

“Don’t you understand? I am a teacher.

Every day, through my students, I touch the future.”

Christa McAuliffe, when asked why she wanted to take part in NASA’s Teacher in Space Project in 1985.

THE TEACHER

Perhaps no profession has the potential to affect the future as dramatically as do teachers. Teachers of mathematics and science introduce students to concepts, methods, and ideas that will shape their lives in innumerable ways. But who are these teachers? What do they give and what do they get back? Why do they continue to teach?

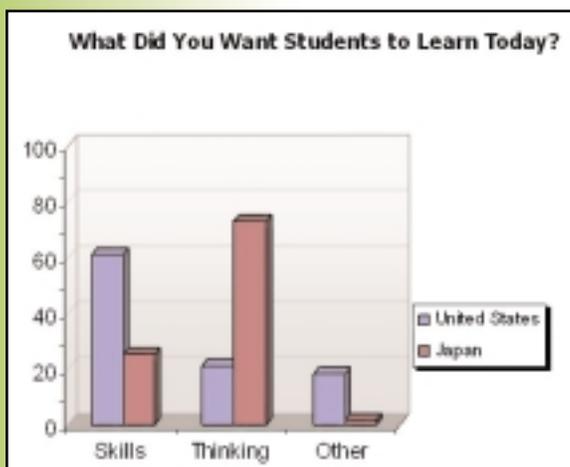
The Teacher’s Place in Society

Trust

- Eighty percent of the public consistently gives local public school teachers a grade of A or B.¹
- Asked about the credibility of public figures speaking out on public issues, U.S. adults rate only Supreme Court justices higher than teachers.²

Competence

- Teachers score as well as or better than lawyers, physicians, engineers, marketing and public relations professionals, educational administrators, social workers, and counselors in their ability to understand and use information.³
- The average Ohio elementary or secondary school teacher has about 15 years of teaching experience.
- Nearly all (97%) of Ohio teachers hold at least a Bachelor’s degree. Half (49%) hold a Master’s degree.⁴ By comparison, in 1996 less than a quarter (22%) of Ohio’s population, age 25 years and over, had completed at least four years of college.⁵
- In college, students who subsequently become high school teachers maintain academic records that are the equivalent of other students’.⁶ However, students who become elementary school teachers typically enroll in less challenging courses, take more remedial courses, and score less well on academic aptitude tests.⁷



The Teacher’s Reward

Compensation

- The average salary of Ohio public school teachers in 1998-99 was \$40,736.⁸
- In 1997-98, the average Ohio teacher’s annual salary was \$408 below the U.S. average. In constant dollars, Ohio teachers’ salaries have been in decline.⁹ See figure.
- The typical salary for a beginning teacher in Ohio is about \$3,000 per year lower than the U.S. average.¹⁰
- The following occupations earn more than teachers: physicians; lawyers; electrical engineers; marketing, advertising, and public

relations professionals; financial managers; computer systems analysts; education administrators; accountants and auditors; property and real estate managers; and food service and lodging managers.¹¹

Stability and Security

- In 1993-94, nearly 65 percent of American public school teachers planned to remain teachers as long as they were able or until eligible to retire.¹²

Unconventional Work Schedule

- Most teachers spend no more than six hours per day in class, and teach approximately nine months of the year. Non-classroom activities—such as creating lesson plans; grading papers; locating materials; talking to parents; and meeting with students, other teachers, and administrators—extend the teacher’s typical work week to 50-55 hours.¹³

Gaps and Obstacles: The Real World Versus the Teacher’s World

Data confirm that the American public holds its teachers in high regard. As a group, teachers are equally as competent, literate, and capable as those in most other professions. However, they are paid less. Moreover, in Ohio, teachers’ real pay has been declining for the past decade.

Some evidence suggests that satisfaction with schools and teachers also may be somewhat lower in Ohio than elsewhere. Data from the 55 largest U.S. cities says that 93 percent of households with children enrolled in public elementary schools are satisfied with their schools. However, in Ohio the percentages of satisfied households are as follows: Columbus, 90 percent; Cincinnati, 82 percent; and Cleveland, 81 percent.¹⁴

The discrepancy between the responsibilities and expectations of teachers and the salary they are paid may deter qualified college students from pursuing a career in the classroom. The student who is driven to succeed, in academia and in the workplace, is lured to fields other than teaching. Those students who choose to pursue certification as a teacher may not be as relentless in their pursuit of excellence.

Differences between the world of schooling and the business world in both schedule and philosophy also may deter quality candidates. The business world values and rewards competence and successful risk taking. Education provides no similar incentives for teachers. The business world functions on a standard 9 to 5 workday, 12 months of the year, with overtime and extended hours the norm. Teachers operate outside the mainstream, on their own unique nine-month schedule.

The teaching profession is not a player on the business world’s economically driven stage. This fact creates a fundamental irony of business-world outsiders teaching students to become business-world insiders.

Endnotes

1. Phi Delta Kappa Teachers' Poll, 1997.
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4. Ohio Policy Inventory for the National Commission on Teaching and America's Children, *The Best Teachers for Ohio's Children*, Ohio Department of Education, Columbus, OH, 1997.
5. Bureau of the Census, "Educational Attainment in the United States: March 1996," *Current Population Reports*, U.S. Department of Commerce, Washington, DC, 1998.
6. R. Henke, S. Geis, and J. Giambattista, *Out of the Lecture Hall and into the Classroom: 1992-93 College Graduates and Elementary/Secondary School Teaching*, National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC, 1996.
7. Educational Testing Service, *The Academic Quality of Prospective Teachers: The Impact of Admissions and Licensure Testing*, Princeton, NJ, 1999.
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9. National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Educational Statistics 1998*, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC, 1999.
10. Ibid.
11. Bruschi and Coley.
12. National Center for Education Statistics, *Schools and Staffing Survey, 1993-94*, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC, 1994.
13. National Education Association, *Status of the American Public School Teacher: 1990-91*, Washington, DC, 1992.
14. A. Carnevale and D. Desrochers, *School Satisfaction: A Statistical Profile of Cities and Suburbs*, Educational Testing Service, Princeton, NJ, 1999.



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This work was produced in whole or in part with funds from the U.S. Department of Education under Eisenhower grant number R168R50003. The content does not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the Department of Education, nor does mention or visual representation of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the federal government.