

January 7, 2011

**Letter to the Editor submitted to the Globe and Mail**

Dear Editor

Those promoting teacher merit pay don't seem too clear on what exactly needs fixing in BC's schools.

Unlike India or the US, our students consistently perform admirably in international math, science and literacy tests. We also have Canada's lowest K-12 dropout rate. Strong union and financial disincentives notwithstanding, BC's teachers already out-perform in their field.

So what's the problem? Our 6-year school completion rate hasn't budged over 80% for a decade and Provincial stats show a consistent demographic profile for under-performing students: they're overwhelmingly Aboriginal, poor and/or have special needs.

This suggests a more pervasive, complex problem than one of teacher competence or disincentives -- unless BC's incompetent, lazy teachers are aggressively choosing the toughest classrooms where these groups predominate.

Instead of encouraging government to waste millions on misguided "silver bullets," BC's political and opinion leaders should sit down with teachers, parents and other education partners to discuss targeted solutions to real problems.

Dawn Steele

**BC Education Coalition**

<http://stopeducationcuts.org/>