

Defining Quality Teaching

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We need to step outside the box for a moment, and remind ourselves what the terms [‘better teacher’](#) and ‘quality teaching’ have typically meant in widespread usage, and better ways to think about the concept. In empirical research on teacher effectiveness and the importance of that effectiveness to student outcomes, ‘better’ has to mean *teaching in the current system*. That’s what we have data for. Public schools dominate that data to an even greater extent than their nearly 90% enrollment share. Private school teacher effectiveness data are rare to non-existent. And because we are mostly intellectual prisoners of the status quo, even outside empirical evidence of teacher effectiveness, an implicit assumption of discussions of teacher quality is that effectiveness means *teaching in the current system*; a teaching environment made [especially challenging](#) by nearly universal failure to [ability group by subject](#), much less leverage different instructional themes like [sports](#) or environment or theater or [athletics](#) or to fully engage diverse children in high value schooling content.

A different system – transformed K-12 funding and governance – especially [along the lines I’ve advocated](#), would at least broaden the definition of effective teaching to include effectiveness in a wide variety of diverse circumstances. A different system could gradually change the nature of instruction by eliminating the circumstances that dominate the current system. Teachers now deemed effective might not be effective in any niche of the new system, or some now deemed effective might be continue to be effective, but only by transforming their classroom behavior. Others deemed ineffective now, or unqualified, might be highly effective in a niche – a particular instructional approach - in a transformed system. I’ve met a lot of

individuals that would like to participate in the intellectual development of children, but not through the typical teaching circumstances of public school teachers in the current system.

There are a lot of potentially effective teachers out there; in circumstances that might exist, and perhaps should exist, but are rare to non-existent in the current system.