

More Pay for Good Teachers

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PAYING teachers the same salary across subjects and in hard-to-staff locations hampers the ability of schools to recruit the best teachers.

A policy paper from The Future of Children, a joint initiative of the Brookings Institution and Princeton University, advocates paying teachers according to performance and skills as a way of improving student achievement.

The paper outlines a plan for improving the quality of teaching, which provides a fillip to federal Education Minister Julie Bishop's plan to push a system of performance pay for teachers.

The paper argues for a system that identifies effective teachers, promotes only effective teachers, ensures good teachers work in problem schools and raises the quality of teachers through professional development.

It says student test scores should not be the only element on which teachers are assessed.

"School systems should judge teachers on a combination of student gains, principal evaluations, parent evaluations," it says.

Higher salaries should be paid to effective teachers who agree to work in disadvantaged schools, and to attract teachers to areas where there are shortages, such as maths and science.

"Teachers with strong maths and science skills often have good opportunities outside of teaching, yet their pay is the same as that of teachers in other fields where outside opportunities may be more limited," it says.

"Additional salary or other benefits could attract more teachers to these difficult-to-staff fields. Pay incentives for teachers in these fields may also be a productive way of increasing the pool of interested candidates."

Research in the paper argues that overall salary increases for teachers are expensive and ineffective and the best way to improve the quality of instruction is lower barriers to becoming a teacher and to link pay and career advancement more closely with increases in student performance.