

Daily Policy Digest

Education Issues

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A DEGREE OF WORTH OR WASTE?

Dallas-area school districts spend nearly \$20 million a year on extra pay for teachers with master's degrees, despite scores of studies that show no ties between graduate studies and teacher effectiveness, says the Dallas Morning News.

Consider:

- Of 170 relevant studies unearthed by the Royal Economic Society, 15 concluded that master's programs helped teachers, 9 found they hurt them and 146 found no effect.
- One of the largest studies, by the Texas Education Agency and the University of Texas at Dallas, found no correlation between master's degrees and student achievement.

And while master's premiums represent only a tiny fraction of total school expenditures, says the News, it is money that could make a tangible impact elsewhere, buying student laptops, tutoring sessions, field trips or additional courses.

Still others say it doesn't matter whether or not the degrees help, nothing will change. America has 3.2 million teachers who together make up the nation's most powerful political lobby, and more than half of them hold master's degrees. They'll fight for that money, said Kate Walsh, president of the National Council on Teacher Quality.

Perhaps the best solution may be to customize degree curriculums to include more classroom time, and less in lecture halls, says Barnett Berry, who runs the Center for Teaching Quality in Chapel Hill. "High school math teachers from rich suburbs face different challenges than people who teach bilingual kindergarten in the inner city."

Source: Andrew D. Smith, "A degree of worth or waste?" Dallas Morning News, January 15, 2007.

For text:

http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/news/localnews/stories/DN-masters_15met.ART.State.Edition2.3d7bb81.html

For more on Education Issues:

http://www.ncpa.org/sub/dpd/index.php?Article_Category=27

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