I read that same article and was reminded of a Public Forum letter a few months back where the writer wrote “It is never the student’s fault if no learning occurs.”

It’s quite in vogue to blame teachers for everything wrong in education. Your dentist/doctor/mechanic analogies were great, because although there are very bad examples in each of those professions, for the most part one’s failure in that department is caused by not following the advice of the expert. Most teachers will find a way to teach every student that is trying to learn.

For the most part, I agree with every part of your rant and rave, and rant right along beside you. Only one thing I will differ completely on and that is the daily visits by the principal. Although I think that it is impossible for a principal to visit 60+ teachers every day, I have often felt that the principal doesn’t come visit my classroom often enough. I may be lucky and the 2 times they come visit the class I’m having an perfect day; the lesson is engaging, the students are on task and the couple troublemakers are absent. Then, they might pick 2 bad days instead. The fact is I, like most teachers, have days where I’m an excellent teacher, days where I’m a good teacher, a decent teacher, a mediocre teacher and even days where I suck as a teacher. I would rather have the principal see me enough times to know that I’m a pretty damn good teacher overall, instead of trusting my impressions to a handful of days.

As for your list of things that would help, I have to say to:

#1) AMEN

#2) Can I hear another AMEN? Social promotion – biggest mistake ever.

#3) Never thought of that myself, but an excellent idea.

#4) True, true.

#No number, just “in addition” – I love this one too. Although I think ANY junior high classroom would do, even an upper income east side one. Can you imagine Chris Buttars trying to teach anything to 35 hormone ridden east side students hyped up on caffeine and sugar? I have argued for a while now that even decision makers at the district level ought to be required to spend every 5th year of their career as a full time classroom teacher. Add to it your requirements for lawmakers, and you would see some serious, beneficial, changes to the way education is regulated.

One last thing, that I would add to the list: #5) Parents get to claim a percentage of the dependant deduction equal to the percent of classes their student is passing. If your student is passing only half of their classes, you only get to claim them as half a deduction. Flunking everything? Sorry mom & dad, no state or federal tax deduction for that kid. Because, as someone who has taught in schools on both ends of the socio-economic spectrum (and a few in between), it is my experience that parental expectations (for their kids) make the world of difference. Some of the best teachers I’ve ever worked with are at some of the lowest scoring schools, and some of the worst teachers were at the highest scoring school I was at. I would bet a year’s salary that, when I was at an upper income school, I could have put a mannequin at my desk, written the assignment on the board and at least 50% of the class would still have passed.

Thank you for your rant and rave, like you, I am getting seriously tired of being the scapegoat.