

New Study: Teacher Unions May Have Damaging Effects on Students

It's well-accepted fact that a good teacher is one of the most important components of a child's education. And as some might assume, behind every good teacher is a good teachers union.

But while unions might be beneficial for teachers, new evidence suggests they are not beneficial for students.

Such a conclusion was reached when Education Next researchers Michael Lovenheim and Alexander Willen [examined student outcomes](#) in states with mandatory collective bargaining laws for teachers. After controlling for different variables, the researchers found that their "results clearly indicate that laws supporting collective bargaining for teachers have adverse long-term consequences for students."

As the chart below demonstrates, students educated in states with mandatory collective bargaining laws experienced a decline in earnings, hours, employment, skill level, and educational attainment.



While these percentage declines may seem small, they translate into significant losses. For example, the 1.9 percent loss in earnings translates into a loss of nearly \$800 dollars annually per student. When added together for all students affected by these policies, this equals "a total loss of \$196 billion per year."

What drives the negative effects which teacher unions apparently have on student outcomes? The authors are unclear, but suggest a few possibilities:

“Perhaps collective bargaining has made it more difficult for school districts to dismiss ineffective teachers or to allocate teachers among schools. Or perhaps the political influence of teachers unions at the state level has interfered with efforts to improve school quality.”

Regardless of the reason, does this new information suggest we should be more careful about the influence of teachers unions in our schools, particularly if they may be damaging our children's futures?

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