

Education is a life long skill necessary for a life of success. It is the teachers that go above and beyond “book smart” that are the most beneficial teachers to the youth of our society. Teachers should be selected based on their performance in a real life teaching environment. In the article *Most Likely to Succeed* written in The New Yorker, Malcolm Gladwell emphasizes the importance of selecting teachers beyond their level of mere intelligence. I support Malcolm Gladwell’s proposal on how to select and retain teachers in the United States. According to Gladwell’s proposal, teachers should be selected and retained through their success in an actual classroom setting, their level of “withitness”, and their performance in an apprenticeship program.

Teaching is a field that requires practice in a real-life setting, not in a made-up “play-school” kind of way. Anyone could be a candidate for a teaching position prior to evaluation in a classroom. It is the teachers who stand out amongst those judged after being placed in a classroom that will prosper in the teaching field. In *Most Likely to Succeed*, Gladwell shows the predicted success of college football player Chase Daniel in the professional football field. As Daniel reaches the NFL, the game he once succeeded in is suddenly changed. In college football Daniel was a superstar. He led his team to victory, “but he was almost always throwing those quick diagonal passes. In the NFL, he would have to do much more than that- he would have to throw long, vertical passes over the top of defense.” The same is true for wannabe teachers. “Test scores, graduate degrees, and certifications turn out to be about as useful in predicting success as having a quarterback throw footballs into a bunch of garbage cans.” Although accuracy can be determined based on these qualifications, performance cannot. The selection of teachers should be done based upon how an individual performs in a room full of children, not on how he or she performs on standardized tests.

Success in a classroom comes when “teachers have a gift for noticing”. It is not simply addressing a problem that makes a teacher note-worthy, it is the teacher’s ability to stop a problem before it starts that makes him or her reach the top of the teaching charts. In *Most Likely to Succeed*, Gladwell comments on the video analysis of an educational researcher, Jacob Kounin. Kounin analyzes how a teacher stops a problem that occurs in a classroom setting. Instead of congratulating the teacher for finally stopping the problem, Kounin frowns upon her for lacking “withitness” and control over what is going on in the situation. It is evident that “withitness” is highly important in the field of teaching, but there is no way to determine if a teacher possesses this quality unless the teacher is in a room full of children trying to take order. This is why it is necessary for a teacher to actually teach before being selected and retained for years to come.

Malcom Gladwell’s final proposal on selecting and retaining teachers in the United States is to instill an apprenticeship program similar to that used in the financial-advice field that “allows candidates to be rigorously evaluated.” In doing this, anyone interested in becoming a teacher could start out at the beginning and attain basic teaching skills in an appropriate teaching atmosphere. After partaking in the apprenticeship program teachers would either achieve their goals and become great teachers, or be overshadowed by other candidates and end their aspired career paths. This way the good teachers can be separated from the bad after undergoing a process that involves not only test scores and interviews, but also performance in a teaching environment. Predicting whether or not a teacher will carry out his or her job successfully before being put in

charge of a classroom “is [nothing] more than a prejudice.” An apprenticeship program would tackle this problem by evaluating a teacher after his or her participation in a real-life teaching situation.

As Malcom Gladwell addresses in his article, what can we “say about a society that devotes more care and patience to the selection of those who handle its money than of those who handle its children?” The children of today are the leaders of tomorrow, so if we do not put great significance on the way in which teachers are chosen, children will be deprived of an effective education and won’t be able to handle society’s money. Malcolm Gladwell’s proposal on how to select and retain teachers in the United States is one of merit and strategy. His plan to begin a teaching apprenticeship system will ensure that only the best of the best, those who can stand up to the “six-five linemen”, will be chosen for the job.