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Why Values-Based Recruiting?

*"Everything that can be counted does not necessarily count;
everything that counts cannot necessarily be counted."* ~Einstein

In our data-driven, standards-based educational environment, some might be surprised by the idea of values-based recruitment of educators; how can we validate its inherently immeasurable factors? But given the rather grim statistics regarding teacher retention and replacement as well as the imperative nature of our work, we as members of our state's educational infrastructure must overcome the need to replace teachers by hiring teachers who will stay in the field to grow and improve in their practices. Values-based recruitment is one means by which Vancouver Public Schools seeks to increase teacher retention and, ultimately, student achievement.

So in an effort to surface those things that, in the words of Einstein, "cannot necessarily be counted," we have turned to using specific hiring practices designed to get candidates talking about those things that matter. We want to hire teachers with that "right stuff [...] teachers who have the character, desire, attitude, personal qualities, and potential to become great teachers" (Coppola, 2004, p. 48). Fortunately for us, values-based recruitment isn't magical; it is the result of organizational change, strategic questioning strategies, and training.

We know it is possible, in the words of William Wordsworth, to "see into the life of things," to read beyond a candidate's resume, GPA, and letters of recommendation to observe one's character and values. A teacher with values congruent to those of the organization will feel a sense of belonging, find synergy in collaborating with colleagues, work diligently to inspire our students and to increase student achievement and be committed to evaluating and improving professional practice. If there is a shared commitment to organizational values, other professional priorities can be developed in time. Ironically, by securing teachers who know intuitively that "everything that counts can not necessarily be counted," those things that do count such as graduation rates, scores on national and state-wide assessments, and school rankings will increase.

But in order to screen for this new vision, we have had to retool our recruitment process. We developed new questions aligned with our values and trained principals and HR staff on listening for the values embedded in candidates' responses. By asking candidates questions about their approaches to student learning, classroom management, and assessment, as well as their commitment to educational leadership and professional development, we are able to listen actively for those attributes of great teachers: high standards and expectations for all children, a passion for working with students, a commitment to self-improvement and collaboration, and a high value placed on the worth, dignity, and capability of every person.

When an organization and its employees share common values, these values support the mutual vision that guides decision-making and passionate teaching at all levels—teaching that gives rise to increased and sustainable opportunities for each and every child.

Reference

Coppola, A. J., Scricca, D. B., & Connors, G. E. (2004). You're hired. *Principal Leadership*, 4 (8), 47-52.

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