

# Qualities that pediatric dentist look for and consider most essential when hiring a new pediatric dentist

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## BACKGROUND

The Texas A&M University (TAMU) Pediatric Dentistry Program is designed to offer a curriculum that is balanced in both didactic and clinical experiences. Emphasis is placed on hospital dentistry, special needs patient care, sedation, and interceptive orthodontics. The primary goal of the program is to develop a biologically oriented, technically capable, and socially sensitive pediatric dentist capable of providing comprehensive care for all pediatric patients. The TAMU program regularly surveys its alumni immediately following graduation to gain insight into strengths and weaknesses of the didactic curriculum and clinical experiences. However, until now, it has not surveyed alumni specifically on competencies necessary to being a successful pediatric dentist. These competencies may include clinical skills, interpersonal skills, and intellectual acumen. This study explored how practitioners rate these skills in order of importance.

## OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study was to obtain feedback from the program's alumni to:

1. Develop a list of essential personal and professional competencies of a highly trained pediatric dentist.
2. Use these competencies to update the program's curriculum.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the Paul P. Taylor Association of Pediatric Dentists alumni who completed this survey.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study received exempt status from the Texas A&M School of Dentistry IRB. The study consisted of a 5-question anonymous survey created in Qualtrics and was emailed to the Paul P. Taylor Association of Pediatric Dentistry Alumni (351 alumni total), with a reminder email sent in attempts to obtain more responses.

The following questions were asked:

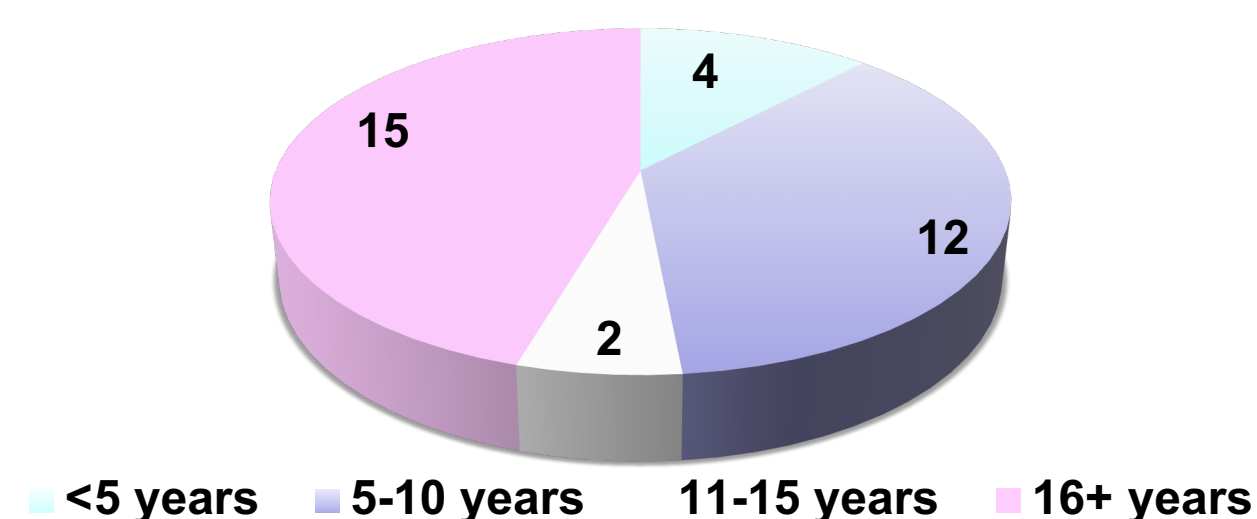
1. List the top 5 clinical competencies that are essential to be well-trained pediatric dentist.
2. List the top 5 interpersonal skills that are essential to be a well-trained pediatric dentist
3. List the top 5 intellectual skills that are essential to be highly trained pediatric dentist.
4. Rank, from most important to least important, the following qualities (ex. Didactic knowledge, intrapersonal skills, clinical skills) you are looking for when hiring a new pediatric dentist to your practice.
5. How many years of experience have you had as a pediatric dentist?

## RESULTS

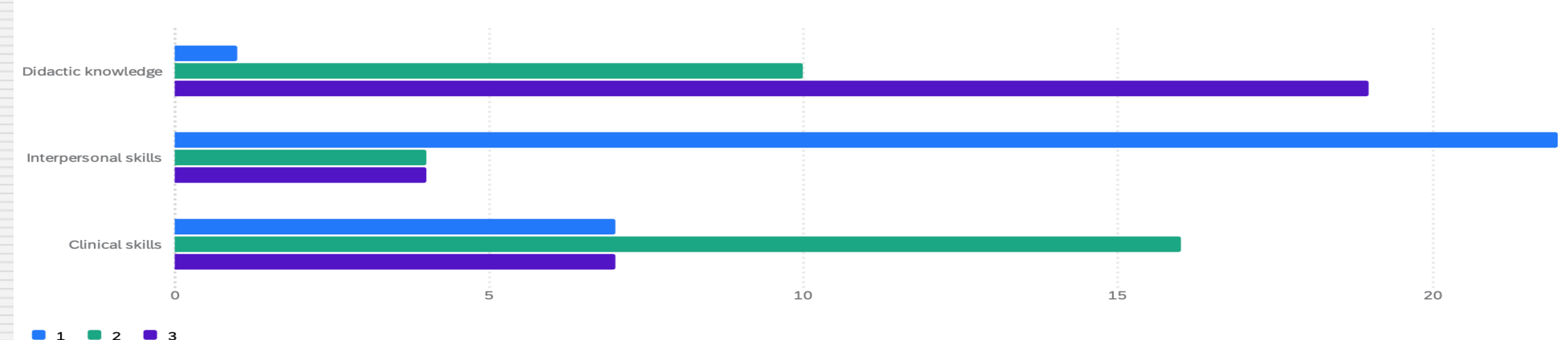
34 surveys used for results (41 total surveys received with 7 discarded for no responses).

Received between 10/16/2023 and 2/19/2024.

### Respondent Years in Private Practice



Rank from most important to least important the following qualities (Didactic knowledge, intrapersonal skills, clinical skills) you are looking for when hiring a new pediatric dentist to your practice 30 1



Top 5 clinical competencies	% of respondents who listed the competency
Behavior guidance	59%
Sedation	35%
Stainless steel crowns	29%
Pulpotomies and pulpectomies	26%
Treatment planning	21%

Top 5 interpersonal skills	% of respondents who listed the skill
Communication	62%
Empathy	44%
Kindness and compassion	35%
Patience	32%
Listening	26%

Top 5 intellectual skills	% of respondents who listed the skill
Critical thinking skills/problem solving	71%
Proper diagnosis	29%
Motivation to continue learning	29%
Treatment planning	21%
Decision-making	21%

## DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION

The low response rate (<10%) of the survey could be due to a variety of reasons:

- 1) Incorrect or out-of-date email address
- 2) Survey fatigue
- 3) Lack of interest

Because of the limited responses, it is impossible to extract any significant statistical analysis. Nevertheless, the results did provide insight into what practitioners might be seeking when considering hiring a new dentist to join the practice. Some of the responses received were "great study" and "It's hard to choose ranks as a good pediatric dentist needs all three."

Admittedly, this study might have yielded better results if it been emailed multiple times. The study might have also been improved if done in a true qualitative format with focus groups.

## REFERENCES

Health Policy Institute. (2021, December). *Trends in pediatric dentistry education programs in the U.S.* American Dental Association. <https://www.google.com/search?q=Trends+in+Pediatric+Dentistry+Education+Programs+in+the+U.S.&aq=chrome..69i57j33i160l2j33i299l2.881j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>