

Do the most successful students always make the best teachers?

There are those who think that the tough race to become a teacher in Finland is the key to good teaching and thereby to improving student achievement. Because only 10% of applicants pass the rigorous admission system, the story goes, the secret is to recruit new teachers from the top decile of available candidates. This has led many [governments](#) and [organisations](#) to find new ways to get the best and the brightest young talents into the teaching profession. Various fast-track teacher preparation initiatives that lure smart young university graduates to teach for a few years have mushroomed. Smarter people make better teachers ... or do they?

If Finnish teacher educators thought that teacher quality correlates with academic ability, Finnish primary school teacher education programmes would admit students with superior school performance. Indeed, the University of Helsinki could easily pick the best and the brightest of the huge pool of applicants each year, and have all of their new trainee teachers with admirable grades.

But they don't do this because they know that teaching potential is hidden more evenly across the range of different people. Young athletes, musicians and youth leaders, for example, often have the emerging characteristics of great teachers without having the best academic record. What Finland shows is that rather than get "best and the brightest" into teaching, it is better to design initial teacher education in a way that will get the best from young people who have natural passion to teach for life.

Read full original article: Q: What makes Finnish teachers so special? A: It's not the brains