



Administrators Seek Highly Qualified Teachers- Children Look at Qualities of the Teachers!

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The present debate over revising the No Child Left Behind Act has left many administrators, parents and taxpayers asking the same question: What components make-up a highly qualified teacher? While adults continue to debate the question, the Public Education Network proposed the question to those who are affected the most by the NCLB...children.

When children were asked to describe their best teachers, here's what they had to say: Good teachers empower students-they're free to be creative and rigorous as opposed to drilling us to pass a test that has no bearing on ability; Good teachers go beyond a basic textbook and are able to convey how concepts apply in life-they can explain why I'm required to learn this information; Good teachers care about us-a lot of students who fail feel their teachers don't care; Good teachers use various learning strategies and take time to be sure we understand new material-it's not a matter of what degrees teachers have, but what connection they have to us; Good teachers understand who we are and where we come from; Good teachers don't have phobias about the school neighborhood or kids from different racial and ethnic groups; Good teachers always encourage us-they're more interested in teaching than in threatening us with rules. (2006)

The response from children regarding qualities they would want in a teacher is very similar to the categories Allington & Cunningham identified for teachers: survival, competent, flexible, expertise, contributor and leader. Most teachers fall into the competent or flexible category. A competent teacher completes the assignments usually using the current instructional model (basal) found in the school and habitually uses certain modalities to teach a topic year after year. A flexible teacher alternates her instructional modalities and uses assessments to achieve an intended purpose. However, a collaborative school will have a majority of expert teachers. An expert teacher is achieved when a school values professional conversations, professional development and collegiality & integration are top priority. The development of expert teachers allows a professional team of educators to contribute ideas to each other without a fear of embarrassment, dictatorship, or animosity. Eventually, a contributing educator will become a leader to other peers in the school; with the main focus on developing professional conversations to enhance student learning in a positive learning environment.

As parents, the most important job is providing your child with the knowledge and skills necessary to live a productive and fulfilling life. Your child's teacher should share these same goals and communicate them through class lessons, parent newsletters and conferences. It is vitally important to have an open communication with your child's teacher and administrator. Questions/concerns about teaching styles, grade level subject requirements and assessments should be answered with a tone of respect and thoughtfulness towards your child's school experience.

Administrators seek highly qualified teachers to instruct the mandated curriculum and pass standardized tests. Children seek teachers who instruct for meaning, connect to their students, and provide empowerment to graduate children who will seek their life goals with confidence, determination and perseverance. Who do you want to hire your child's next teacher?

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