

What Schools Look for in a Teacher

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*“Teachers inspire dreams, shape lives, and
give us hope for the future.”* Author Unknown

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Academic Preparation

Schools are looking for teachers who have a strong preparation in their teaching area, a well-rounded education, good grades, and a record of good standing. Schools are also looking for individuals who have been involved in their school and community.

Strong Preparation in Teaching Area

School systems want teachers who are well prepared in their teaching area, whether that be a grade level or a content area.

In order to be able to understand and teach a subject or a grade level, it is essential that teachers be well versed and well prepared in their teaching area. With so much information available through the Internet, teachers must be well prepared in order to effectively teach, guide, and enlighten their students. A teacher's quality of preparation will set the parameters for student learning.

Schools want highly qualified teachers, and now, through the Federal "No Child Left Behind Act," the government requires that all teachers be "highly qualified" in their area(s) of teaching responsibility. If a teacher is not highly qualified, parents must be informed in writing that this is the case. You can ensure that you will be considered "highly qualified" by completing your full program of study, by passing your state certification tests, and by meeting the certification requirements in your state.

"Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire." William Butler Yeats

Well-Rounded Education

As an educator it is important that you be an enlightened person. An enlightened person has a well-round education, is aware of the feelings of others, knowledgeable of various times and places, and familiar with a variety of human experiences.

Having a well-rounded education will make you a more desirable teaching candidate, and it will better prepare you for the teaching profession.

Good Grades

It is important for teaching candidates to have good grades. Good grades reflect a good work ethic, a determination to succeed, and a commitment to quality. Good grades also enable teachers to meet the continuation criteria in their field of study. School systems often see good grades in a teaching candidate as a yardstick of quality assurance.

Record of Good Standing

Teaching candidates need to have “good standing” in all they do. If a student is placed on any kind of probation (academic or otherwise), schools and school systems may view the candidate as a “risk.” They may then conclude that there is a greater potential for things to not work out. Staying in good standing will increase your chances of being hired.



School and Community Involvement

In addition to having a well-rounded education, it is important for teaching candidates to be involved, well-rounded individuals. Teaching candidates can show they are well-rounded citizens by participating in leadership activities, campus and community organizations, by serving their communities, and by doing volunteer work.

Through community involvement, a teaching candidate can network, form professional relationships, and learn about the role of an educator in the larger community. Experiences in the community also show prospective teachers just how important a quality education is in our society.

Your involvement in community and leadership activities will provide potential employers with a snapshot of your interests, abilities, and of your potential.



Character

Schools are looking for teaching candidates who will be good role models for their students. Strong references and a clean, positive record provide the best evidence of a candidate's character.

Strong References

It is essential that teaching candidates have strong references in order to separate them from the pack. To get strong references, one must foster good working relationships with co-workers, friends, and colleagues.

Your best references will come from your college advisor, a college professor, a supervising teacher, and/or someone who knows you well through work or through an extra-curricular activity. Put your best foot forward, do not burn bridges, and always work to impress.

Clean Background Check

Educational institutions, as well as most private companies, now conduct background checks as standard procedure prior to employment. These background checks are usually done on a national level. School systems generally do not hire candidates with a felony offense on their record. Lesser offenses are considered on a case by case basis.

“I touch the future. I teach.”

Christa McAuliffe, Teacher, Astronaut

Good Credit Rating

As a rule, schools and school systems do not currently perform credit checks on potential employees. However, private companies generally do.

As a future employee, it is important for you to know that your credit history may be checked. Because a poor credit rating will imply that you may be a risk as an employee, it is essential for you to maintain a good credit rating.

Clean Internet Profile

Although schools and school systems generally do not go online to check MySpace and Facebook websites, many private companies do check these sites before hiring an employee. Students need to be very careful what they post online. Students should also be very careful with their emails, and with all electronic communications.

