

Individual Leadership Character Submission

Nominator Information

Name: Thomas P. Smith

Nominee Information

Name: Beverly Hayes Easterling

Title: Special Educator Teacher

Organization: Kennedy Middle School

Nomination Information

Examples of how this person demonstrates INTEGRITY:

- A) Aims to not sacrifice truth for momentary peace or comfort--speaks honestly with parents about sensitive subjects---a child's behavior, their home life, their cognitive limitations
- B) Character and behavior are consistent with children, staff, parents, and community members. She responds to students fairly and consistently. Her expectations are the same across the board.
- C) Seeks true reconciliation (between races/economic lines, etc). This involves intentionally and actively stepping into conversations where she is the minority in thought or in color. Understanding the temporary tension is healthy and necessary---as long as both parties are being honest---and that the true reconciliation isn't possible without the process.

Examples of how this person demonstrates RESPECT:

- A) Beverly has been described as a quiet leader---one that doesn't mind working behind the scenes and understands the importance of being a part of a whole. She was recently selected as a trusted member of hiring committee for a new assistant principle. She is frequently called into interviews for prospective staff members because her opinion is respected and her character can be trusted during and after interviews. Also, as a collaborative teacher, she daily plans and executes lessons with a general education teacher. Although their personalities and teaching styles are drastically different, she has been described as approachable and student-focused. Her agenda can easily be put aside---as long as the child is the one benefiting. She seeks to be a humble servant---this doesn't mean a weak or shy demeanor, but one that is others-centered/focused.
- B) Although Ms. Easterling has 3 student teachers and staff members regularly coming to her for instructional and behavioral advice, she is quick to admit her weaknesses. Just last week she asked to observe another teacher to better master a concept prior to teaching her students. She has no problems asking for help. She noticed she was ill equipped to advocate and provide services for students when they returned from incarceration. She and received a grant to study restorative justice (and racial reconciliation) in Africa last summer to build a bridge between the juvenile justice department and the school system. She is committed to being a life-long learner.

C) It can be an easy thing to blame-shift when student progress isn't what you expected. Blame it on the dilapidated neighborhood, the incompetent parenting, or their cognitive limitations, but she seeks to have high expectations for students regardless of what tools they arrive to her with in their tool boxes. She takes full responsibility for their current academic and character development from the first day they enter her classroom. Excuses are not an option and she sees each child as a personal mission.

Examples of how this person demonstrates RESPONSIBILITY:

- A) Outward Bound Club, Builder's Club: Willingness to commit to student development in time consuming activities outside of the classroom. When makes commitments, can be trusted to follow through. Takes on long-term projects that don't show quick progress, but she steadily works with the end in mind.
- B) As a special education teacher there is an extensive amount of legal documents and data collection occurring regularly. These documents are detailed and individualized for each student receiving services. She maintains the largest case load in the school and consistently completes all paper work on time. Although the process is laborious, she is diligent to not only correctly complete the files, but to explain all the documents to each parent---even if that means house calls after school hours.
- C) Commits to each child. Refuses to teach the 99 and have one wonder off. Goes to court hearings, meets with parole officers, social workers, etc and helps find community resources for students and their families. Fights for each child and takes personal responsibility for their progress.

Please relate an incident demonstrating leadership character:

Ms. Easterling strives to demonstrate the highest level of commitment to her students. She believes that in order for her student's lives to truly be redeemed, the neighborhood and community must be transformed. She is living out this conviction in word and deed as an active member of the community.

In 2008 she moved into the Vine City neighborhood to take a more active role in restoring the impoverished community. Despite the multiple break-ins and the disconnect from her previous life, she remains steadfast in her mission to work towards reconciliation and restoration for a brighter future for her students. Prior to her transition to the inner city, she could sympathize with the issues in her students' lives, but now she can empathize with them and advocate for them in a stronger and more productive way. Whether it be speaking out against unjust closing of the local grocery store or being surrounded by the ripple effects that stem from generational poverty, she finds joy battling towards progress and continually falls in love with her new home.