

# I'm Tired of Celebrating "Teachers"

The latest Key & Peele sketch "TeachingCenter" is *still* going viral. It's a spoof of *SportsCenter* that imagines a world where we put as much time, energy, and money into honoring teachers as we do athletes. In case you haven't seen it, here it is:

Most of the reactions have been predictable: "If only..."; "Teachers *should* be paid more"; "I would watch this!" (really?!?).

No question that the sketch was funny. But having worked in education reform, I was also annoyed by the video. Why? I'm simply tired of being told to celebrate "teachers."

**CELEBRATE  
TEACHERS!**

In the Western world, the generalized celebration of teachers originates in the 18th and 19th centuries, when government-run education became a primary tool for creating a national identity to substitute for the recently dethroned religious identity. But today, the teachers unions are the main drivers of it. They have made a big push to exalt teachers as the priests – and sometimes martyrs – of modern times. It helps when it comes time for collective bargaining agreements.



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## EDUCATION

# Key And Peele Sketch Raises An Important Question: Why Aren't Teachers Paid More?

To be clear: I think we should honor individual teachers who had an impact on us during our years in school. But I eschew the idea of honoring teachers in general. Teaching is similar to other professions in that there are ones who perform it well and others who perform it poorly. Some teachers have played a significant role in our intellectual growth; others had very little to offer and wasted our time. Some teachers went into the profession with a selfless desire to educate students; others went into it because they didn't know what else to do and thought a pension might be nice. Some come to see it as a lifelong vocation; others move on to other pursuits after a few years. Some are examples of virtue; others are pretty creepy.

Teaching is a service – and an important one at that – but have we asked why we are celebrating this particular service

as a society more than others? After all, most of us would not survive for very long without grocery stores. Why not have special campaigns to celebrate grocers? Most of us now depend upon fast internet service in our home. Should we have special campaigns to recognize the efforts of internet providers?

I'm all for celebrating Mr. Powell, Mr. Maxand, Mrs. Boness, Dr. Boyle – individuals during my education who instilled in me crucial skills, and introduced me to great authors. I'm just not that into celebrating "teachers."

[Image Credit](#)