Class Expectations and Television

The main goal of television is to entertain; to most people, this is beyond question. But is this really the goal? Isn’t the goal of television to sell, sell and sell? Television executives and companies make their money from advertising. Programs are only as valuable as the audiences they attract because those audiences are the real target—of advertising for Buick Centuries, State Farm Insurance, and Wheaties. Fifteen and thirty second ads are not the only way that television encourages us to buy, however. Research has shown that families who are presented as middle class on television actually live much above middle class American standards according to their homes, clothing, and surroundings on television. Could the Simpsons really live as well as they do—Krusty Kamp, saxophone lessons, vacations, and all—on Homer’s income from the nuclear plant? One of the possible effects of these portrayals is that average, middle-class Americans feel that they are not providing for their families at a middle-class level because their understanding of “middle-class” has become inflated. This leads to an unhealthy competitiveness and a drive to reach perhaps unrealistic goals.
Educating Educators

While it is most important that elementary teachers be versed in a wide array of subjects, middle and high school teachers should be required to take more courses in their specialized subject and fewer in the area of education. To receive a teaching degree in English at some schools, a student may take as few as thirteen courses in English. This raises the question: should teachers be experts on education or on the subject that they teach? While both areas are extremely important, a B. S. is only a four year program and hard choices have to be made. More knowledge about their subjects will create teachers with more enthusiasm for their area, more knowledge to share with their students, and a more in-depth approach to, and understanding of their subjects.
Restrictive Licensure:
Why Can’t College Professors Teach High School?

In the past few years, many states have had difficulty finding qualified high school teachers and in some cases, such as California, have temporarily hired instructors who are, strictly speaking, unqualified; in the case of California, anyone with a bachelor’s degree could teach in the last 1990s. Some say, however, that rigid rules about licensure prevent qualified and valuable faculty from teaching in the secondary education system. This includes individuals from the private sector who want to share their experience and education with high school students and college professors who are uninterested in the fight for often dwindling grant opportunities and in the increasing focus on research and publishing. These talented professionals are generally unable to move to high school teaching because they do not have teaching licenses and returning to college to qualify for licensure in order to move into a less lucrative career discourages most. This system prevents high schools from benefiting from the valuable experience and knowledge that these professionals have and are willing to share. States need to assess their needs and the qualifications of this pool of potential faculty members and create a system that makes it easier for those with experience and education to obtain teaching licensure.