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Letter: Special Act teachers deserve salary equality

While teachers in other states are striking to protest their low and stagnant wages, New York has been lauded for offering the highest average salaries for teachers in the nation. New York is credited with having the highest average teacher salaries in the nation, and we agree that the dedicated professionals entrusted with teaching our children deserve to be fairly compensated. Unfortunately, not all New York state teachers are treated equally. In fact, the teachers who work with the most challenging students, those in state-recognized Special Act and 853 schools, are some of the lowest-paid educators in the state. That needs to change.

Teachers working in the local Special Act and 853 schools including Northern Rivers Family Services, LaSalle, St. Catherine's Center, Vanderheyden, Berkshire and St. Anne's are required to have the exact same credentials as those in public schools yet they work longer days, have a longer school year and serve a population with arguably much higher needs.

It is true; teachers who stay in our certified schools tend to see teaching as a calling, not just a job. They are often from the communities in which they teach. They understand education is the best path for children to break out of the economic insecurity in which they are raised and they want to make an impact on the next generation.

Unfortunately, we must now rally for something that should be a given: equal pay for equally credentialed professionals.

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