

More about What Principals Want

Jorge Correa, Assistant Professor at the Charter School of Education and Human Sciences at Berry College in Mt. Berry, Georgia, surveyed 18 teachers pursuing advanced degrees in educational administration. He asked them to respond to the question, "As a principal, what would you expect of first-year teachers in your school?" The results were published in the Winter 2002 issue of the *New Teacher Advocate*, and included content knowledge, ongoing professional growth, teamwork, flexibility, good communication, and organizational skills.

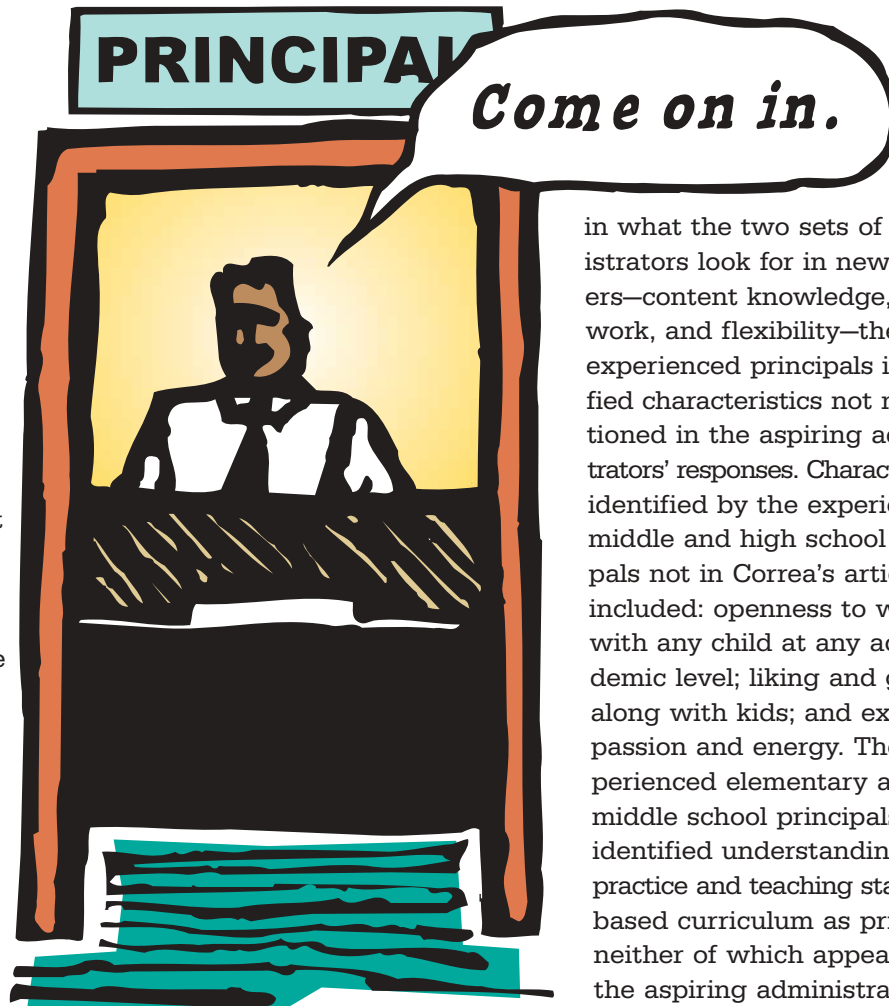
Curious how practicing administrators might respond compared to the aspiring administrators, I asked three principals of our Professional Development School sites in Anchorage, Alaska, a similar question. Contrast their responses to the question "What are three things that you look for in a new teacher?"



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with the expectations of the aspiring administrators (see sidebar this page).

Despite similarities



in what the two sets of administrators look for in new teachers—content knowledge, teamwork, and flexibility—the experienced principals identified characteristics not mentioned in the aspiring administrators' responses. Characteristics identified by the experienced middle and high school principals not in Correa's article included: openness to working with any child at any academic level; liking and getting along with kids; and exhibiting passion and energy. The experienced elementary and middle school principals identified understanding best practice and teaching standards-based curriculum as priorities, neither of which appeared on the aspiring administrators'

What three things do you look for in a new teacher?

8-Year Elementary Principal

1. Demonstrates the ability to think "big picture," for the good of the entire school
2. Understands best practice
3. Possesses good interpersonal skills

23-Year Middle School Principal

1. Shows an ability to teach standards-based curriculum
2. Exhibits openness to working with any child at any academic level
3. Demonstrates flexibility and creativity

8-Year High School Principal

1. Likes kids and gets along with them
2. Exhibits passion and energy
3. Knows subject content

final list. It is interesting that the experienced high school principal purposefully placed content knowledge last on his list—a major contrast to the aspiring administrators' priority. Though content knowledge is important to that principal, it does not rank number one. Finally, no duplication occurs in the three lists of the experienced principals.

What does this comparison mean to you? For teachers interviewing for a job, it illustrates the importance of knowing a school before applying for a position there. Principals

hire teachers who exhibit the knowledge, skills, and dispositions they value. Therefore, the school will be a reflection of these merits. Knowing what a school values and evaluating your strengths and weaknesses within this context prepares you for the interview. In addition, if you are a new teacher and you find that you just do not “fit in” that school, you may want to examine what it values in relation to what you value. If the values seem mismatched, you may wish to transfer to a school with values closer to your own. ■

Stealing? Not in My Class!

New elementary school teachers are always shocked the first time they discover a child stealing. I remember feeling betrayed and hurt. I had forgotten that most children steal or lie at one time or another. Though it is not acceptable behavior, stealing is not really that uncommon.

No matter how disappointed you feel, try to deal with the problem without letting your emotions interfere. Also, keep public knowledge of the incident to a minimum.

Many years ago, I came across the booklet, *Discipline: Classroom Control for Better Teaching*.^{*} It has given me helpful hints on dealing with the problems of stealing without personalizing the issue. I learned that it's best to be proactive from the first day of school:

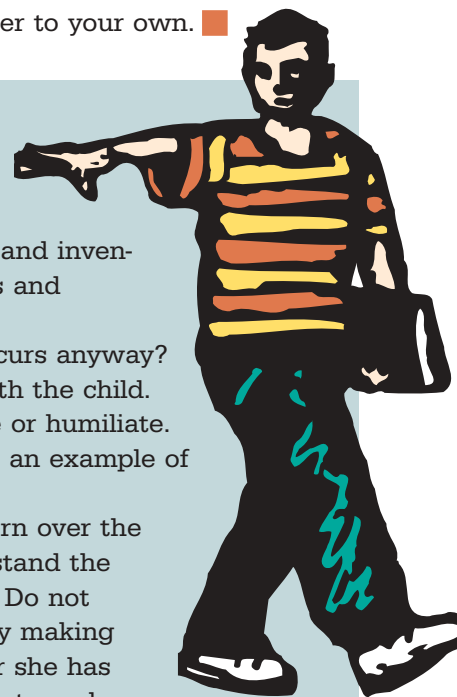
- Stress the value of trust and honesty. Emphasize that everyone in the room has a responsibility to one another. You must be able to trust them, and they must be able to trust you.
- Provide examples of proper role models by reading stories that emphasize honesty and trust.
- Remove sources of temptation. Why invite trouble? Keep your valuables out of sight and in a secure place. Discourage students from bringing large sums of money or valuables to school. If students do bring such articles, provide a safe-keep area.
- Keep careful records. Your record keeping can prevent potential theft. Record and track books and equipment issued to and

^{*}December 1988 by John and Lavona Dunworth and Emery Stoops

borrowed by students, and inventory classroom supplies and materials.

What if stealing occurs anyway?

- Talk privately with the child. Do not publicly ridicule or humiliate. Above all, do not make an example of the child.
 - Show your concern over the child's failure to understand the importance of honesty. Do not personalize the issue by making the child feel that he or she has hurt your feelings or that you have been betrayed.
 - Explore with the child the reason for stealing, and reflect on why this *decision* was a poor one. Discuss alternative choices the student could have selected.
 - Explain consequences for the inappropriate action and the reasons for them.
- Know your facts if a parent conference is needed—no parent wants to admit his or her child is a thief. Speak with your principal, school counselor, or psychologist about the incident before the conference. Approach parents with the attitude of working with the involved adults to help the child. Thoughts of retribution for the offense must be secondary. Of primary concern is helping the child extinguish the behavior and providing positive alternatives. ■



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