



Educator Barnes – 12/3/17

The great school mix up is one strategy elementary principals use to remove ineffective teachers from upper elementary grades, the grades where state standardized tests are taken. Apparently, moving these teachers to an 'easier' grade will magically fix the problems they faced in their upper-grade classroom. There are a few reasons this is a problem.

There is no 'easy' grade.

Each grade has its unique qualities and it is insulting to the teachers who work hard at their craft in the younger grades to have a colleague moved to their grade because it is

perceived as an easier grade to tackle by the administration. You could argue the lower grades have the heavy lifting and the bulk of the work. They set the foundation for the school. These teachers are the ones who help shape whether a child will potentially love school. *The Atlantic* article, "[The Collateral Damage of Testing Pressure](#)" notes that a [study](#) found, "being assigned a teacher in early-elementary school who switched from a higher grade led to reduced academic achievement, effects that persisted through at least third grade."

The problems will most likely appear in their next classroom.

If a teacher could not manage a class of fourth graders, what makes a principal think kindergarteners will be easier? In addition to learning the content of the new grade level, the teacher will also need to improve in areas of weakness. Moving any teacher without targeted professional development or instructional coaching is setting that teacher and his or her students up for failure. The skills a teacher needs to manage a classroom, to deconstruct standards and develop solid lesson plans are needed in every grade. No grade should be seen as a place where a struggling teacher can be moved.

School culture is affected.

Many teachers bond with their teammates and when a less effective teacher is moved to a lower grade, a teacher who is more effective is moved to an upper grade. If you are that teacher who is moved to a lower grade, many times you know why you were moved; you might be wondering if the next step is out the door. It can also make the team become resentful towards the person who is moved into the grade because the team knows it will take extra support to help this person improve. Although we would like to think all teachers would be happy to help each other out, the reality is many teachers are already under pressure just trying to make sure their students are progressing and may not have time to help another teacher. When teams are constantly shifting, it becomes hard to develop and maintain a strong cohesive school culture.

Principals, if you know a teacher is struggling or is ineffective don't move him or her to a lower grade and hope the teacher will get better because the grade is easier. It devalues the work of effective teachers in those grades. It also makes the work even harder for the teachers in the upper grades who will eventually receive those students who had a struggling teacher in the lower grades. Offer the teacher lesson plan support, have someone model lessons, give constructive feedback and connect the teacher to an instructional coach. Deal with the root of ineffectiveness and stop reassigning teachers as a quick fix.