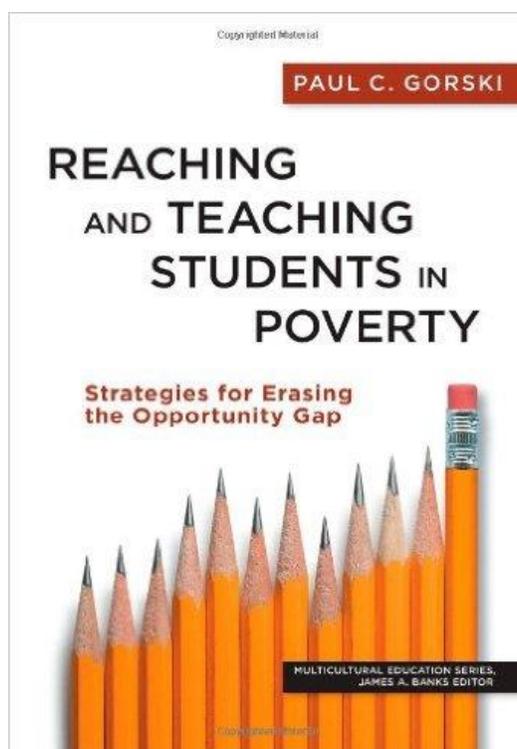


***Review of Reaching and Teaching Students in Poverty:  
Strategies for Erasing the Opportunity Gap***

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Gorski, P. (2013). *Reaching and teaching students in poverty: Strategies for erasing the opportunity gap*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

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## Table of Contents

### Introduction

<a href="#">An Opening Letter</a> .....	133
Brief summary of the text, target audience, praise and critique, explanation of multigenre projects, guidance regarding how each genre fits into the larger project.	

### Part One: Equity Literacy: Why and Where?

<a href="#">1.1 Equity Literacy in the Wild</a> .....	136
Introduction of Four Abilities of Equity Literate Educators and a fictional application.	
<a href="#">1.2 Visual Representations of the Unequal Distribution of Poverty</a> .....	138
Visual representations, some personally created and others found, of concepts discussed by Gorski.	

### Part Two: Myths and Redressings

<a href="#">2.1 More than Meets the Eye</a> .....	140
An art creation influenced by Gorski's thoughts on meritocracy and the American Dream.	
<a href="#">2.2 Bro, Do You Even Gorski?</a> .....	141
Memes and explanations that summarize portions of <i>Reaching and Teaching</i> , specifically a critique of Ruby Payne's culture of poverty.	

### Part Three: We're sorry. The quick fix you wanted doesn't work. Please try another option.

<a href="#">3.1 Which came first, the answer or the problem?</a> .....	142
A flow chart created to demonstrate the absurd cycle of blaming teachers for problems and then expecting them to solve them.	
<a href="#">3.2 Summer Reading List for Educators</a> .....	143
A collection of readings and videos that support Gorski's claims and can help educators in their pursuit of equity in classrooms.	

### Part Four: Where the rubber meets the road

<a href="#">4.1 It's not just about the unboxing</a> .....	144
A YouTube unboxing video of strategies from <i>Reaching and Teaching</i> .	
<a href="#">4.2 With not on</a> .....	145
A simple chart that takes up Gorski's call to work with students and families experiencing poverty and not to work on students and families experiencing poverty.	
<a href="#">4.3 Intentionally seeking opportunities to expand spheres of influence</a> .....	146
Visual notes created while reading the chapter that present initiatives that educators can implement in their classrooms and schools to support students experiencing poverty.	

### Conclusion

<a href="#">So, where does <i>Reaching and Teaching</i> fit?</a> .....	147
A diary entry that summarizes the text and further describes who the text is for.	

### References

<a href="#">The stuff</a> .....	148
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## Introduction

### An Opening Letter

To the readers of *JoLLE*:

Crafting this multigenre<sup>1</sup> book review has been such an interesting journey. When I first began reading Paul Gorski's (2013) *Reaching and Teaching Students in Poverty: Strategies for Erasing the Opportunity Gap (Reaching and Teaching)*, it was not my intention to embark on a multigenre project; I simply wanted to read the book and work on internalizing some of its messages. What ended up happening was an engagement with the text across multiple mediums and what evolved out of my reading morphed into this multigenre book review and an adaptation of the curriculum I teach in my classes.

Possibilities are endless when working with and through multiple genres. Hughes (2009) described multigenre as an amalgamation of many types of writing with an interwoven thread of connection that unites the entirety of the project. Multigenre defies standardization, encourages choice, incorporates the arts, and encourages literacy enjoyment. It just might be the embodiment of equity literacy (Gorski, 2013). Hughes (2009), describing Allen's (2001) suggestions, stated, "Each piece in a multigenre paper represents diverse genres, divulges different aspects of the topic, and creates a patchwork of writing and creative expression with an overlying theme that is inviting, while at the same time informing" (p. 35). It was with this in mind that I embarked on the journey of a multigenre book review.

*Reaching and Teaching*, from the beginning, lines itself up in opposition of deficit perspective<sup>2</sup> texts which place the source of inequity squarely on the shoulders of those who experience it. Where Gorski differs from those texts is in the way that he compels readers to expand their view of poverty from a micro-location residing with individuals to a larger system within which we, whether we acknowledge it or not, are #alwaysalready<sup>3</sup> participating. In the pages of *Reaching and Teaching*, poverty is never presented as something that relegates those experiencing it as deserving of societal injustice. This is markedly different from other popular texts which claim to seek reprieve for those experiencing poverty by attributing their plight as part of the culture of poverty (Payne, 2003). Gorski persistently reminds the reader that nothing from his text can be immediately put to work in classrooms, schools, and communities without adaptation for personal context. Implementation without adaptation furthers the marginalizing power of a culture of poverty by assuming that folks experiencing poverty in inner city Milwaukee<sup>4</sup> are similar to folks experiencing poverty outside Houston<sup>5</sup> are similar to folks experiencing poverty in Appalachia<sup>6</sup> are similar to folks experiencing poverty in...are similar to folks experiencing poverty in...are similar to folks experiencing poverty in... This strength is simultaneously, for lack of a better word, a weakness in that in times of media saturation, instant gratification, standardization, and

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<sup>1</sup> Shout out to Dr. Hilary Hughes at The University of Georgia for her support, mentorship, and belief that knowledge doesn't always need to be crafted in unaccessible scholarly text.

<sup>2</sup> A deficit perspective involves "approaching students based upon our perception of their weaknesses rather than their strengths" (Gorski, 2011, p. 152).

<sup>3</sup> In a class that Dr. Hilary Hughes, Dr. Gayle Andrews, and I designed (EDMS4000/6000 - Community Contexts in Middle Grades Education), we use the hashtag #alwaysalready to symbolize everyone's impact on and participation in societal systems whether that impact and participation is acknowledged or not.

<sup>4</sup> Shout out to Dr. Matthew Desmond at Harvard University for his book *Evicted* (2016), which also influenced my mindset.

<sup>5</sup> Shout out to all my students from Channelview who showed me what it meant to be truly engaged with your students.

<sup>6</sup> Shout out to Dr. Stephanie Jones at The University of Georgia and her book *Girls, Social Class, and Literacy* (2006), which changed the way I think about power, perspective, and positioning.

commodification, schools are looking for immediate practices that can be employed in a business-like way to boost profits (student test scores) and minimize expenditures (expenditures). This text, and the mindset of equity literacy, will not do the work for those educators. This text is not a guide for scaling up. To me, that is refreshing.

Gorski's *Reaching and Teaching* is a book for all stakeholders concerned with equity and justice for the students in our schools. Regardless of an individual's position in a school's community, their work influences the lived experiences of the children in classrooms. Preservice and practicing teachers could pull inspiration from the way that Gorski skillfully presents how this work relates to the day-to-day interactions of classroom communities. School level administrators are charged with building-wide policies that target structural inequities and seek to sustainably challenge them in the long run. Community leaders and district level administrators are provided data that combats dominant narratives surrounding poverty and the students and families who experience it. This breadth of influence could also be viewed by some as a downfall of the text. Poverty is an overwhelmingly complex concept to begin to address, and Gorski admits that this book is not about quick fixes. If someone seeks to open the pages of this book and solve the issues of poverty that impact their school community, they will be greatly disappointed. This text is about changing the way readers approach and think about poverty. I feel that it accomplishes just such a task.

This multigenre book review is divided into four parts: *Equity Literacy Why and Where?; Myths and Redressings; We're sorry. The quick fix you wanted doesn't work. Please try another option;* and *Where the Rubber Meets the Road*. A summary of *Reaching and Teaching*, in addition to the previous paragraph, is embedded within each genre. Genres used to relay thoughts and grapplings are depicted in Table 1.

The contents of this review are wide and in different degrees of refinement. Some were crafted in short amounts of time, yet others were the result of continued engagement with the text over the course of many days, weeks, or even months. It is safe to assume that this review will continue to grow across time with new connections to pop culture or daily interactions. Engaging with a text in this way has helped<sup>7</sup> me internalize the purpose and intention of the text while attempting to, in a paraphrase of Gorski, adapt it to my personal context. Throughout the text I will continue to include footnotes as a means of holding a side conversation with the reader--to both infuse some internal humor and provide some insight into my thoughts as I created the project. I hope you enjoy what you find and feel encouraged to engage with the concepts contained within the pages of *Reaching and Teaching* or with a text aligned with your interests and passions.

Sincerely,



Matthew J. Moulton  
Ph.D. Student in Educational Theory & Practice  
Middle Grades Education Graduate Assistant  
The University of Georgia

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<sup>7</sup> And forced.

Table 1  
*Contents of This Multigenre Book Review*

Genre	Contents	Purpose
<a href="#">Transcript from a fictional nature television show</a>	Presents the four abilities of equity literate educators (Gorski, 2013), which guide much of the text.	Using a transcript from a show with an outside-of-the-action narrator allows me to present thought processes and analysis of the action alongside what is happening.
<a href="#">Multiple visual representations of data</a>	Four visual representations of data that contain hyperlinks to resources where the data was obtained.	To relay the need for equity literacy and the work presented by Gorski.
<a href="#">Eye chart</a>	An eye chart that displays the inequity present in systems which govern society.	To portray an example of how the aspects of Gorski's equity literacy are able to be employed by all, with some corrective help, just as all parts of an eye chart are able to be viewed with the naked eye for some and with the assistance of glasses for others.
<a href="#">A collection of memes</a>	Four memes of Gorski with supporting text.	Memes can bring humor to subjects and point to areas of irony. These memes are used to summarize key points from the <i>Reaching and Teaching</i> text.
<a href="#">Infographic with supporting text</a>	Visual depiction of the paradox teachers exist within as both a solution and cause of many of society's issues.	To stress just how important the concepts of <i>Reaching and Teaching</i> are for practicing and future teachers to develop so that they can begin to confront and change the societal view of their purpose and profession.
<a href="#">List of outside resources</a>	Resources that relate to the concepts presented in <i>Reaching and Teaching</i> .	To pick up Gorski's call to implement equity literacy through all means and in all spaces and places.
<a href="#">YouTube video</a>	An unboxing of strategies described by Gorski. "Unboxing videos" typically portray an individual (visible or not) opening up toys, electronics, or other items with the central focus resting on the item itself.	To present an analogy to demonstrate the wide array of strategies which hold the common trait of needing to be adapted for context.
<a href="#">Visual Table</a>	A table depicting the intention of Gorski's text to work <i>with</i> folks experiencing poverty and not <i>on</i> them.	To mimic classroom key concept posters. It should not be a difficult concept to internalize but it is of vital importance to cement into thought processes. This is one location where other popular texts about working with students in poverty differ from <i>Reaching and Teaching</i> . Gorski always focuses readers outward towards society rather than toward the individual experiencing poverty.
<a href="#">Visual notes</a>	Notes developed while reading the text.	To better internalize the initiatives suggested by Gorski. Visual notes help note takers draw (literally) connections between key concepts and their verbal and visual cues.
<a href="#">Conclusion diary entry</a>	A summary of the text and the journey undertaken to construct this review; modeled after an online blog post.	To serve as the conclusion to the project and describes how and where <i>Reaching and Teaching</i> fits into classrooms and teacher education.

## Part One: Equity Literacy Why and Where?

### 1.1 Equity Literacy in the Wild

#### The Four Abilities of Equity Literacy

1. The ability to **Recognize** both subtle and not-so-subtle biases and inequities in classroom dynamics; school cultures and policies; and the broader society, and how these biases and inequities affect students and their families
2. The ability to **Respond to** biases and inequities in the immediate term, as they crop up in classrooms and schools
3. The ability to **Redress** biases and inequities in the longer term, so that they do not continue to crop up in classrooms and schools
4. The ability to **Create and Sustain** a bias-free and equitable learning environment for all students (Gorski, 2013, p. 21)

*Transcript from a nature show* is a scene where the reader stumbles upon a Southeastern United States middle grades teacher education classroom in the wild. I use the safari guide's voice as a means of describing what was happening in my head during the class sessions that inspired this transcript. Even though there were multiple issues popping up in the class, I was attempting to call upon Gorski's work to help me confront those issues when they came up. The safari guide peers in the window of the teacher education classroom.

**Safari Guide (SG):** Oh this is just amazing. We have stumbled upon a budding equity literate teacher educator. It appears that the instructor is primed and on edge. The class must be discussing controversial topics. Let's have a listen.

**Teacher Educator (TE):** Why do you think we had you read this book in this class?

**SG:** Oh, oh, oh, the TE led with an open-ended question putting the onus on to the students. What a tricky move! Their discussion looks to be robust and engaging. Many of the brand-new teacher candidates seem to be nodding their heads in agreement. Oh my, it seems like a teacher candidate (TC) who is more oriented toward a deficit mindset is attempting to assert his dominance.

**Pat (P):** I'm just trying to play devil's advocate.

**SG:** What a stunningly passive-aggressive move employed to deflect attention away from his deficit views! What is in store for this class?!?!

**TE:** Sure.

**P:** Removing the option of field trips for all students because a few cannot partake is not fair either.

**TE:** Right

**P:** But that's what equity literacy is calling for. Punish those who made good choices and were able to afford these experiences.

**SG:** Oh, this student has introduced a challenge to equity literacy, holding tightly to the privilege that access to financial resources provides. Little does he know that Gorski (2013) says that equity literate educators have "the ability to **Recognize** both subtle and not-so-subtle biases and inequities in classroom dynamics, school cultures and policies, and the broader society, and how these biases and inequities affect students and their families" (p. 21). Let's see if the TE recognizes the subtle bias.

**TE:** No. If that is what you heard or got out of this article, let's revisit the text see what it is we are missing. This is a great opportunity for us to dive deeper into what equity literate educators are able to do. Let's take this field trip example. I feel like we are all coming from a place where we imagine that we are at school the morning of the field trip and one or two kids don't have the money to participate. But, we need to rewind, because if we start employing equity literacy at this point, it is too late to truly address one of the sources of inequity in schools.

**SG:** Skillfully executed. Return to the text. The TE *recognized* and *responded to*. Now the TC appears to be reading through the four abilities of an equity literate educator. Will the TE work towards *redressing* the bias so that it does not crop up again in the future?

**P:** Why, what do you mean?

**TE:** Actions taken now will do little to help a system that is founded on inequitable practices. If students are saved from field trip ridicule the morning of over and over and over, what has been done to remedy the true cause of the inequity?

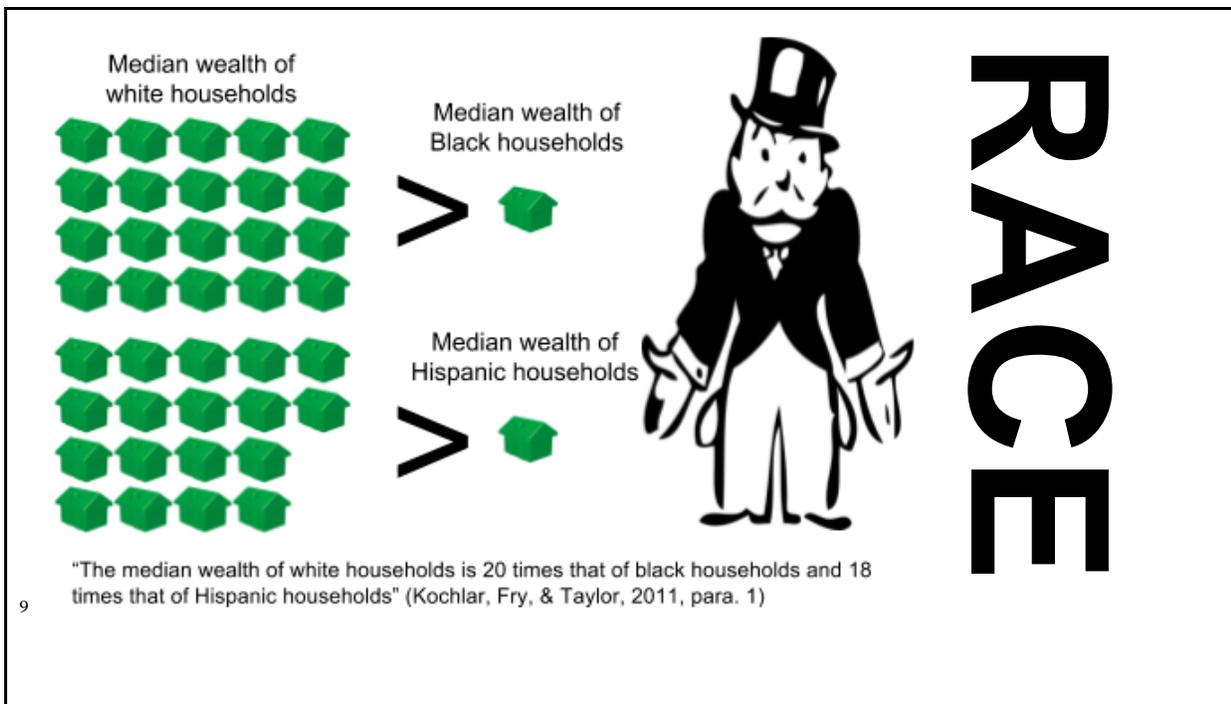
**SG:** Like a lion lying in wait for its prey, the TE pounces at the opportunity to change the conversation to the long-term. Solving a current problem with a bandaid will do nothing to *redress* the inequity that festers in the system. How is our TC doing with this information. Oh his face appears to be turning red.

**TE:** If we approach these issues of inequity and bias from a place where we are putting all of the responsibility on individuals rather than on societal systems that contribute to the inequity, we are not doing our job to the best of our ability. So, what is something that we could do to address this field trip dilemma earlier in the process of planning? Maybe at the school level?

**Adrienne (A):** Having personally experienced what it is like to be told to go to in school suspension for the day while my classmates were on a field trip, I think that finding outside sources to fund trips like this is of paramount importance. There are loads of grants that are available to schools for just such trips. Maybe even find sponsors from the community!

**SG:** Wow. What a brave and vulnerable soul. This teacher candidate just outed themselves as having experienced economic hardship and provided a first-hand account of what inequitable practices do to those who they target, intentionally or not. Cheers to the teacher candidate and cheers to the TE for their part in working to *create* a bias-free learning environment where a student could feel free to express themselves so freely and honestly. It appears that this group of TCs under the guidance of their TE may be on the road towards practicing equity literacy in their future classrooms. Hopefully conversations like this continue.

## 1.2 Visual Representations of The Unequal Distribution of Poverty



<sup>8</sup> (Bibler, 2015)

<sup>9</sup> The juxtaposition of including white Rich Uncle Pennybags (the Monopoly man) next to inequalities about race serves as a cultural critique. Even though there are white folks experiencing poverty, the median wealth still holds true to the statistics presented above.

**DISABILITY**

**Health Care Spending for...**

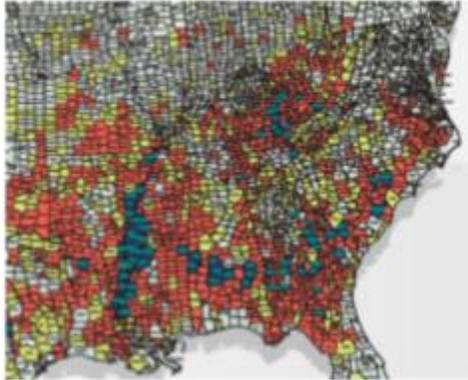
**Folks without disabilities** vs. **Folks with disabilities**



Researchers found that "after controlling for all sorts of variables, that people who have one or more disabilities spend, on average, 50% more on healthcare *out-of-pocket* than people who have no disabilities" (Gorski, 2013, p. 48)

10

**HIGH**  
concentration in the  
**SOUTH & APPALACHIA**



**POVERTY**

Nestled within a chapter whose intention is to dispel rumors and lay a common foundation for readers about poverty, Gorski punctuated the importance of working within a framework of equity literacy. Statistical facts, such as the ones described above, "help us see concepts like meritocracy and equal opportunity from new angles" (p. 50), including the intersectionality which compounds these gaps in the distribution of poverty. It must be stated that ambitious books that seek to illuminate and subsequently dismantle systemic injustices can lose appeal to educators who look, simply, for quick fixes and hacks that can be implemented in their classrooms. In order to adequately relay the message he seeks to send, Gorski must undo so much bad teaching that has been woven into the fabric of education--bad teaching influenced by bias, prejudice, and short-cuts towards quick solutions. The next section of this review will focus on these toxic threads.

<sup>10</sup> Map below adapted from: Housing Assistance Council (2010)

Part Two: Myths and *Redressings*

2.1 More than Meets the Eye

$\frac{20}{200}$

**M**

1

$\frac{20}{100}$

**ER**  
is

2



$\frac{20}{70}$

**I T O C**  
a lie that

3

$\frac{20}{50}$

**R A C Y**  
makes folks feel entitled

4

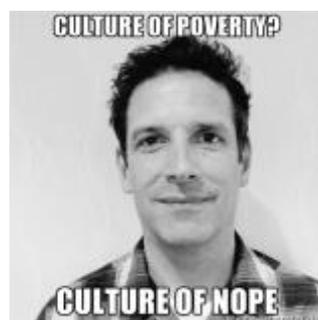


to have/hoard/consume THINGS while ignoring those going without. . . . .

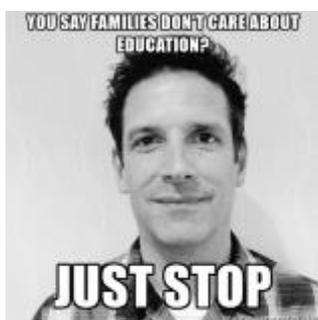
## 2.2 Bro, Do You Even Gorski?<sup>11</sup>



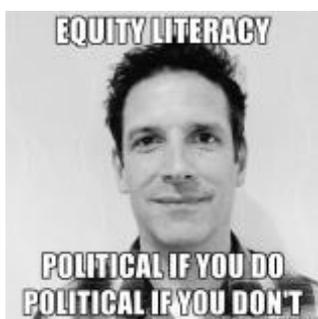
A consistent theme in Gorski’s work is the deconstruction (and in some cases outright demolition) of supporters of the Culture of Poverty framework, specifically Ruby Payne. In *Reaching and Teaching Students in Poverty*, Gorski (2013) continued this work by tracing the term culture of poverty to its inception while repeatedly stressing that “the danger with these approaches or, more specifically, with how they often are implemented is that they conflate ‘culture’ with race, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and other identities, thereby suggesting that disparities or conflicts result from *cultural misunderstandings* rather than *biases and inequities*” (p. 54-55, emphasis in original). This move by Gorski helps readers discern the difference between Gorski’s and Payne’s brands of educating teachers for work with students in poverty. Gorski’s is built on locating the source of inequity outside of the individual, while Payne locates the inequity within the individuals themselves as part of a unifying culture.



Gorski stated, “There simply is no evidence, beyond differences in on-site involvement, that attitudes about the value of education in poor communities differ in any substantial way from those in wealthier communities” (p. 60). Lack of on-site involvement could be the result of a myriad of things, including lack of paid leave from low-paying hourly wage jobs, no childcare available (even if the school provides this amenity, a parent being unwilling to leave their child with a stranger is completely understandable), and lack of consistent and timely transportation. Writing off a parent or guardian’s lack of involvement as an indication of their lack of value placed on education is irresponsible and short-sighted.



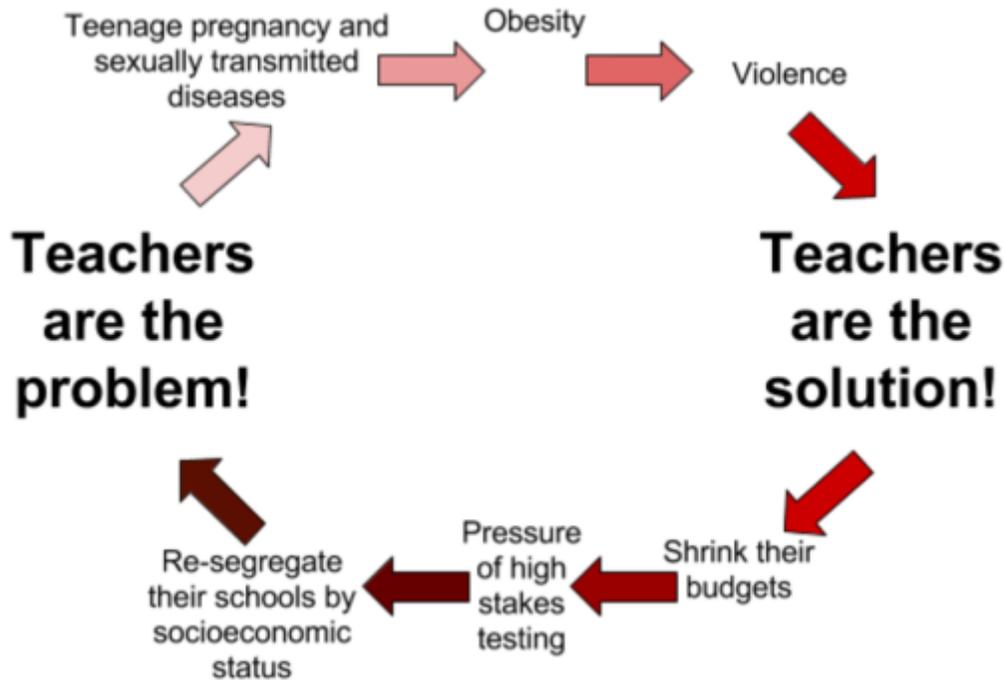
Some educators may wish to refrain from participating in acts such as equity literacy, citing that doing so would become a political move. Teaching is a political act, and Gorski stated that deciding to implement equity literacy is a political move **but no more so than actively choosing to not implement equity literacy in classrooms**. *Reaching and Teaching Students in Poverty* does a fantastic job of describing what is at stake if educators do not employ such practices.



<sup>11</sup>Memes are a way to interject some humor in situations. They are deployed to draw attention to the irony of situations. Some meme characters take on a life of their own like [Philosoraptor](#) (n.d.) and [Success Kid](#) (n.d.). If you want to make your own Gorski meme, [click here](#).

**Part Three: We're sorry. The quick fix you wanted doesn't work.  
Please try another option.**

**3.1 Which came first, the answer or the problem?**



One thing that very large and nearly unanimous majority of folks in the United States have in common is that we have all gone through some sort of schooling. But, just because you sat in a classroom for so many years does not mean that you know the most effective ways to work with students from diverse populations. Knowledge and receiving good grades in subjects ranging from world history to organic chemistry does not qualify someone to teach in classrooms. Teaching is a skillful act that must be approached diligently and with purpose. Skillful teachers understand that the content that they teach may not always be the most important thing for students to learn on a given day. Gorski illuminates the silliness of the media and politicians (who have never set foot in a classroom) attacking teachers with assumptions of their fitness to perform in classrooms. Folks who have no business (or expertise) interpreting and relaying statistical data about teachers and students do little but further a market model of education which thrives on merit and neoliberal<sup>12</sup> choice. The flow chart above represents the narrative in society that persistently paints teaching and teachers in a negative light, yet at the same time continues to pile more and more societal issues onto the already hunched shoulders of educators. Obviously, this chart could be larger to include more hits against teachers (the bottom half) and pilings-on (the top half), but for sake of the reader's sanity and confidence to enter into classrooms soon, the flow chart will remain conservative.

<sup>12</sup> Neoliberalism is, in a crude and limited definition, the push to dismantle the public sector and put it in the hands of private corporations driven by market principles of choice. For more info on neoliberalism read Giroux's (2012) *Disposable Youth* or watch this nifty YouTube video: [Neoliberalism-Three Minute Theory \(Kerr, 2015\)](#).

### 3.2 Summer Reading List for Educators

In chapter seven, Gorski describes how some of the most popular solutions to inequity and injustice in school classrooms are ineffective. His “small sample” (p. 112) includes direct instruction and other low-order pedagogies, tracking and ability grouping, and charter schools. The following texts, in my opinion, supplement Gorski’s suggestions from chapter seven.

#### Charter Schools

Frankenberg, E., Siegel-Hawley, G., & Wang, J. (2010). Choice without equity: Charter school segregation and the need for civil rights standards. Retrieved from <https://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/choice-without-equity-2009-report>

Losen, D. J., Keith, M. A., Hodson, C. L., & Martinez, T. E. (2016). Charter Schools, civil rights and school discipline: A comprehensive review. Retrieved from <https://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/resources/projects/center-for-civil-rights-remedies/school-to-prison-folder/federal-reports/charter-schools-civil-rights-and-school-discipline-a-comprehensive-review>

#### Tracking

Mathis, W. (2013). *Research-based Options for Education Policymaking: Moving beyond tracking*. Retrieved from <http://nepc.colorado.edu/files/pb-options-10-tracking.pdf>

Harris, B. (2011, August 3). Tracking derails diversity [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://www.tolerance.org/blog/tracking-derails-diversity>

#### Direct instruction and other low-order pedagogies

Schneider, J. (2014, May 8). Guest: Direct Instruction is a band-aid for education inequity [Opinion Editorial]. Retrieved from <http://www.seattletimes.com/opinion/guest-direct-instruction-is-a-band-aid-for-education-inequity/>

Books—fiction and nonfiction, education-focused and noneducation-focused—help illuminate inequities that exist in and out of educational spaces. But, *reading* should not only be thought of as paper based. Videos can also provide a vibrant and engaging medium. The following texts are a great way to expand personal experiences and help describe the necessity of learning about/from marginalized populations.

Adichie, C. N. (2009). *The danger of a single story* [Video File]. Retrieved from [https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\\_adichie\\_the\\_danger\\_of\\_a\\_single\\_story?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?language=en)

Desmond, M. (2016). *Evicted: Poverty and profit in the American city*. New York, NY: Crown.

Emdin, C. (2016). *For white folks who teach in the hood... and the rest of y'all too: Reality pedagogy and urban education*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Jones, S. (2006). *Girls, social class, and literacy: What teachers can do to make a difference*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Rose, M. (2004). *The mind at work: Valuing the intelligence of the American worker*. New York, NY: Penguin.

Sherman, A. (2009). *The absolutely true diary of a part-time Indian*. New York, NY: Little, Brown Books for Young Readers.

Smooth, J. (2008, July 21). *How to tell someone they sound racist* [Video File]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=boTi-gkJiXc>

Smooth, J. (2011, November 15). *How I learned to stop worrying and love discussing race* [Video File]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MbdxeFcQtaU>

## Part Four: Where the rubber meets the road

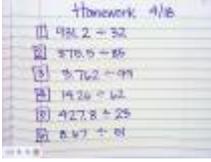
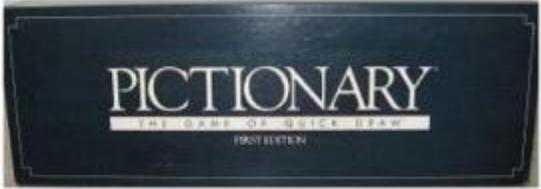
### 4.1 It's not just about the unboxing<sup>13</sup>



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<sup>13</sup>For more examples of unboxing videos, check out: [Guardians of the Galaxy Funko Pop \(TherealIdeal, 2015\)](#), [Air Jordan 11 - Space Jam 2016](#) (Slade, 2016) and [Pocket Chair](#) (Unbox Therapy, 2016).

4.2 *With* not *on*

<b>People or things you work...</b>	
<b>...with</b>	<b>...on</b>
 Pencil	 Homework
 Hammer	 Porch
 Accountant	 Taxes
 Partners	 Games
<b>Families in poverty</b>	<b>Building trusting relationships and finding opportunities for accessible family involvement</b>

Gorski writes of “committing to working *with* rather than *on* families in poverty” (p. 132) as the mother of all strategies. A fitting analogy since true change is birthed from respect. As previously stated, this is not easy, but it will not be easy to deconstruct (demolish) persistent #alwaysalready inequities that have been baked into our subconscious.

4.3 Intentionally seeking opportunities to expand spheres of influence<sup>14</sup>

**EXPANDING OUR SPHERES OF INFLUENCE**

**Definition:**  
Sphere of Influence -  
What I can control

**Ms. SPHERE OF INFLUENCE**  
Family + Friends + Community + Prof. Dev. + Myself + My classes

**Georski says...**  
I ultimately decided to write a book about what educators can do **RIGHT NOW** in order to improve educational experiences of poor and working class students in their classrooms and schools P. 142

**Initiative One:**  
Advocate for Universal Preschool and Kindergarten  
\*USA is the only industrialized nation without universal early childhood education

**Initiative Two:**  
Cultivate Relationships with Community Agencies and Organizations

**Initiative Three:**  
**14 > 26**  
Advocate for smaller class sizes

**Initiative Four:** Attend and provide Ongoing, Advanced Professional Development Opportunities  
On Reaching and Teaching Low-Income Youth and their Families

**Initiative Five:**  
Extend Health Services and Screenings at schools.

**Initiative Six:** PROTECT Physical Education and Recess and encourage fitness

**Initiative Seven:** PROTECT Arts, Music, and Drama Programs  
**Every child is an artist.**  
-Pablo Picasso

**Initiative Eight:** PROTECT School and Local Libraries in High Poverty Neighborhoods  
Kamala Khan (aka Ms. Marvel) says "We must protect All the Libraries."

<sup>14</sup> For more information, check out [this video on visual note taking \(2012\)](#) or Rachel Smith's [TED Talk - Drawing in class](#).

## Conclusion

### So, where does *Reaching and Teaching* fit? -- Diary entry

<b>Mood?</b>	Inquisitive
<b>Wearing?</b>	flip flops, black shirt, painting shorts, and a Nationals cap
<b>Drinking?</b>	dark roast, no room, black and unforgiving like the circles under my eyes
<b>Music?</b>	<a href="#">Francis and the Lights featuring Bon Iver and Kanye West - Friends<sup>15</sup></a>

Dear Diary,

I just finished reading this book, Paul Gorski's *Reaching and Teaching Students in Poverty: Strategies for Erasing the Opportunity Gap*. I am simultaneously intrigued, convicted, and hopeful for what this title discusses. This guy, Gorski, writes like we are having a conversation. A conversation where one person does all the talking and the other person nods their head, chuckles, scowls, and scoffs (all at appropriate times of course). I imagine that were we in the same room, I might be able to be a part of this conversation. Besides, the book *is* about equity.

As a teacher educator, I see this title fitting nicely within the bounds of teacher education/curriculum courses whose desire is to not just celebrate diversity but illuminate inequities and the structural barriers that hold them static. Gorski efficiently, professionally, and emphatically topples dominant narratives surrounding students from families living in poverty and provides different lenses for educators young and old to view these students and families through. Acknowledging that a completely equitable and bias-free system of education is not necessarily possible, Gorski stresses that it is our duty to work towards what is best for our students. Using equity literacy as a foundation in the classes that I teach will hopefully lead to teachers who are better prepared to work with students from diverse populations.

With respect to practicing teachers, Gorski helps light the path towards safer learning environments by describing practices that could be revolutionary for schools and classrooms if teachers and administrators adapt them for their contexts. It is intimidating to think that this equity literacy work will require so much *more* from teachers, but the lived experiences of students are at risk if our classrooms do not strive for what is best for all.

Probably the thing that sticks with me the most from this book is that it is a political choice *to* implement equity literacy in classrooms, and it is an equally political choice *to not* implement equity literacy in classrooms. We live in a society that believes in a false meritocracy. One that believes that everyone has a fair shot at achieving the ever-elusive American Dream. If those lies that separate and govern are ever going to be busted up, we must make intentional choices to begin that conversation. So, Diary, thanks for listening. You always know exactly what to say. Give *Reaching and Teaching* a shot; it might just impact the way you interact with the world.

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<sup>15</sup> (2016)

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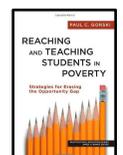
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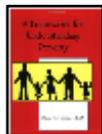
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