

Study: Higher salaries will attract better teachers

By RHONDA SNIDER
Reporter

Do higher teacher salaries and more money for material resources in schools increase the quality of teachers? The answer to this question has received much debate in the recent controversy over the quality of education in America.

Two Texas A&M political science professors have designed a report, "Resources for Public Education and Teacher Quality," to answer the question.

Drs. Harvey Tucker and David Hill believe there is evidence to "support the proposition that better candidate

teachers can be attracted by higher teacher salaries and greater material resources for education."

The report cited a study which found a significant correlation between average teacher salaries and average Scholastic Aptitude Test scores. In states which had higher salaries for teachers, the average SAT scores tended to be higher also.

In addition this study revealed that expenditures per pupil in average daily attendance are also significantly correlated with the SAT scores of those who intend to study education.

The study, conducted earlier

this year by C.E. Feistritzer of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, covered 22 states.

Tucker said this was unique data and worth compiling into the report that he sent to the Governor's Select Commission on Education. The Commission is making recommendations to the Texas Legislature on how to spend the state's money on education.

He said this research doesn't prove that states which raise teacher salaries will have better quality teachers. It also doesn't prove the high salaries will produce students who will make higher SAT scores.

For example, New Hampshire had the second lowest average teacher salaries but had the highest average SAT scores of the 22 states in the survey. Nevertheless, Tucker said, the research approaches a positive answer to the question of how to get better quality teachers.

The research also suggests — though it doesn't prove — that students who plan to major in education will be smarter if they attend a school system with greater funding for material resources, he said.

"It gives us evidence to suggest that this is not a silly idea," Tucker said. "It suggests to me that if we make a commitment to

higher salaries and more money for school systems, we could improve on those who decide to go into education as a career."

Tucker said data are not available on those who actually did go into education as a career, but the scores are available of those who plan to major in education and these are usually lower than average SAT scores.

A two-step, long-term process is needed to produce higher quality teachers, Tucker said. He recommends increasing salaries which will begin to attract a higher quantity of candidates to the teaching field. This will bring both higher and lower quality teachers which

leads to the second step — weeding out the lower quality ones.

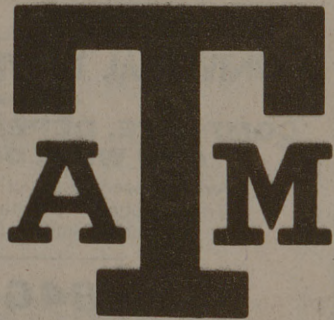
He said this is a long-term strategy because initiating the higher salaries would not change the present teachers, but would merely give them a greater income. Tucker said not much can be done to improve teacher quality in the short run.

In the long run, however, the natural turnover in the teaching field will result in higher quality people, he said.

This process will take at least three to five years before any effect is seen due to more intelligent young people who decide to go into teaching because of the higher salaries. And it may

take as long as 10-15 years before a state would recognize a significant increase in the quality of teachers because, he said, it takes that long before the majority of those presently teaching reach retirement age.

In addition to increasing salaries, other conditions for quality teachers are more material resources, elimination of violence and discipline problems in the schools, increased respect and pay for teachers. All of which improve the teachers' work environment, a primary motivation for quality work, he said.



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Rocking?

Researcher says rocking babies has benefits

United Press International
WASHINGTON — In a study suggesting the rocking of babies may have more benefits than just calming an infant, a California researcher reports that premature babies placed on oscillating waterbeds have enhanced nervous system functioning.

These tiny infants showed fewer signs of irritability, were alert more often, were more responsive to the human face and voice and perhaps most important, had fewer occasions of interrupted breathing during sleep than similar babies who

stayed in an ordinary incubator.

Dr. Anneliese Korner, professor of psychiatry and behavioral medicine at the Stanford University School of Medicine, said the waterbed's gentle oscillations may mimic the maternal biological rhythms the baby experienced before birth.

She noted that, unlike normal term babies, prematurely born infants usually are placed in an incubator in a hospital and thus are deprived of normal movement stimulation similar to that experienced before birth.

Numerous studies of laboratory animals have suggested that lack of such movement after birth may impair the early development of the brain.

"The most gentle way I could think of providing compensatory movement stimulation to

preterms was through waterbeds," Dr. Korner said at a seminar sponsored by the federal Alcohol, Drug Abuse and Mental Health Administration.

The incubator waterbeds have gentle head to foot motions and also maintain a temperature just slightly higher than the air in the incubator. The fluid support also is easier on the babies' gentle skin.

"This intervention not only helps the pre-terms behave more normally, but also — and possibly more important — makes their behavior less frightening and more appealing to parents," she said. "This is of major significance to the long-term well being of pre-term babies."

Dr. Korner said premature babies — which account for 7 percent to 10 percent of all in-

fant born in the United States — are particularly vulnerable to future nervous system, behavioral and mental health problems.

"Their biological immaturity at birth not only places them at medical risk, but predisposes them to behaviors that are haunting and frustrating for parents," she said.

"Pre-term babies' disturbed sleep patterns and excessive irritability make them difficult to care for. They are harder to soothe and feed and less responsive to parents than are full-term babies."

After two studies revealed that premature babies placed on waterbeds had fewer occasions of the breathing interruptions known as apnea, Dr. Korner conducted a more detailed study, comparing premature babies on water beds for up to six weeks with those assigned randomly to normal incubators.

"We found that the experimental group demonstrated significantly more motor behavior, showed significantly fewer signs of irritability and were more than twice as often in the visually alert state and were significantly more responsive to a human face voice," she said.

"This pilot study, which we intend to replicate, thus suggests that compensatory movement stimulation as provided by waterbeds is likely to enhance the neurobehavioral development of preterm infants."

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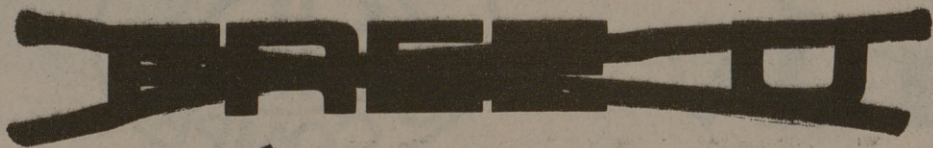
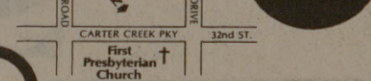
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