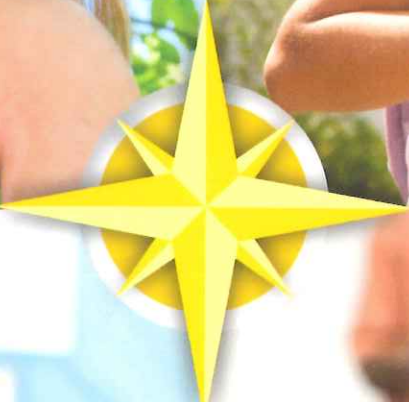
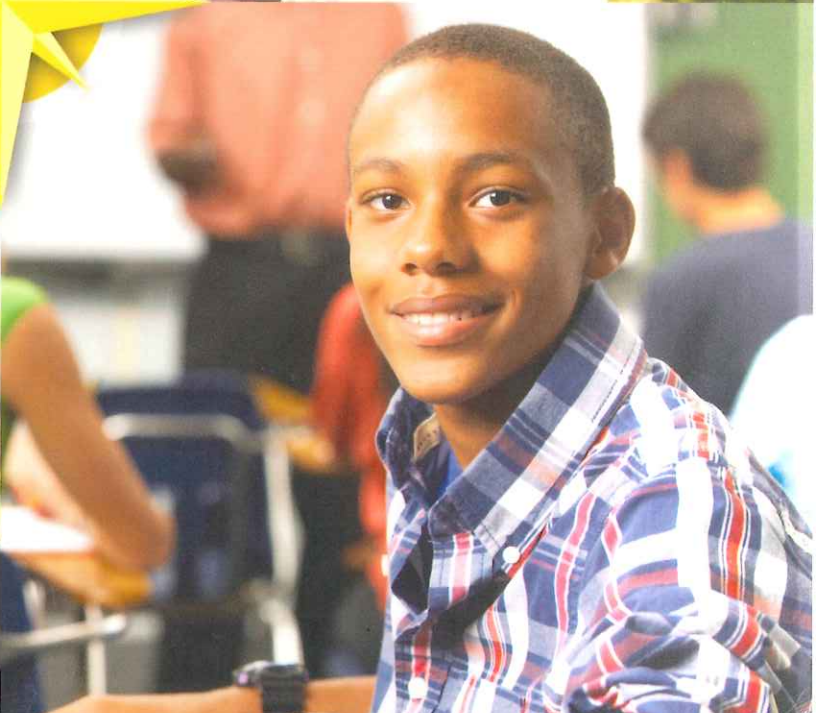


# Your Introduction to Education

## Explorations in Teaching

Third Edition

Sara Davis Powell





## THE OPINION PAGE

*This Opinion Editorial was published in the La Crosse Tribune, Wisconsin, on December 25, 2012.*

### **Poverty in Schools Is Community Problem**

by Rick Blasing

*Rick Blasing is a counselor at Lincoln Middle School, SOTA II and Coulee Montessori in La Crosse, Wis.*

When you consider what it must be like to be a child living in poverty, what do you envision?

Do you visualize a sad, sullen young person, an individual who cannot even consider the possibility of a happy life for himself? Do you see an individual who may be poorly fed, ill-clothed or whose eyes reflect a profound sadness?

When we see this young person in the community, we cannot fully know whether the possible signs of poverty we observe are a consistent life-condition. However, in the schools and in our classrooms, educators quickly learn of the dire conditions in which far too many of our community youth exist.

Through daily contact, teachers quickly recognize the signs of those who might be lacking sleep or who might be disconnected from their peers. These children become quickly evident to the caring educator, who can recognize a youngster who lacks not only material things but also the essential components and necessities needed for a healthy brain and body, a sense of self-esteem and a positive vision for their future.

Students who live in poverty parachute into the school environment from their "other world" on a daily basis, always striving to display a semblance of normalcy. It can be a tortuous and damaging existence for them, and it can assault their young sense of self and distort what they see as their own value and place in society.

For many, the school and classroom offers at least a temporary respite from the fundamental things lacking in their young lives.

Our community is indeed rich in resources. We are wealthy beyond measure when it comes to the amount of dedicated people who work to make things better for others. Working in the schools, I'm often heartened by the degree of dedication and selfless generosity demonstrated by parents and guardians who contribute their time and talents, educational materials, and pantry items to help with the great work going on. It's truly humbling and encouraging to witness this.

It's exciting to see an increasing degree of collaboration between groups and agencies in our region, which are searching for new ways to help those children and their families in our community. At a gathering in August, the city of La Crosse, La Crosse County and the La Crosse School District hosted the La Crosse Community Summit: Rebuilding for Learning II community conversation.

This event brought together city and county professionals, educators and other community stakeholders with the goal of creating and implementing a web of organized learning supports to address those societal barriers to learning.

While children in poverty certainly have the ability to achieve at the same level and reach the same academic benchmarks as their peers, their initial ability to effectively focus and learn can be severely hampered when their basic human needs are not being met.

A more recent community conversation about children in poverty took place in October at Viterbo University. Co-sponsored by AMOS (a local interfaith community coalition), the D.B. Reinhart Institute for Ethics in Leadership at Viterbo, the La Crosse County Human Services Department and Family Policy Board, League of Women Voters of the Greater La Crosse Area, and the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, this gathering provided a meaningful discussion involving strategies for helping children and families in poverty. Through these invaluable community conversations, we learn about the ways we can work together for greater common good.

During this season of giving and sharing, it's a timely reminder that we remain focused on those families in our society needing resources, assistance, job-training and employment opportunities to better their economic situation and prospects for the future. It is imperative we do what we can to provide the children with the necessary resources and nutrition so that they can effectively learn and grow while in our schools—giving them all of the benefits that a good education provides.

It has been said that it's the moral test of a nation in how it treats those who are in the dawn of life or in the twilight of life. Let us aspire to meet that moral test and, to that end, work to eliminate the poverty that hurts the lives of so many families and children in our community.

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This Opinion Page piece is poignant and compelling. It is a statement of a community's dedication to ask "And how are the children? Are they all well?" They want to answer that they are doing what they can to give every child opportunities for positive development, regardless of their circumstances. Write a well-developed paragraph in response to each of the following questions and prompts:

1. Relate what you know about Maslow's hierarchy of needs to what Rick writes in this Opinion Page. Elaborate on which needs must be met first, and which will be met more easily as a result.
2. The imagery of students "parachuting" into the school environment makes a point. Why is this message so important for teachers to understand?
3. What are some ways you might make the most of what Rick calls the "temporary respite" of your classroom?