



## Washington State Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

“The Practitioner’s Best Friend”  
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### ‘Critical Questions’ Series June 2008

#### What are We Looking for in Today’s Educator?

“It is only with the heart that one can see rightly;  
what is essential is invisible to the eye.”  
~*The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

In answering the question titling this article, the temptation might be, especially in our data and standards driven culture, to list attributes and qualities of a good educator and create a rubric. However, much of what an educator must possess in order to be effective cannot be easily measured by traditional means. The very act of measuring personal qualities necessarily reduces the process to examining *what* a person can do, not necessarily *who* that person is and will become. Past accomplishments and attractively presented artifacts from past endeavors may reveal evidence of one’s past, but when hiring new educators to work with students, the focus ought to rather be on their present values and their potential for growth.

If, as *The Little Prince* states, “what is essential is invisible to the eye,” then hiring educators based on the invisible—their values—requires a shift away from the traditional method of examining only what can be seen and heard such as transcripts, job history, and accomplishments. Values-based recruitment and interviewing has, at its foundation, a fundamental belief that teachers must walk through the door in possession of values and characteristics that will excite students and colleagues. These values include:

- Passion
- Belief that Everyone is a Learner
- Excitement
- Creativity and Innovation
- Advocacy for Students
- Energy
- Compassion
- Vision

A teacher with these core values and characteristics will cause students to learn and achieve. These descriptors are more difficult to measure than test scores, professional accomplishments, grade point averages, and interview scores. Rather, values-based recruiting and interviewing depends on rich and engaging discussions in which candidates open up their feelings and communicate from the heart as well as the mind. This is not to say that experience, transcripts, and résumés do not play an important role, but today's educator must be able to articulate how their values are the foundation for everything they have accomplished as well as the catalyst for all they aspire to achieve.

In addition to a strong awareness of core values, today's educator must have interpersonal skills that work in tandem with their value set. The ability and desire to build relationships and foster connections with students, families, colleagues, and community is an essential part of being an educator in our increasingly global society. It is essential that educators possess the interpersonal skills necessary to facilitate effective learning at the individual, classroom, school, district, and community levels. Today's educator must perceive their sphere of influence as reaching beyond the classroom door and beyond the school walls, and they must relentlessly seek avenues to pursue their passions and advocate for students.

If we are to truly strengthen and improve learning experiences for our students, we first must hire educators whose values are clear, strong, and aligned with their interpersonal skill set. The only caveat is that the school or district hiring new educators must also be acutely aware of its own values, and those must be authentically reflected in daily practices. When an organization and its employees share common values, a culture is born—in education, a culture of learning.

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