

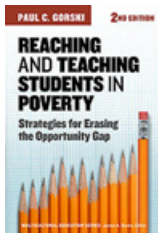
Justice, Not Grit: How Schools' "Achievement Gap" Initiatives Often Recreate Economic Injustice

Decades of research has uncovered horrid inequities in the educational opportunities available to students experiencing poverty as compared with those available to students from wealthier families. Nevertheless, many people, including many diversity-minded educators and education leaders, continue to embrace a stream of responses to economic "achievement" gaps that focus on changing students' mindsets, cultures, and levels of grit. These responses do not work—*cannot work*—because they ignore the conditions that create educational outcome disparities, sometimes called the *opportunity gap*. This is a partial list of ways this opportunity gap operates in schools.

Compared with schools with low percentages of students experiencing poverty, schools with high percentages of students experiencing poverty are more likely to have:

- less access to school nurses and college counselors;
- more limited access to computers and the Internet;
- inadequate learning facilities such as science labs;
- more teacher vacancies and substitute teachers;
- more teachers unlicensed in their subject areas;
- less rigorous and student-centered curricula;
- inoperative or dirty student bathrooms;
- serious teacher turnover problems;
- higher student-to-teacher ratios;
- insufficient classroom materials;
- fewer extracurricular programs;
- fewer experienced teachers;
- lower teacher salaries;
- larger class sizes; and
- Receive less funding.

What makes us think we can meaningfully respond to the impacts of these conditions by "fixing" the mindsets, cultures, or grittiness of students or families experiencing poverty?



The information on this handout is excerpted from Paul Gorski's book, *Reaching and Teaching Students in Poverty, Strategies for Erasing the Opportunity Gap, 2nd Edition* (Teachers College Press, 2018).