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Economics and Diversity

When one thinks of diversity your thoughts don't automatically go towards someone's financial status. However, one's financial status is one of the key factors regarding diversity. How does this correlate to school districts or PTA?

Have you ever heard of "spirit day", field trips, picture day, bake sale, etc? The one thing these items all have in common is financial contribution. Pictures can cost anywhere from \$35.00-\$75.00, field trips range from \$8.00-\$100.00, spirit wear can range from \$20.00-\$65.00, and bake sales can range from \$0.50-\$5.00. For some parents these are common things that are required for school age children to participate in. If you are fortunate parents can allocate that money to fit in their yearly budget. Sounds easy enough, right? It's not for some families.

I've provided a copy of a section of a school located within the Suffolk County district report card. The section selected clearly states that 52% of the population is considered economically disadvantaged. Meaning more than half of the families with that district are below or right at the poverty level. How does this affect the children and PTA? If the parents are barely making ends meet, how can they possibly afford anything extra? In other words, how can they afford field trips, picture day, spirit wear, and they are living below or on the poverty level? When the parents cannot afford these items, their children suffer. The children can't participate in the events if they don't have the proper tools? Or the children feel left out because they are forced to wait on the sidelines until that event is over. Imagine wanting to participate for spirit day, but you can't afford to purchase any of the items in the school store!

How can the PTA help? The PTA presidents can reach out to the vendors that service that particular school, and they can ask for a few vouchers. Most vendors will do this as a thank you to the school anyway. However, the vouchers don't always reach those in need. Take the vouchers directly to the school social worker or school psychologist. They will have a list of the families that are in need. Field trips always need adult chaperones. If a parent can't afford the trip the teachers may allow them to chaperone, and in return the children can go for a free or reduced cost. These are just some of the things PTA can do to promote inclusion regardless of one's financial status.