

# A Dozen Essential Guidelines for Educators (##)

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## A Dozen Essential Guidelines for Educators

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*To create the schools our children deserve, it's probably not necessary to devise specific policies and practices for every occasion. Rather, these will follow logically from **a few core principles** that we devise together. Here's a sample list of such principles, intended to start a conversation among educators, parents, and (let's not forget) the students themselves:*

*1. Learning should be organized around problems, projects, and (students') questions – not around lists of facts or skills, or separate disciplines.*

*2. Thinking is messy; deep thinking is really messy. Therefore beware prescriptive standards and outcomes that are too specific and orderly.*

*3. The primary criterion for what we do in schools: How will this affect kids' interest in the topic (and their excitement about learning more generally)?*

*4. If students are "off task," the problem may be with the task, not with the kids.*

5. *In outstanding classrooms, teachers do more listening than talking, and students do more talking than listening. Terrific teachers often have teeth marks on their tongues.*
6. *Children learn how to make good decisions by making decisions, not by following directions.*
7. *When we aren't sure how to solve a problem relating to curriculum, pedagogy, or classroom conflict, the best response is often to ask the kids.*
8. *The more focused we are on kids' "behaviors," the more we end up missing the kids themselves – along with the needs, motives, and reasons that underlie their actions.*
9. *If students are rewarded or praised for doing something (e.g., reading, solving problems, being kind), they'll likely lose interest in whatever they had to do to get the reward.*
10. *The more that students are led to focus on how well they're doing in school, the less engaged they'll tend to be with what they're doing in school.*
11. *All learning can be assessed, but the most important kinds of learning are very difficult to measure – and the quality of that learning may diminish if we try to reduce it to numbers.*
12. *Standardized tests assess the proficiencies that matter least. Such tests serve mostly to make unimpressive forms of instruction appear successful.*

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