

A Modest Proposal for the Socialization of Educational Employees in Order to Increase the Living
Standards of Educators and Improve the Quality of Education for Our Children

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Abstract

In the following Swift-style essay, I addressed the issue of teacher salary. Though my essay begins much like any argument for increasing teacher pay, the second paragraph proposes the satirical solution of providing on-campus housing for educators. When I began researching my topic, I found that providing on-campus housing to teachers has recently been proposed in Miami, Florida. For that reason, I had to make my satirical solution even more absurd than I had initially planned. The primary satirical tools upon which I rely are verbal irony, understatement, distortion, and sarcasm. I suggest that teachers should live in community housing and that teachers should pool talents and resources in order to create a community because, I ironically suggest, giving up personal freedoms is a small price to pay for basic necessities. Rather than paying salaries, school districts would provide housing and food and rely on professionals like the school nurse to provide health care and ask teachers to provide fresh meat and vegetables. This method of satire is particularly effective because it calls attention to the way that teachers are often dehumanized and belittled as glorified babysitters in the salary debates. By providing such an absurd solution, this essay forces readers to reconsider previous assumptions about teacher compensation.

A Modest Proposal for the Socialization of Educational Employees in Order to Increase the Living Standards of Educators and Improve the Quality of Education for Our Children

For much of the last fifty years, teachers have lamented the high stress and low pay that come with working in education. A teacher's salary is based on 187 days of work for 8 hours per day. However, with only one hour of dedicated planning time factored into the work day, teachers are left piles of work that must be completed outside of the classroom: up to twelve hours per day during the week and an additional eight hours or more on the weekends planning lessons, grading papers, communicating with parents, and completing additional training or paperwork. Teachers are also required to complete continuing education hours, which is why they attend conferences and planning sessions in the summer while they are technically off contract. While many teachers work upwards of 60 hours per week, teachers are salaried employees who are not eligible for overtime. This means that teachers are working, on average, 800 unpaid hours per year. Teachers are required to have, at minimum, a four-year degree, and compared to other professionals with similar education requirements, teachers make only 77% of what other college graduates make. In some states, teachers qualify for federal aid programs. As a result, many teachers take second (and sometimes third) jobs to make ends meet. Though teachers may not be as valuable as doctors and lawyers, they do provide the public with a great service—the best provide solid foundations for future generations, but even the worst still provide tax payer-funded daycare for working parents. Therefore, we must take action and provide better support for our teachers.

The most logical way to solve this problem is to socialize the education profession. All school districts need to build dormitories to house the faculty and staff of their schools. Single teachers will share living quarters with communal kitchens, living areas, and bathrooms, thus reducing the number of units needed to accommodate the number of teachers, support staff, administrators, custodians, maintenance, and cafeteria workers for each school. Teachers who are married will have their own one-room unit with a private bathroom; however, teachers who are

married without children will still share the communal kitchen and living areas. Teachers who are married with children will be provided with one additional bedroom per two children and a private kitchenette and living space. Teachers will be fed three meals per day at their school cafeteria, which will be served Monday through Friday during the school year. On weekends and in the summers, the cafeteria workers will be given an allotment for preparing meals for the school worker community in the communal kitchen. Additionally, teachers will be given a weekly allowance of \$5 per person in each family during the school year and \$10 per person in their family during the summer so that they can enjoy snacks and local entertainment. If both spouses teach for the district, then they will receive \$10 per family member all year since they save the district money in housing costs. In addition to the cafeteria workers preparing meals, other school staff will also be able to contribute their skills to reduce the amount of benefits for which the district would need to pay. For instance, the school nurses will provide basic healthcare, eliminating the need for expensive health plans; the campus SROs will be in charge of security for both their assigned schools as well as the employee housing in which they live; the family and consumer science teachers can provide clothing to the staff and family members (theatre teachers can probably help here, too); the ag teachers can raise livestock and tend gardens to provide sustainable food sources; the shop teachers and maintenance staff will be in charge of repairs for the campus community; and coaches can double as personal trainers for the rest of the staff. Any other talents possessed by individual staff members could be seen as a community benefit, thus allowing for personalization within each district living community. Imagine art lessons and poetry readings and quilting circles—the possibilities are endless. By providing such living quarters and provisions for the faculty and staff, schools would be able to eliminate almost entirely, with exception to the weekly allowances, the need for salaries.

There are several reasons why this is a logical solution to the serious problem of low teacher salaries. Firstly, this plan would reduce the cost of travel to and from school, which will maximize the amount of time spent planning and grading. Secondly, planning and vertical teaming would be

easier and more efficient because teachers will have ready access to their teaching partners living next door or one floor below. Thirdly, this will encourage more cross-curricular instruction because when teachers live together, they will come to appreciate the unique talents of their colleagues. Fourthly, this will encourage teachers to get to know each other better. In so many schools, teachers only know the other teachers in their own departments. Rarely can you see a math teacher conversing with an English teacher outside of the workroom, but if that math teacher and English teachers are neighbors, they will build camaraderie, which will make for a stronger school environment. Fifthly, if teachers live together, they can maximize the summer planning and training hours, and administrators could host weekly staff development rather than trying to cram it all in the week before the first day of school. Education already consumes every minute of educators' lives, so the community living will allow for even more productivity per school year. Sixthly, teachers who want to have additional income for entertainment and travel are still welcome to take summer jobs or sell products on the side to make extra money—this is America, after all—and they will have more time for this since they no longer have to drive to and from work.

Now, I know that some will say this is ludicrous, that teachers should be able to have the same respect and financial freedom as other professionals who earn money and can choose how to spend that money to have the kind of home and lifestyle that suits their personal preferences. *The reality is that trading these personal freedoms is a small price to pay for the security and low cost of communal living. After all, teachers don't really have time for relationships outside of their school lives because they have no work-life balance, and they spend virtually all their time at school as it is. Providing this housing arrangement is, by far, the most logical way to ensure that teachers have adequate housing and food, especially for those who have families, while also eliminating the amount of guilt they feel when they spend valuable planning and grading time doing mundane things in the real world, like driving and shopping for groceries. Furthermore, the community of educators would be a living example for their students, showing how people from all backgrounds can live*

together in perfect harmony. Others may say that there still needs to be considerations for teacher retirement, and to that I say, why retire? With all their essential needs taken care of, teachers can work long past the normal age of retirement, which is currently 65. Elderly teachers could, if necessary, transition to the role of support staff if they feel they are no longer capable of running their own classroom. School districts could also eventually consider building campus nursing homes for those who have health conditions that prevent the former teacher from working, a service which could be provided by teachers' adult children who have not yet completed college or found a permanent career. There's really no way that this plan would not greatly improve the lives and living conditions of educators.

What remains absolutely true is that, despite the long hours, stress, public disrespect, and low wages, teaching is a privilege. The opportunity to work in a profession that allows a person to experience the learning and growth of children makes teaching one of the most noble and enviable professions. But just because teachers should consider themselves lucky to have such wonderful jobs doesn't mean that they shouldn't have cookie-cutter housing and slightly palatable food, that they shouldn't have the opportunity to work extra hours to contribute to the greater good of their professional community. Teachers deserve these added benefits precisely because they work so hard for our children. Teachers sacrifice so much of themselves for their profession, so sacrificing a little personal freedom for the relative comfort and security of community housing is really not too much to ask. Overall, the education of our children will be greatly improved when all of our educators become part of a shared community who are dedicated in both mind and spirit to our children's futures. And when teachers show how well this plan works, our society will be eager to consider similar living arrangement in place of salary for other public servants, like our police officers and our politicians.

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