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## THERE ARE BETTER WAYS TO HELP POOR STUDENTS

1 **L**ord Mandelson, first secretary of state, is concerned about social mobility in Britain. He wants to make it easier for pupils from poorer backgrounds and badly performing state schools to get into the best universities.

2 He believes the universities should lower their offers for such pupils and has asked officials in his newly expanded business, innovation and skills department to examine schemes run by Leeds University and the King's College and St George's medical schools in London. All have increased the proportion of pupils they take from local comprehensives.

3 At first sight there is merit in Lord Mandelson's initiative. We have educational apartheid in Britain and talented but poor young people are falling by the wayside. There are many reasons for this, most notably the fact that too many comprehensive schools remain "bog standard" despite having tens of billions of pounds poured into them in recent years. 19, the top independent schools remain among the best in the world, creating a two-tier system that favours the better-off minority.

4 It is not just the teaching that holds back bright but poor pupils. Many parents seem to lack ambition and are unwilling to make the sacrifices needed for their children to secure good grades. That applies to many schools as well, which discourage even their star pupils from applying to the best universities and seeking careers in the professions. Tuition fees mean pupils from poorer backgrounds think hard before embarking on higher education.

5 To use the old cliché of levelling the playing fields (when state schools used to have them, that is), Lord Mandelson has come up with a formula to favour the disadvantaged. Instead of saying state schools should have better teaching and encourage their best pupils, or that parents should do more, he has thrown up his hands and said it is just too complicated. Much better to massage the grades and favour underperforming pupils. The trouble with this, of course, is that it is manifestly unjust because it penalises pupils in the private sector who worked hard to get good grades and also devalues the exam system.

6 Here are some less damaging suggestions to help children from poor backgrounds. First, redouble efforts to talent-spot brighter children, fast-stream them in schools and get them to weekend and summer schools where they can improve their grades and mix with other ambitious pupils. Second, offer financial incentives to universities to take children from poor backgrounds with good grades. Third, encourage more interviews and aptitude tests for university entrance so colleges can assess poor but talented pupils, rather than using a tick-box approach to grades. Fourth, keep up the pressure on independent schools and good state schools to help to run

failing comprehensives and share teaching facilities.

7 This is a more laborious approach than Lord Mandelson's simple grade fixing. But it has the merit of being fairer and not penalising children from modest backgrounds whose parents have made sacrifices to use private education. It also avoids the danger of damaging our universities, which are already under huge financial pressure. In short, nobody 22 but everybody has an interest in ensuring the most gifted get the best education. Tough choices, first secretary of state, are often the best.

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## Tekst 5 There are better ways to help poor students

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- 1p 18 Which of the following is in accordance with paragraphs 1 and 2?  
Lord Mandelson wants universities to
- A adjust standard admission requirements for poorer pupils.
  - B facilitate higher education for pupils who have not been taught proper academic skills.
  - C offer better education programmes to pupils from schools with low performance levels.
  - D submit poorer pupils to additional university entrance examinations.
- 1p 19 Which of the following fits the gap in paragraph 3?
- A As a result
  - B Meanwhile
  - C Paradoxically
  - D Similarly
- “There are many reasons for this, most notably the fact that ... in recent years.” (alinea 3)
- 3p 20 Welke drie andere redenen worden in alinea 4 genoemd?
- 1p 21 Which of the following is proposed in paragraph 6 with regard to “children from poor backgrounds”?
- A Their admittance to university should depend on a variety of assessment tools.
  - B They should be enabled to change to independent or good state schools.
  - C Universities should get funding to offer places to poor students even with below average performance.
- 1p 22 Which of the following fits the gap in paragraph 7?
- A advocates making university admission for poorer pupils more complex
  - B seeks to increase the financial strain on poorer pupils’ parents
  - C wants a lowering of university standards

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### Bronvermelding

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