Ruby Payne Biographical Information

#### “The two things that move a person out of poverty are education and relationships.”

Ruby K. Payne, Ph.D.

Dr. Ruby K. Payne has been involved with education since 1972 as a teacher, principal, consultant, and administrator. Her first book, ***A Framework for Understanding Poverty,*** is a powerful tool for educators to use when dealing with children from poverty.

In her book, Ruby discusses the hidden rules that govern how each of us behaves in our social class. Those rules, because they are hidden and only known to those within the group, prove to be a major stumbling block for individuals trying to move to a new social class. Students from poverty often languish in classrooms run by members of middle class because those are the rules that govern.

Where did she get her data? First of all, she has been married since 1973 to a man who grew up in poverty because his father died when he was 6. Though it was situational poverty, he lived for several years with those who were in generational poverty. Over the years, as she met his family and the many other players in the “neighborhood,” she came to realize there were major differences between generational poverty and middle class – and that the biggest differences were not about money. But what put the whole picture in bas-relief for her were the six years she and her family spent in Illinois among the wealthy. It was the addition of the third dimension, wealth, that clarified the differences between and among poverty, middle class, and wealth.

As the principal of an affluent elementary school in Illinois, she began to rethink so much of what she had thought about poverty and wealth. The Illinois students had no more native intelligence than the poor students she had worked with earlier in her career. And she noticed that among affluent black, Hispanic, and Asian children, their achievement levels were no different from the white children who were affluent.

She shared her information with her faculty members. One teacher told another, and soon she was doing several workshops in other districts. She now speaks to approximately 200 groups a year, spreading the word throughout North America that children of poverty need not suffer through an educational system oblivious to their needs. She presents her research and observations in such a way that many people experience “eye-opening learning,” enhancing their own abilities to help children of poverty succeed.

Ruby received her B.A. from Goshen (IN) College. She earned a master’s degree from Western Michigan University and her doctorate from Loyola ()IL) University.