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### Tracking in Education in Secondary Schools

Tracking students has always been a big topic in education. Tracking means dividing students to different groups by academic ability. Today, in the United States, normally, middle schools and high schools are not allowed to track students. However, in China, tracking is very common in education. Especially in secondary schools, there are different classes, different assignments, and different teachers. I don't know whether or how many students have complained about this education of system in China, but over thirty years, nothing have changed. Most Chinese parents think tracking in education can improve students' academic grades, but most Americans think tracking students is unfair.

In Chinese high schools, they always give you a test before school starts. This test will decide which class you should attend. Classes are leveled according to students' abilities. Therefore, the top forty high score students will be in one class. They call it Quick Class, which means the students can learn more quickly than students in other classes. This class has the best teachers. Also, they do extra school work. Leftover students are in other classes. They call it Slow Class. Obviously, this is tracking students. This leveling is being banned in the high schools of the United States. Schools are not supposed to give their students tests to track them in different levels. Americans think that public education has to treat students the same. All citizens pay taxes, so their children should have equal rights to receive the same education and the same quality of teachers. In addition, banning the tracking of students is a sign of educational equality.

If we look back at history, we can find out that the United States has tracked students too. According to the documentary film called *The Story of American Public Education* by Stone Lantern Films, during the early 1900s, an intelligence test designed by Stanford University, psychologist Lewis Terman was used widely in American schools (“Episode 2”). Almost all schools gave children an IQ test every year to find out what level they should learn at. The high-IQ students would receive the better education. They would have opportunities to learn some esoteric knowledge; they would have better quality teachers. The low-IQ students would just learn something easy, in addition to skills they would use for jobs. It seemed like a great way for schools to educate their students. However, people started to realize it was unfair to some students; they lost opportunities to get the higher level education. IQ tests are not always one hundred percent accurate. Later on, the schools are no longer supposed to give their students IQ tests. In China today, although there are no IQ tests either in secondary schools, there are different classes with different teachers. Students with better grades can have better teachers. Those teachers pay more attention to better students. Sometimes they give those students some extra work to help them get better grades on exams, but for those students with poor grades, teachers are care less. They do not care about what grade their students have, or whether their students do homework or not. It seems like teachers give up on some students who are not smart enough, and move their attention to other students who have chances to get into good colleges. Therefore, some students give up on themselves, because no one cares about them. I would say that tracking students is definitely unfair.

Every time after big exams, Chinese secondary schools also rank all of the students and announce their grades on one chart. Sometimes, it makes some students with poor grades ashamed. Most Chinese parents think that it is reasonable to rank all of the students and let

everybody know the ranks. They think it is another way to encourage students to get better grades. In my opinion, it could push students to work harder, but it also gives students too much pressure. It is impossible to let everyone be the first. There is always a last one, even if some students worked really hard. So much pressure could kill a teenager who is not mature enough to handle failure. I read a lot of news about students' suicide because of pressure. In the United States, the grades are private. No one can announce the grades out loud. It avoids tracking in education. Also, it can protect students' confidential information.

In conclusion, I think there is no short cut to education. We cannot pick just one group of students, educate them to become successful people, and give up on others. Education should be fair to every single child in the nation. I would say that tracking system of China kills millions of children's talents. If they mirror the American education system, I am sure the situation would be better. Tracking students is never okay. In my opinion, Chinese education should stop put children into cruel competition, and tracking them to become different levels people. They should work hard to find out a way to make education system more equally. Just like American education system, a lot of students, teachers and parents fought for equal rights though the past half century. For China, It is about time for changing, do not be afraid.

Works Cited

“Episode 2 — As American As Public School (1900 - 1950).” *SCHOOL: The Story of American Public Education*. PBS, 2001. Video.