



# Textbook case of inefficiency

Can't buy a quality education



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**D**ateline America, 2012: College Students Complain “We’re Taken For Granite,” Face A “Doggy-Dog World.”

Those expressions were actually used in papers submitted to freshman comp professor James Courter. Other students wrote they found the college experience “homedrum” or had trouble getting into “the proper frame of mime.”

Courter quotes them in a Wall Street Journal column bemoaning the poor reading skills of incoming students.

Coincidentally (or something more?) that same issue of the WSJ also featured a piece entitled “America Has Too Many Teachers.” In it, Andrew Coulson of the Cato Institute points out that while the number of public school students has grown a mere 8.5 percent since 1970, “the public school work force has roughly doubled — to 6.4 million from 3.3 million — and two-thirds of those new hires are teachers or teachers’ aides.”

That helps explain part of the reason why since 1980 spending on public school education in the U.S. has doubled in inflation-adjusted dollars.

Twice as many teachers. Twice as much money. But does anybody believe that a high school graduate today is (as a college student might actually say) “twice as much smart?”

We know they’re not.

We test students all the time, tests like the National Assessment Of Educational Progress (NAEP). And since 1970, these results in math and reading have essentially been flat.

For example, the average 17-year-old’s NAEP score in reading back in 1971 was 285. In 2008 it was 286.

That’s what we got for doubling our education spending.

When you compare the U.S. to countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the results are even worse. Education reform activist Bill Costello points out that our annual “per-pupil spending in 2006 was 41 percent higher than the OECD average of \$7,283, and yet American students still placed in the bottom quarter in math and in the bottom third in science among OECD countries.”

Or as they say down at offices of the teachers union, “money well spent!”

And that’s the problem. Despite the deluge of tax dollars, despite having a ridiculously high number of teachers vs. students, and despite the dismal results, the teachers unions and their allies always demand more.

And, unfortunately they often get it because the public has such a skewed view of what’s really happening in our schools.

Ask the average American and they'll tell you our teachers are woefully underpaid, our schools are crumbling death traps and our nation is neglecting its children.

When I tell people that, just as an example, the average Boston teacher's salary is around \$82,000, they refuse to believe me.