed to provide the resources to children with learning disabilities from low SES with a different approach in education. The study's focus is on the educational disparities among low SES children in Los Angeles County with learning disabilities. The target population are children within ages five to twelve in the Los Angeles Country area who are diagnosed with learning disabilities such as ADD, ADHD, and dyslexia. The goal of this study is to design an ideal curriculum that tailors to the needs of children with learning disabilities in order for them to succeed academically.

The curriculum includes using activities that specifically targets a particular learning disabilities. At the end of every activity the students will take a survey to see whether or not they enjoyed the activity and to determine what other activities are most effective. We will conduct monthly tests to assess the progress of the students with learning disabilities and track the effectiveness of the Project CC's curriculum to make improvements if necessary. Furthermore, parents will also be involved in the curriculum planning stage to determine the effectiveness of Project CC. By assessing the Curriculum's impact on these students, we

can discover the learning techniques and education style that caters to their needs, ultimately reducing the health disparity within education.

We will start a preliminary round at a non-profit organizations, All Nation's Church Elementary team. This community has more than 100 students ages K to 8, to implement the layout of the curriculum. During this preliminary round, our goal to find the ideal curriculum that aids the improvement of educational success in this certain population. This project will serve as the ground to implement such ideas in public schools as advocacy and more research is done. Project CC is critical to the success of children from low SES with learning disabilities because it is vital for every child to have access to a curriculum that fits their unique needs to succeed in academia. Also, a curriculum tailored to the needs of students with learning disabilities allows the students and their parents to take ownership of their education. This Project will touch on the stigma surrounding learning attention disabilities — how students with LD are often seen as “lazy” or unmotivated to learn in classrooms.

### III. Conclusion

The overall impact of Project CC is to close the gap prevalent in education and to end the stigma around learning disabilities in minority communities. In order to decide whether Project CC has been successful, we will look at reports cards from students who have taken part in the curriculum implemented by Project CC and compare those pre and post grades. We will also assess teachers' opinions of the curriculum to make improvements to future curriculums. The needed resources for children with learning disabilities will be discovered, so they will not be negatively labeled as “problem children”. By having a curriculum that is more inclusive of students with learning disabilities education will become more equitable for all students.

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**Author Summary:** Undergraduate Student Researcher at the University of California, Irvine. Trained researcher in UCI School of Medicine. Interest in psychiatric, mental health nursing, and health disparities in education.