

Ability Grouping By Subject, Re-Visited

John Merrifield
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Hurray for the *New York Times*. I never thought I'd say that. But they earned it with their focus on the importance of ability grouping *by subject*, though their June 4 article fails to emphasize the critical '*by subject*' element that could cause many readers to confuse critical, non-elitist, multi-dimensional ability grouping *by subject* with similar-sounding, but very different 'tracking' that pretends that children are one-dimensionally weak, strong, or average, rather than the multi-dimensional people, with strengths and weaknesses, that are the human norm.

The *Times*' June 4, 2014 article, "[Tracking Students by Ability Produces Results](#)" follows their June 10, 2013 article, "[Grouping Students by Ability Regains Favor in Classroom](#);" the subject of [my third blog post](#). The 2014 article finds evidence to support the "common sense" that, "too much variation within a single group causes the whole process to break down." The article's observation that, "most school districts in the U.S. have some form of ability grouping or tracking," together with the 2013 article's description of ability grouping in action in traditional public school classrooms demonstrates why the current system struggles to do the right thing, the right way. The photo accompanying the 2013 article shows a teacher roaming a classroom wherein children of different abilities sit at different tables within the same classroom; implementation of ability grouping that maximizes its difficulty and minimizes its benefits. Ability grouping within classrooms also maximizes the negative stigma effects that are a primary objection to ability grouping and tracking. Ability grouping, *by subject*, in separate classrooms or in specialized schools of choice is the right way to do the right thing; matching student abilities and interests to school mission and teacher strengths. Find additional readings and links to evidence, [here](#). Originally posted [here](#), June 24, 2014.

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