

Costly Dissonance on Teacher Effectiveness

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Assistant Professor of Education, Jack Schneider, the author of an [article](#) offering ways to improve teacher effectiveness, and the *Education Week* readers that posted comments virtually took for granted the [debilitating teaching circumstances](#) of traditional public schools (TPS); not even noting how the poorly designed circumstances have been made even worse by political correctness. Poor design includes failure to sort children [by ability, by subject](#), rampant [out-of-field teaching](#) that arises from single salary schedules, misaligned educator incentives, and politically-correct [curricula](#) and [textbooks](#). We've made it even more difficult to not leave children behind by imposing politically-correct, paralyzing [federal discipline guidelines](#), and added to already [onerous differentiated instruction challenges](#) by mainstreaming special needs children; children most in need of specialized campuses, not the TPS' learning style diversity-maximized classrooms.

Professor Schneider's blames rampant teacher ineffectiveness on failure to adequately support teachers. His proposed solutions include: a.) less isolation – more time for teachers to interact; b.) more lesson prep time; c.) more support, including feedback that is never punitive (i.e. no accountability); and d.) better training, which means Schneider believes there are ways to train people to be everything to everyone; that is, avoid [teacher burnout](#), suddenly want more contact with parents, [not less](#), and succeed at differentiated instruction in classrooms with children that are high-achieving in that subject sitting next to special needs children. By the way, just such a case recently arose within my extended family. Two autistic children were just added to 28 other children that includes my very bright niece. The law calls for the least restrictive environment, which may or may not make autistic children feel better about themselves. But it is hard to make

the case that the resulting increased teaching challenge is good for the academic development of anyone in the class.

One of the comments on the Schneider article included the union favorite that improved teaching would take better people which would require increased pay; no mention of whether it would be okay to pay better teachers more than ordinary teachers. Teacher unions oppose real merit pay. True, it is hard to measure and reward merit in the current system; another key reason why we urgently need a system in which teachers are directly accountable to their clients through school choice, another union no-no.

The mass dissonance about the nature of school system problems and solutions is sad and costly. The main proof is the decades of [persistence](#) of the abysmally low performance problem. Schneider's diagnosis is hope triumphing over experience.