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Chasing the Dream: Poverty & Opportunity in America *Childhood Poverty and Brain Development*

This week, ***Chasing the Dream: Poverty & Opportunity in America***, WNET's multi-platform initiative, looks at the relationship between childhood poverty and brain development across multiple programs: ***MetroFocus***, ***NJTV News with Mary Alice Williams*** and ***PBS NewsHour Weekend***. Each program will be airing a segment on this issue as part of their regularly scheduled broadcast. These stories are the second of eight poverty-themed topics to air in the months ahead as part of the ***Chasing the Dream*** initiative. For further information, see the listings below.

NJTV News with Mary Alice Williams

Airs Thursday, June 25: THIRTEEN at 6 p.m. and NJTV with at 6 p.m.

Money can buy a bigger house, a bigger car, or a bigger boat... but can it also buy a bigger brain? ***NJTV News*** visits a Head Start pre-kindergarten center operated by Acelero Learning in Freehold, New Jersey, to see how Garden State parents are bridging the income achievement gap.

MetroFocus

Airs Thursday, June 25: WLIW at 7 p.m.; THIRTEEN at 8:30 p.m.; and NJTV at 10:30 p.m.

Is there a relationship between childhood poverty and brain development? This week, anchor/reporter Jack Ford, speaks with Dr. [Kimberly Noble](#), a developmental cognitive neuroscientist and assistant professor of pediatrics at Columbia University, about a study entitled

[Family income, parental education and brain structure in children and adolescents](#), published in *Nature Neuroscience* earlier this year. The findings reveal that the brain surface area along the cerebral cortex, the area of the brain responsible for language ability and memory, is six percent less in children from families making less than \$25,000 per year than kids from families making \$150,000 or more per year. But according to Dr. Noble the study's results do not predetermine a child's future brain development. "We know that the brain is very, very malleable to experience. We think that these differences reflect differences in experiences that these children have had, and we have every reason to believe that by changing children's experience, that may lead to amelioration of these findings."

PBS NewsHour Weekend: Children, Poverty & Toxic Stress

Airs Saturday, June 27: THIRTEEN at 6 p.m. and WLIW21 at 6:30 p.m.

PBS NewsHour Weekend's Megan Thompson takes a look at the growing research on poverty and its effects on children's mental health and cognitive development. The story features an interview with Dr. Jack Shonkoff of Harvard's Center on the Developing Child, who says exposure to chronic adversity early in life - something he calls, "toxic stress" - can actually affect the wiring of the brain. Thompson travels to Connecticut to profile Ruth Fajardo, a mother of four who has struggled with depression, and whose family has faced poverty and violence. Thompson also speaks to Dr. Darcy Lowell, founder of Child First, a non-profit that helped Fajardo and her kids through its successful home-visit model that's now being replicated in other states.

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