



WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT TEACHER QUALITY?



Reporter Matt Barnum recently wrote for the *Atlantic* on *The Contradictions of Good Teaching*. In the article, he asks, “Is a good teacher one who makes students enjoy class the most or one who is strict and has high standards?” The piece raises important questions about defining and enabling good teaching in America’s classrooms. Two NEPC Policy Briefs shed light on these issues:

Policy Reforms and De-professionalization of Teaching. In his recent *Atlantic* article, Barnum writes about a study that concludes that teachers who improve students’ test scores get lower marks from students on surveys measuring students’ happiness in math class. Rich Milner’s NEPC brief raises additional questions about evaluating teachers using student test scores. Milner’s analysis finds that assessing teachers based on their students’ test scores de-professionalizes instruction by prioritizing teaching to the test over other important aspects of instruction, such as student well-being.

Creating Teacher Incentives for School Excellence and Equity. What can schools do to increase the odds that they will attract strong teachers? This brief from Barnett Berry and Jon Eckert examines the research and then offers four recommendations:

1. Use incentives to attract and retain good teachers at high-needs schools.
2. Expand incentive programs to reward teachers who contribute to organizational priorities such as collaboration or peer evaluation.
3. Improve teacher working conditions through a variety of methods including eliminating out-of-field teaching assignments, hiring principals who encourage teacher leadership, and allotting time and tools for teachers to learn from one another.
4. State, local and federal officials should champion examples of high-needs schools that do a good job of recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers by providing

high-quality, sustainable learning and working environments.

NEPC Resources on Teacher Education, Quality and Professional Development

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