Teacher’s Forum:
Survey Highlights

The following questions in the 2014 Teacher’s Forum Survey were posed to a group of 35 educators who represent many years of experience in the roles of teacher, principal, and superintendent. It is the hope that their candid thoughts will support your own pursuit as a teacher and help you to widen your perspective of what it means to make an impact and be a dynamic educator.

1. What are the three most important characteristics that you look for in a teacher candidate?
   - Personable, team-member, student-centered, intelligent, confidence, and sense of humor
   - Competency in teaching, outstanding people skills, enthusiasm
   - Passion for kids, instinctive drive to continuously improve, willingness to work with a team.
   - Personality, composure, improvement-based mindset
   - Sound knowledge of instructional planning, relentless focus on growth, and personable, with a sound knowledge on best practice in instruction and assessment
   - Professional Appearance/Attitude, Outgoing Personality, Honesty
   - Classroom management, competent with curriculum, high positive expectations for students
   - Passion for learning and teaching, commitment, and active member of school community
   - Organized, creative and flexible, passion, flexibility, compassion
   - Knowledge of the developmental needs of students, subject area knowledge, professionalism
   - Resourcefulness, sense of humor, ambition to keep learning
   - Flexibility, ability to collaborate, and deeply rooted belief that all scholars can learn
   - Ability to develop relationships with students and colleagues, knowledge of content area and instructional practices, evidence of being a reflective practitioner
   - Student centered philosophy, passion, excellent communication skills
   - Curiosity, adaptability, willingness to connect with students of all levels.
   - The right mindset (the belief that all students can learn regardless of their background and that all students should be held to high expectations). Data driven (someone who knows how to use data to drive instruction), and flexibility (be open to make adjustments for best interest of students)
   - Someone who has proven results helping kids grow academically, behaviorally and/or socially-emotionally, someone who can speak fluidly about how their instruction helped kids grow, someone who is reflective and learns from their mistakes
   - A team player, they are child centered versus teacher centered, and willing to continue to grow
   - First, an outstanding teacher must be able to critique his/her instruction, curriculum, and students as learners. Also, have a desire to seek authentic relationships with students in order to know the students as learners and help assess their learning needs.
   - Grit - ability to work through challenges and obstacles, leadership - Ability to lead a group of students from point A to point B, critical thinking - ability to use data and prioritize actions
   - Continuing to grow as a professional, a student first mentality, good communication skills.
   - Positive and enthusiastic, well-spoken and professional, knowledgeable about content area, grade level expectations, current trends/curriculum and technology

2. How Do You Define Accountability and What Should Accountability Mean to New Teachers in Order to Support Student Growth and Success?
   - The process of ensuring that students are learning the information they are supposed to learn over the course of the year. New teachers should expect to be versed in both formative and summative assessment practices that will give them information about each individual student.
A teacher's number one job is to educate the child regardless of background and/or baggage they may bring to the table. It is up to the teacher to meet that challenge and provide/connect the child to the resources they may need to be successful.

Seeing yourself and saying, honestly, that you've done all you can do. You are the only person you have to answer to in the end.

Accountability means being able to have students meet or exceed expected growth goals and targets as set by the student, teacher, team and school.

Accountability is being responsible for your actions and taking ownership of successes as well as failures. Accountability should mean adaptability for new teachers. Teaching in the real world is completely different than learning pedagogy in a controlled university environment. Flexibility will take new teachers far when fostering support for student growth and success because the learning environment is so diverse with regard to student ability. Do whatever it takes to support students and do not take for granted the students' lives outside of the learning environment.

New teachers are accountable or every students' academic and social emotional growth and success. As an administrator, I am held accountable to make sure that the new teachers have the resources, materials, professional development and support to ensure they can be successful.

Accountability is about the entire learning community of a school being held to a high standard. Every faculty member is a part of the success of a school and a school community.

Accountability is knowing your learners and how they are progressing in your class.

Teachers who are accountable are credible and able to explain and support choices they make.

Accountability is using and understanding data to guide your instruction; following through with conversations - both with students and parents; continuing own professional growth to enhance classroom practices to better student learning.

Accountability is a sense of ownership in the development of students. It can be measured in many ways including the use of data.

New teachers need to ensure that every child demonstrates growth and that they are able to show this growth to the parent.

As the accountability landscape changes, especially for primary students and teachers, I recognize how vital my expertise in differentiation will be as I try to reach every student and bring them all to a level of mastery no matter where they were when they came to me.

Taking responsibility for your growth as a teacher and ensuring that as an educator you remain up-to-date on new ideas, research and methods of approaching your content area.

We define what teachers are accountable for at the beginning of the school year so they are very clear about how their performance will be measured. This includes student academic performance/growth, professional expectations, as well as other campus specific expectations.

First and foremost, creating meaningful relationships with your students is the only way to build intrinsic motivation to succeed and learn/grow.

When a teacher is accountable to students, it means that he/she has a clear idea of what the learning goals are a thoughtful, well-designed plan for how to achieve those goals, and a willingness to adjust instruction in order to best meet the needs of all students.

Accountability means commitment to supporting students in their social, emotional, and intellectual development and helping students feel invested and valued in the learning community.

Accountability means ensuring growth for all students but of course, that's much easier said than done! When student growth isn't happening or fast enough, it's essential for new teachers to reflect on their practice and ask themselves what they would do differently if they had the chance.

Teachers have the responsibility to see that ALL students grow. This can happen if teachers use formative as well as summative assessments. Teachers must also reflect on their own practice when analyzing student work. Teachers should be open to being a part of a professional learning community where they share ideas, feedback, and ways to make their teaching and in turn makes a student's learning stronger.
Accountability is the teacher fulfilling his/her role as the educator to encourage student growth. It's important that new teachers understand the students as learners. What are their needs? How do they learn best? How can they best identify with the material? This is best done through deliberate assessments, both formal and informal. Understanding where your students are and what their needs are can have a powerful impact on how you can help get accomplish their learning goals.

In one word "growth". A teacher meets students where they are at and grows them academically. As a leader, a teacher must set goals and build student investment to reach those goals.

Teachers are accountable to meet their students where they are at and to support their growth. Accountability is simply communication about goals. For new teachers, it should mean that you work collaboratively with staff and administration and accurately report student strengths and areas of concern and continually reassess and set new goals as needed.

3. Given the volume of teacher candidates, how can new teachers stand out to principals?

- I am usually looking for a teacher to fill a specific position, so I need someone who has the credentials (certificate endorsements) who match the position.
- Teachers need to be assertive demonstrating solid people skills. Today's teacher needs to be collaborative supporting the goals of the institution as well as her/his personal goals.
- Do your best to make a personal contact with them either through student teaching, subbing, being introduced by another faculty member, etc.
- Get involved with the schools early and often. Show you want to be there, don't just talk about it.
- Be poised, but enthusiastic. Have a consistent narrative in which many responses lead back to a focus on growth. Be up on current, educators/research (Hattie, Wiggins, Stiggins etc.) show that knowledge. Have evidence of hitting growth targets and knowledge/examples of goal-setting by students, self-monitoring, self-assessing; be collaborative
- Do not try to impress administrators with the latest "buzz words". It is important to be familiar with the latest trends in education but more important to be yourself.
- Have a diverse array of skills that allow YOU to bring something to the school. How can YOU make the school better? Technology is huge.
- By identifying their strengths, clearly articulating their skill set, and focusing on student growth.
- Teacher candidates can stand out by including links or QR codes to short examples of their teaching or links to electronic portfolios.
- Use your unique skills and interests to separate yourself from the crowd.
- Have flawless application materials, present yourself professionally.
- What personnel interests can the candidate bring into the classroom to grow student's experiences/opportunities; clear articulation of their own expectations of student learning; have good questions prepared about the school community they are interviewing for.
- Often, it is the unique fit of the candidate to the needs of the school as a learning organization.
- We are always looking for candidates that have a strong history of achievement (even if it is work not related to education). The better candidates can articulate these accomplishments (both on a resume and in an interview) the more they will stand out to principals.
- Volunteer time at the schools you are interested in most. Form relationships with students, teachers & school staff. Everyone at schools talk and word will get around to the principal. After doing this, reach out to the principal and see if he or she can observe you teaching.
- Be yourself. Find what your strengths and talents are, and demonstrate how you can use them to help students cultivate their own talents.
- Providing formative data showing student growth and sharing what worked and what didn't.
- It is important to show that you are reflective and can identify strengths and areas of improvement to help students learn. Explain how you might differentiate a lesson to meet their students' needs.
- Maximize your strengths. Consider what your skills are and focus on how they can contribute to a potential school or district. Convince them that they can't be as successful without you.
• Be very specific in your answers and not provide vague responses. For example, describe your class management system in detail (paint a picture).
• Talk about your ability to use technology in the classroom. This is huge right now and is something anyone with 10 years or more experience is not good at doing.
• If you want to be a 4th grade teacher, what will set you apart from all of the other 4th grade teacher candidates? You can stand out by having “that something extra” that will help you work with all students in the classroom. It could be a specialty in ELL, Special Education, or Reading Instruction. It could be your passion about literature and public speaking. It could be that you have expertise in integrating the arts into the curriculum. What makes you unique?
• Make sure resume is professional, accurate, and proofread! Send an email to introduce and make a connection to follow up on a sent resume. Research the school where you are applying/interviewing and come prepared to not only answer questions, but ask some too!

4. Please share three key areas new teachers should prioritize in order to be successful in teaching.
• Planning and Preparation, classroom management, and instructional delivery
• Counseling candidate – active listening skills, ability to empathize, able to organize chaos
• Good lesson plans, delivery of Instruction, solid classroom management skills, high expectations for themselves and their students
• Technology, assessment, and special education/RtI.
• How to promote positive social emotional development in your classroom and develop a space for positive community learning. Know where you would like to teach and go to targeted professional development for that specific group. I also think learning how to differentiate on a daily basis & provide all students with what they need is the most difficult skill to master and the only way to properly practice is by getting involved in schools & picking teacher’s brains
• Collaboration– seek advice from your colleagues and be open to constructive criticism. Building relationships with students. When the atmosphere in your classroom is positive and supportive, students will be more able to grow and stretch intellectually
• Behavior management, standards based grading strategies, and knowledge of practical and effective formative and summative assessment strategies with an understanding of how the data can be used to impact instruction
• Create your units with the end in mind by determining what you want your students to know and be able to do in terms of your learning targets. Design assessments that will measure student mastery formatively and summatively. Create learning opportunities along the way that will prepare and allow students to practice meeting targets and differentiate instruction for those needing help
• Understand Literacy/Reading Strategies, preparation: it is always better to be over prepared as opposed to underprepared, and classroom management
• Planning, finding a mentor, and build relationships with students!
• Rapport with stakeholders, classroom management , Common Core, professional development
• Pedagogical content knowledge, relationship building, continuing education
• Be willing to learn from mistakes, because they will be made. Stay focused on the school and district goals in planning, instructional delivery, and assessment of students. Build a network of support to get feedback, discover different approaches or methods to consider in your practice, and to relieve yourself of the stress that naturally comes with this responsibility.
• Know the curriculum inside and out, know your students inside and out, and know how to teach your students ways to understand themselves as learners.
• Use data! Know what your students have and have not mastered. Adjust your plans based on the data you collect. Build and establish relationships with your students. Set goals not only for your students (how much growth will my students achieve this year?), but also for yourself (what are new teaching strategies you want to hold yourself accountable?).
• Providing clear expectations for students, behavioral, academic or otherwise. This includes during the first 6 weeks of school up through the end of the school year. Focus on the end goal. What you
want kids to be able to do at the end of the lesson or unit? Little by little, build independence in children. Children thrive in a student-centered classroom where they can learn from each other, solve problems together and build a strong community of learners.

- Build positive relationships from the beginning. Reach out to parents early to share positive feedback about their child. Find a mentor to answer questions or to provide feedback.
- First, learn who your students are as learners. Everything you do begins and ends with their learning needs. Next, gather as many resources and ideas as possible, whether it's curriculum, digital tools or people in your building. Finally, set learning goals for you and your students. You know where they need to be, but it's important to let their needs determine how they'll get there.
- Classroom goal setting. Planning strong lessons & units. Understanding the common core.
- Communication, connectedness, growth mindset.
- Communication with students, parents, colleagues and administration. Laugh and share the joys of the classroom. It's humbling to see some kids who were challenging in the classroom end up being great successes as parents, citizens, and in the workplace. But you'll still take credit for some of their successes because they were "your student"!
- Classroom management, routines, procedures, collaboration with colleagues and teams, and commitment to differentiation and planning student-centered lessons.

5. What is one piece of advice that you can share with new teachers?
- Get as much experience teaching diverse groups of students and subject areas. Be patient with yourself as you are building up your teaching and management strategies.
- Teaching is a learning process; be humble enough to ask questions!
- Do not hesitate to ask for advice. Work closely with your mentor and your supervisors.
- The best teachers are confident, happy people who genuinely like helping students learn their subject. It is very important for us to remember that we teach children, not the material.
- Try new things and get feedback from people you trust.
- Do not treat students (especially high school students) as if they are children. Be yourself and students will recognize your sincerity and classroom disruptions will stay at a minimum.
- Do not treat students (especially high school students) as if they are children. Be yourself and students will recognize your sincerity and classroom disruptions will stay at a minimum.
- You're a product; don't forget to market yourself well.
- Make sure you make time for reflection. You will find lots of ways to improve your craft, but if you do not make time for reflection, it is difficult to make these improvements.
- Take care of yourself. Get plenty of sleep, eat well and exercise – find a good work/life balance!
- Remain 100% professional in all your relationships with parents, students, colleagues and administrators. Beware of your social media postings, and do not "friend" students or parents of students from a personal account.
- If you can think of anything which you think is more important than education, do that. The world needs impassioned teachers who want to be the best they can be. You will learn in your first years that you know much less than you thought when you graduated, but have the ability to be much better than you ever dreamed if you are able to put your heart and soul into it.
- Spend time organizing yourself. Develop routines for your class, find a filing system that works for you and create a classroom that is functional and beautiful for you and your students. Remember, no one looks stylish yelling at children so learn how to have patience. And lastly, go home. Do things unrelated to school. It will make you a better teacher and a happier human.
- Plan ahead but be ready to adapt to the unexpected. Have paper copies of assignments even if your students are in a 1:1 technology classroom. Have extra supplies. Be willing to embrace teachable moments instead of always worrying about following the daily agenda you have set.
- Seek and be open to feedback! If you feel like you are not getting enough coaching or feedback from anyone in your building, ask for it. Getting feedback from experienced teachers is very
important to your professional growth. They will be able to identify things you might not even be aware you are doing. Observe those that give you feedback if possible as well.

- If you’re not willing to invest one hundred percent of yourself to your students then teaching is not for you but if you are willing to invest yourself for those hours and beyond then it is the most rewarding career anyone could ask for.
- Take care of yourself. If you want to teach kids what it means to be their best selves, you need to make sure to take time to devote to your health, personal relationships, and intellectual growth.
- Learn from your colleagues! Open your classroom door, invite other teachers in for feedback and observe your colleagues regularly. No teacher is an island -- the experiences teachers share is integral to lifelong learning!
- Respect everyone in the school. All employees are a part of a child's education. Have fun and enjoy the students!
- I have two pieces of advice. Once you start your first teaching position, don't be afraid to ask for help. You'll need it and people will typically be happy to help you out. My second piece of advice is always stay positive. Every school has their share of negativity and gossip. Be a positive force instead of giving into the negativity.
- Develop strong relationships with students and families. Make phone calls home, hold students accountable, and remain humble in the work you do. A true partnership with families/communities can help you go deeper in your work and can ultimately change lives.
- Be reflective and honest with yourself. You will make mistakes. So do our kids every day. Learn from those mistakes. Your intentions are always good; don't beat yourself up!
- If teaching is what you were meant to do, make a positive difference every day with your students. You can do this!