



Skill-Free Teachers

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The new non-requirement for becoming a teacher in New Jersey—pushed by the teacher’s union there—reminds me of some of my own classroom experiences as a kid.

Applicants [no longer](#) need to pass a test that asks basic questions about English and math and other subjects in order to get the job. Why not? Because formal confirmation of basic skills is an obstacle. New Jersey needs more teachers. Remove obstacle, get more teachers. Simple addition.

Schools have other ways to determine whether applicants have the basic skills they need in order to teach those skills.

But the reason for scrapping the test is evidently to ensure that deficiency in these skills, as such, won’t prevent you from being hired.

My alternative plan: accelerate free-market reforms of education, school choice, so we don’t have to “rely on” illiterate, innumerate, government-foisted “teachers.”

In 1983, when Bill Clinton was governor of Arkansas, he instituted a competency test that, according to a 1985 *Washington Post* [story](#), ten percent of the state’s public school teachers flunked. More than one-third of teachers in the state’s worst county failed this basic test.

One reason that poor and minority communities had such poor outcomes was that many of their teachers were illiterate and couldn’t do math. If you asked my fifth-grade math teacher, a product of that system, what is the sum of two plus two, she’d have had to look it up.

I survived. I now know that two plus two make eleven. But I would not want any of today’s students to undergo the same so-called instruction.

This is Common Sense. I’m Paul Jacob.