

Expert Explains Why Many Educators Can't Teach Math

U.S. high school students recently scored a huge victory when they [won the 2016 International Math Olympiad](#). The team's head coach attributed the U.S.'s increased standing in math to the many online elements of self-education that are now available to the enterprising young student.

But what about the young students who don't pursue online math learning opportunities? Why can't they excel in math through the courses they take in the classroom?

One answer to that question was recently posed by education expert Marc Tucker in [The Hechinger Report](#). According to Tucker, American students don't get math "because their elementary school teachers don't either." Tucker goes on to explain his statement:

"We are mainly recruiting teacher candidates from the bottom half of the kids who go to college," said Tucker. "These kids come out of high school with a very shaky command of high school math and eventually become teachers who can show their students the steps for doing a long division problem, but can't tell them why it works. So when their students get to high school, they can't really do algebra either because they don't understand how the arithmetic works."

A chart [recently highlighted](#) by the Brookings Institution suggests that Tucker might not be all that far off the mark in his assessment. Brookings explains:

"The gray bars span the 25th to 75th percentiles in skill level among college graduates in each country. The red lines mark the skill of the median teacher. ... Numeracy skills of American teachers are below average both in comparison to

other American college graduates and in comparison to teachers in other countries.”

Such a state is alarming, particularly as these individuals will shape the knowledge of the next generation of students.

But before we lay all the blame for this sad state on America's teachers, it's wise to consider that they, too, are products of the American education system.

If we want our students to break free from the educational stagnation which has plagued the last several generations, are we also going to need to break free from the education system's box and look for alternative ways to train the next generation in excellence?

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