The 2010 Teacher’s Forum Survey was distributed to 20 educators who represent many years of experience in the roles of teacher, principal, and superintendent. We hope their candid replies will support your 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. Please share three key areas new teachers should prioritize in order to be successful in teaching.

- Thorough preparation of every class. Teaching skills, not simply content. Respect and love for students.
- Classroom management, content knowledge, lesson planning, discipline, and assessment.
- Good long term instructional planning - based on skills, Get to know your school community (students, parents, community, stakeholders), and for any practice/action, get in the habit of asking, "Is this in the best interest of my students?"
- Relationship building (with students), development of clear expectations, willingness to learn.
- Data Driven Decision Making and use of Higher Order Thinking Skills Question and Response.
- Build authentic and positive relationships with children. Be well-organized and thoughtful when planning curriculum.
- Assume goodwill; listen and don't be defensive, whether you're interacting with colleagues or parents.
- The "sine qua non" of successful teaching is classroom control. No control no teaching. For some it comes easy. For some they work out a way to avoid control and slide by. And for some they can never achieve it.
- Knowing the instructional goals of each lesson...and knowing how you have met them, Classroom management...having a variety of strategies for getting student redirected or re focused, and understanding the importance of meaningful communication.
- Creating lesson plans that engage students, and incorporates differentiation of instruction, and cooperative learning instructional strategies.
- Get to know students, get to know the curriculum, watch good teachers teach and see how it is done.
- New teachers should make planning, professionalism and collegial dialogues, and continuing education their priorities in order to be successful.
- Classroom management and procedures, Integrating critical thinking, and problem solving into lessons authentic and valid assessment.
- Solid background in curriculum and methodology, classroom management skills and good people skills.
- Love what you do, planning is the key to success, and treat every student as if they were your own.
- New teachers should focus on mastering their curriculum and learning about the school environment.

2. What are unique qualities that you look for in a teacher candidate?

- From multiple respondents: professional, collaborative, enthusiasm/positive attitude, zest, grit, intelligence, presence, confidence, spirituality and sincerity. Passion for teaching and authentic interest in children.
- A person who is bright, communicates well, loves the mission and being with students.
- Exposure to children in other teaching opportunities such as camp counselor, aide, or nanny.
- Diverse experiences, evidence that they aren't afraid of children.
- Content knowledge, planning, instructional delivery, assessment, collaborative relationships, and reflection and professional growth.
- I look for a presence. Beyond being nervous about the interview, is the individual comfortable with him/herself as a teacher. What sets him/her apart?

3. What is one piece of advice that you can share with new teachers?

- From multiple respondents: Be professional. Don't fake it! Be honest. Know yourself. Find a mentor/support group. Work cooperatively with fellow teachers. Prioritize as much as possible.
- Respect and love your students and they will respect and love you.
- Develop a vast networking system to find a job.
- Make sure you work hard but have a balanced life, as well. Get lots of sleep and exercise.
- All schools are run differently. It is important that you spend some time during an interview asking questions of the principal to make sure that the position and school is the right fit for you.
- The first year is CRAZY!!!!
- Remember you are not teaching math or reading or science; you are teaching children. Build strong, positive, authentic relationships with children, and they will learn.
- We are a community of learners...and we learn from one another...and we never stop learning. We will make mistakes...but hopefully, we learn from them. But if all our decisions are made with the mindset of what is best for the child" we can't go too wrong.
• Incorporate a variety of instructional strategies in your classroom to ensure that you reach all students.
• KEEP UP! Develop a regular routine for daily duties, i.e., reporting discipline, grading papers, planning, photocopying, etc. Try to stay ahead of the game in planning. Don't waste prep-periods. Use every minute of the day at work, and it will pay off.
• Interview the school as hard as they interview you - don't settle for any school, but find a good match
• Make sure principals can see you love what you do

4. Given the volume of teacher candidates, how can new teachers stand out to principals?
• Be thoroughly grounded in the mission, show mission commitment in your personal life, be committed to teaching skills, not only content.
• Teachers must be able to supervise and/or coach as many extra-curricular areas as possible.
• The resume must appear professional and always addressed to the principal. Never "to whom it may concern."
• Teachers need to know the history and background in the school they would like to serve.
• Writing personalized cover letters is very important. I also like when applicants include copies of transcripts, certificates, and letters of reference in the initial e-mail.
• Make yourself stand out by having specific interests or talents that separate you from the crowd. Show a principal that you are talented in other ways.
• I look for teachers with unique talents, who are willing to wear many hats in our school community.
• The illustration of expertise in a content area, diversity of experience, and flexibility
• New teachers will stand out if they have impressive portfolios with real examples of curricular projects, assessments, student work, pictures, that demonstrate
• New teachers have to be willing to work very hard and bring fresh ideas to a school.
• Work hard in preparation of lessons- Listen to your classroom teacher and practice what she/he teaches you and thank them for helping you. Invite the Principal to observe you teach - Observe other teachers - When you have or see problems discuss with you
• The manner in which they conduct themselves, including appropriate dress, and language and the manner in which they contact me
• Candidates can stand out by having and articulating (in their resumes) a variety of teaching experiences (in addition to student teaching) such as tutoring, mentoring, volunteering, sponsoring an activity, or coaching
• Teachers who exhibit enthusiasm about their content area stand apart from those who are merely seeking employment. It is also to a candidate's benefit if he/she is willing to participate in extracurricular activities.
• New teachers can stand out to principals by citing specific examples of strategies they have used to engage students in meaningful learning experiences.

5. Can you list an interview question that helps you gain a better understanding of a teacher candidate?
• What is it about teaching that makes you think you want to spend your life doing it?
• Describe the most difficult classroom management or discipline problem you have experienced.
• Describe a professional collaboration that went well and then one that did not go well. What did you learn from the experience?
• What is the most telling is whether a candidate responds with answers tailored to my school rather than generic responses. I want to know a candidate has done their research & truly wants to work with our kids.
• Give me an example of a classroom management strategy that you would utilize in your classroom.
• List five qualities that a teacher must possess to be successful in this school.
• Give me an example of how you integrate technology into the curriculum.
• Can you tell me about a time when you thought you had thoroughly planned a lesson and realized it wasn't working? Why wasn't it working and what did you do?
• What do you know about this school?
• Tell me a little about your most challenging student last year and how did you handle it.
• A student in your class tells you that the project you have assigned the class does not interest him. He suggests an alternative project. How do you respond?
• What challenges did you have in students teaching and how did you learn from them?
• Identify the competencies that are essential for being a great teacher.
• If you could describe the perfect teaching position that best fits you, what would it be?
• What is the one thing that you would like parents and students to say about you?
• How would you define a student centered teacher? What would I see in your classroom that would convince me you are student centered?
• What does a typical day look like in your classroom?