Too much specialization

There are two major trends in public schools during the last 50 years.

First, rising costs: School district spending has increased at more than twice the rate of inflation.

Second, there’s been a huge increase in specialization.

It used to be teachers were certified in grades K-6 (for all major subjects) and 7-12 in a specialty like English or math.

Special education teachers had separate certifications (which now are broken down into sub-specialties).

Certifications were added for middle school (originally, grades 6-9, but now for grades 4-8).

Then K-6 certifications were dropped in favor of pre-K-3 (now pre-K-4 certifications).

While English and mathematics teachers still only need one certification for grades 7-12, science has been subdivided into specialties (biology, chemistry, earth and space, physics, and general science).

Then there are a host of other certifications outside the major subjects — not just art and music, but reading, computer science, communications, and a host of others.

Commentary by Tom Hylton

Payne suggests schools should be organized to allow teachers to stay with the same students for two or more years, so they have time to get to know both their students and their parents very well.

The key to achievement for students from poverty is in creating relationships," she says.

"The key to achievement for students from poverty is in creating relationships," she says.

This is also much more rewarding and less stressful for teachers.

Tom Hylton is a member of the Pottstown School Board. However, the views expressed are his alone and not the board’s.