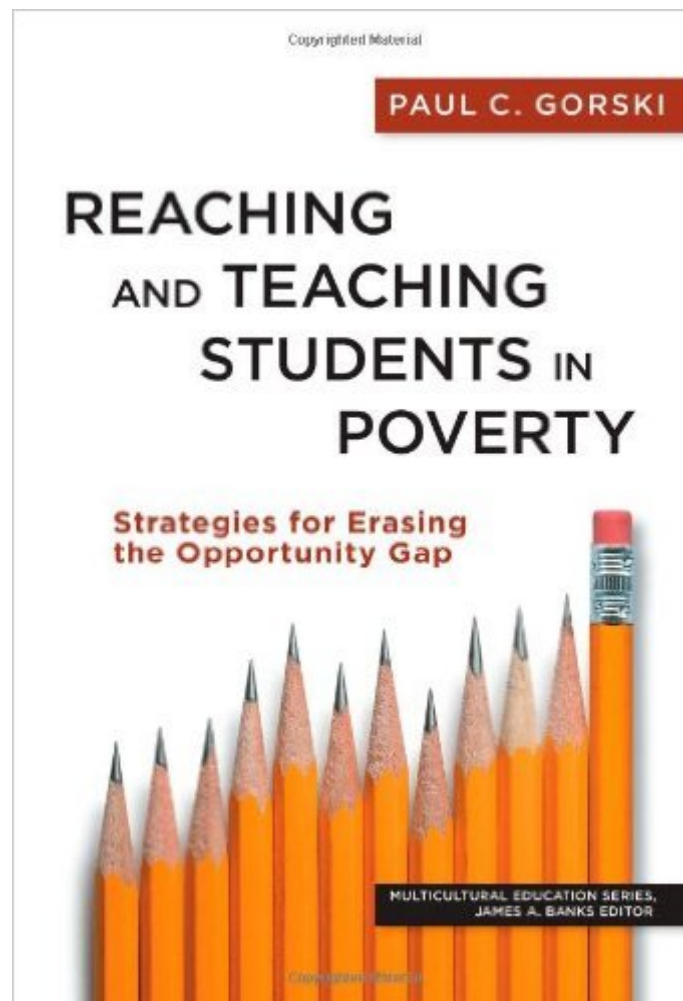


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# Reaching And Teaching Students In Poverty: Strategies For Erasing The Opportunity Gap (Multicultural Education)



## Synopsis

"This is the 'poverty book' I've been waiting for. It provides powerful, clear-eyed analysis of why economic inequities exist and persist, and practical classroom-tested guidance for teachers and leaders who care to make a difference. Paul Gorski's voice is passionate, accessible, politically astute, and (I hope) impossible to ignore." -- Gary Howard, founder of the REACH Center and author of *We Can't Teach What We Don't Know, Second Edition*

"This book should be required reading for all teachers! In his wonderfully readable, highly lucid analysis of poverty and social class, Paul Gorski gently but firmly redirects teachers away from damaging ways of seeing students and families who live in poverty, toward a vision of respect that champions equity and enables young people to bloom in the classroom." -- Christine Sleeter, professor emerita, California State University, Monterey Bay, and immediate past president of the National Association for Multicultural Education

"Finally! A book that helps educators not only learn about the devastating impact of poverty on children's lives, but also helps them think about what they can do -- in the words of author Paul Gorski -- right now as well as in the future to help improve the life chances of young people living in poverty. Highly readable and comprehensive, *Reaching and Teaching Students in Poverty* will be a welcome addition to school, university, and community bookshelves." -- Sonia Nieto, professor emerita, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

"From one of the smartest scholars on poverty and education comes this engaging, relatable, and thoroughly researched book that every educator and school leader should read. Paul Gorski makes vivid and compelling how and why poverty matters, when and where we've gone wrong with current reforms, and perhaps most important, what we can do in our schools and classrooms to ensure that every child receives the very best education that our nation has to offer. Read and share it today." -- Kevin Kumashiro, dean, School of Education, University of San Francisco, and author of *Bad Teacher! How Blaming Teachers Distorts the Bigger Picture*

The author draws from decades of research to deconstruct popular myths, misconceptions, and educational practices that undercut the achievement of low-income students. He carefully describes the challenges that students in poverty face and the resiliencies they and their families draw upon. Most importantly, this book provides specific, evidence-based strategies for teaching youth by creating equitable, bias-free learning environments. Written in an appealing conversational tone, this resource will help teachers and school leaders to better reach and teach students in poverty.

**Book Features:**

- \* A conceptual framework for creating equitable educational opportunities for low- and middle-income youth.
- \* Instructional strategies based on an analysis of more than 20 years of research on what works (and what doesn't work).
- \* A depiction of teachers, not as the problem when it comes to the achievement gap, but as champions

of students.\* Activities such as a Poverty and Class Awareness Quiz.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"...low income people face innumerable inequities in and out of schools. These inequities regarding access to everything from adequately funded schools to playgrounds to prenatal care have nothing to do with poor people's cultures and everything to do with what Jonathan Kozol called the 'savage inequalities' of schools and society. We, as a society, give low-income youths less access to educational opportunity, healthcare, nutrition, and other goods, and then blame the outcomes of these inequities on their 'culture of poverty.'"Not an easy read...not a feel-good read. This challenges the reader to look closely and deeply at some assumptions and stereotypes we may bring to our work with kids from low-income families.Gorski takes us step-by-step from a shattering of the myth of the 'culture of poverty.' He is careful in his title to not talk about kids OF poverty, but kids IN poverty. Not an accident of word choice...a deliberate choice of a careful practioner.We as educators must confront our own biases, well-meaning as they may be. We need to develop an new kind of literacy...equity literacy. We must push back against those soft-bigotry statements: Poor parents don't care about education; they're lazy,drug-addicted abusers who can't communicate and obviously care little about their children.It's important to turn this around. Achievement gaps can be explained by examining OPPORTUNITY gaps...those resources most of us take for granted that poor families don't have..healthcare, prenatal care, dental care...living and working conditions that are safe...recreation opportunities, with money and time and transportation NON-issues...community

and social services access...affordable childcare...enrichment opportunities...a society that validates our efforts. Poor families, because they may be working two or three low-paying jobs, with little free time and no disposable cash, do NOT have these opportunities to support their families. We think of their inabilities as deficits, but we must stop...they are barriers to opportunity. Poor families have just as much resiliency as others when we help dismantle the barriers. So, how do these gaps affect families' ability to thrive? Preschool, schools with adequate funding and resources such as libraries, shadow education (those ACT prep classes and tutoring and camp activities WE offer our own kids), support services, high expectations, WELL-PAID, CERTIFIED, EXPERIENCED TEACHERS (not 5-week wonders from TFA), higher-order, challenging curricula, the opportunity to include parents fully in their children's education. What are the barriers? TIME and TRANSPORTATION, a LIVING WAGE, to name a few. Gorski lists the ineffective practices in schools: cutting arts and music programs, direct, scripted, instruction, tracking of students, and charter schools. He tells us what works: Arts programs, high expectations, higher-order, student-centered pedagogies, movement and PE, relevancy in the schools, teaching everyone about biases, analyzing materials for bias, and my favorite: LITERACY ENJOYMENT!! Woohoo!"The most powerful strategy is to create cultures that promote reading enjoyment...literacy instruction should not focus solely on reading or writing mechanics. More to the point, tho, it means that we ought to find ways to foster in students excitement about reading and writing even when they respond reluctantly at first.

1. Institute literature circles
2. Provide reading material options that align with stated interest of students
3. Use a variety of media that engage students actively and interactively
4. Incorporate drama into literacy instructions.

"I love the chapter entitled 'THE MOTHER OF ALL STRATEGIES' and I concur...building relationships IS the mother of all. Relationships with our students and relationships with their parents. It's not enough to set up conference times and then smugly say, 'well, we offered time for these parents to come to school. They must not be interested.' That's the same as the teacher who says, 'Well, I taught it, the students didn't get it.' I hate both of these messages...they point back to that deficit mindset. We need to ask ourselves how hard we tried...did we take into consideration work schedules, transportation, childcare? Did we really do everything we could to invite parents who may have negative feelings about schools? Did we truly show our value for them and their children? Were we creative in our problem solving, or did we simply shrug and blame the parents? I've had a couple of conversations with professionals about 'those parents' who don't care...and I'm learning to offer alternative ways of thinking about the facts in a gentle push back. Which leads to the last chapter: SPHERES OF INFLUENCE...what IS my sphere? What can I do? He suggests we do our job with sensitivity and respect...that is our sphere, but he says, "...when

we do anything, anything at all, to push back against the defunding of schools or the underfunding of education mandates and to resist the imposition of corporate-style accountability and high-stakes testing, we are also advocating, whether we know it or not, for low-income students. Of course, we also are self-advocating, which is an added bonus."He offers advocacy goals: preschool, community agency access, smaller classes, ongoing PD for teachers, access to healthcare, PE, arts and music. Surely every one of us could choose ONE of these issues to become advocates for. Important book...I read it twice, once highlighting, the second, collecting all those quotes for reference later. Would make great reading for our legislators who continue to chip away at the few support systems poor families have.

I teach a class focused on diversity and social justice in education and for years I've searched for a text that would review the existing literature on poverty and education as well as provide realistic short term and long term strategies for educators to advocate for their students. My class loved this book! It's a great read, accessible, well organized, informative and practical! I intend to keep this as required reading for my future classes.

It could have been summed up in a paragraph: People in Poverty have great resilience and should be respected for their accomplishments in the face of adversity. There were not a whole lot of actual suggestions for boots on the ground teachers and I found it to be repetitive and a dull read. I did find a lot of positives in confronting my own stereotypes so it was time well spent, but I wouldn't recommend this book to others. I read the book as part of my own personal reading and not as part of a class so I think the price was very high given how little I can apply in the classroom come Monday morning.

Reaching and Teaching Students in Poverty is a perfect course text for teachers and administrators. Too often, educators base their knowledge of the relationships between poverty and schooling on erroneous information and mythical "commonsense" thinking rather than on authentic understandings and research. Paul Gorski's book helps educators to reconceptualize their knowledge, understandings, and beliefs through extensive research and meaningful examples. His writing is accessible and never dogmatic; rather, he invites reflection and asks readers to question previous knowledge. Most importantly, he offers alternative perspectives that deepen comprehension. I used this book in my graduate course, Diversity, Schools, and Community. My students are experienced teachers, most of whom are employed by the Chicago Public Schools.

They see poverty daily, first-hand. They told me that the book gave them important new insights into the structural causes of poverty and helped them to develop new strategies for teaching. They appreciated having new learning about: "how society tried to fix people and not the problems they face"; the lack of resources and opportunities that all poor people experience; the extent to which children in poverty arrive at school with stereotypes against them that the students are aware of; the important differences between the "achievement gap" and the "opportunity gap"; and the tremendous cumulative effect that is carried by poor student from educational cutbacks. They valued the practical advice for "addressing their own biases"; learning "about the truths of poverty"; and having "research-based practical solutions for increasing opportunities for low-income students." Finally, the students appreciated the way that the book fostered engaged and honest class discussions about this difficult and controversial topic.

This book is a powerful tool for educators trying to resist the "culture of poverty" deficit thinking that is embedded in so many schools' practices and policy. Rather than trying to "fix" poor kids and their families, the latest installment of Gorski's work provides a deep understanding of the complexity of poverty, its causes, and trends as well as a clear and practical educational blueprint for how best to create and sustain equitable learning environments for poor and working class students. Written in friendly, accessible language, the book deftly balances high-quality research and theory with specific "equity literacy" strategies that teachers and school leaders can implement immediately. This is an invaluable resource that should be required reading for all teachers and the cornerstone of any professional development related to working with kids in poverty.

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