

NOT EVEN COMBAT PAY COULD ENTICE EX-TEACHERS

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MEMO: LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The letter "Tap retired teachers to help lower class sizes" (Thursday) commented: "Where can Florida find enough new teachers - more than 12,000 a year? One overlooked resource is retired teachers. In the coming decade, one-third of U.S. teachers will retire. There are thousands in Florida. Many came here in retirement to enjoy the good life. Most are civic-minded and troubled by crowded classrooms."

The writer overlooks the reality that retired teachers do indeed want the good life, and teaching is something that many have escaped for that purpose. During the past two or three decades, the whole character of teaching has changed, making it a far less attractive vocation. It's not just compensation, either. Major issues include indifference or hostility from many parents, potential lawsuits, mainstreaming of mentally unstable students, adversary relationships with management, too many students, and more. A vocation to which many once were dedicated has become something different. Give up the good life for combat? Maybe, if someone desperately needs to supplement his or her pension. Otherwise, I seriously doubt it.

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