

Professional Resources

Rob Baxter

David and Goliath: Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of Battling Giants

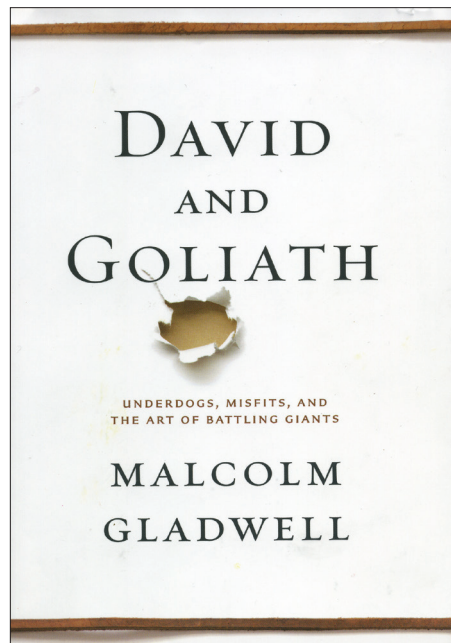
Malcolm Gladwell, 2013
ISBN 978-0-316-20436-1

Not to be missed by all educators at the primary and secondary levels, parents, students, and anyone else who needs “re-educating.”

Born in England, educated in Elmira, Ontario, Malcolm Gladwell turns our notions about education, success, advantages and disadvantages upside down in this brilliant book, proving once again that perception does not always reflect reality. Disadvantage can apparently be turned to great advantage.

In illustrating his point of view, Gladwell challenges our preconceived ideas. Do schools in wealthy areas provide students with “life lessons” that can be learned in poorer areas? Does academic achievement really improve when class sizes are smaller? According to Gladwell, no, and he supports his conclusions with solid research drawn from a variety of countries including Canada, as well as examples and graphs with “inverted-U” curves.

To the uninitiated into this kind of data, including this column’s author, Gladwell explains, “There’s the left side [of the graph], where doing more or having more makes things better. There’s the flat middle, where doing more doesn’t make much of a difference. And there’s the right side, where doing more or having more makes things worse.” However, Gladwell clarifies that, “For special-needs students, the inverted-U



curve is shifted far to the right.” More students can mean more variety, leading to better classroom dynamics and discussions, whereas in smaller classes, discussions can suffer from passivity and a lack of difference among students’ opinions. Gladwell then raises a good question: “It is a strange thing, isn’t it, to have an educational philosophy that thinks of the other students in the classroom with your child as competitors for the attention of the teacher and not allies in the adventure of learning?”

There is so much to this book. It really is a must-read for everyone concerned about learning and education.

Currently a staff writer at *The New Yorker*, former *Washington Post* reporter, author of five books with four on *The New York*

Times bestseller list, inducted to the Order of Canada in 2011, Malcolm Gladwell graduated from the University of Toronto’s Trinity College in 1984 with a degree in history.

What Every Parent Should Know About School

Michael Reist, 2013
ISBN 978-1-4597-1904-0 (pbk.); 978-1-4597-1906-4 (epub)

In addition to parents, these ideas are essential for all primary and secondary educators, including superintendents, trustees, those seeking a principalship or in the process of acquiring such qualifications.

Drawing on his 30+ years of various positions in the education system, Michael Reist presents compelling evidence that we need to change the way we operate and think about teaching, as well as some solutions to the system’s problems. As he states from the outset, “*This book is dedicated to every child who hates going to school. (We’re working on it.)*”

He also recommends to the more scattered among us, “Open the book wherever you like, and start reading. (...) we also learn by random chance and thinking by association, spiralling back to the same ideas again and again. Randomness and repetition are keys to learning.”

The book’s 14 chapters deal with a wide variety of topics including the *Physical, Emotional and Social School Environments*, *Mental Health in Our Schools*, *The Truth About Bullying*, and *Brave New World*:

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