



## Who is Really in the Teaching Trenches?

By Educator Barnes – August 10, 2019

If you would have asked me last school year what I would be doing this school year, I would have told you I would still be an elementary librarian. Apparently, some educators did not see that as a real teaching job. Yes, I'm no longer a librarian, but not because of those comments, but those

comments got me thinking about how educators rank and categorize other educators. One educator said, “You’re not really in the teaching trenches?”

I wasn’t aware that some teaching jobs were more important than others, but unfortunately, that is the message sent from districts, principals, and other colleagues. English/language arts and math are put on a high pedestal because they are subjects assessed by state standardized tests. Yes, science and social studies are occasionally assessed by state standardized tests, but those scores don’t affect a school’s accountability. Those teachers are treated as less valuable. Don’t be an elective or special areas teacher. You are treated like a glorified babysitter. Colleagues will even pull students off of your classes whenever they want. What does this divisiveness do to our schools?

These hierarchies are not healthy. When teachers are seen as or even told they are less important, they may doubt their abilities or not put in the best effort. Every person, including the cafeteria and custodial staff, that students come into contact with at school is important and should be treated that way. Maybe we can’t control what the principal does or says, or even the district, but educators can stop devaluing each other.

When children leave school, we expect them to be well-rounded citizens. This means they need access to many subject areas. Subjects outside of English and math should not be an afterthought. It is hard for non-English and math teachers to be effective if they are an afterthought. They need the same quality professional development and resources as English and math teachers. Administrators should acknowledge their hard work as much and at the same level as other educators.

As an administrator, I’m evaluating art this year, and I’m so excited. I have already been thinking of ways to support the art teacher and to build her up as an educator. She is as valuable as any other educator on my team; I’m going to make sure she knows it.

Before you fix your lips to say someone is not really in the teaching trenches, think about the impact of your words and how you are dismissing the value of other educators.