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# Employment Interviews for Educators

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## Preparation

- Determine the requirements of the job.
- Research the organization (philosophy, values, etc.).
- Determine the interviewer's name, title, and status in the organization.
- Prepare answers for the questions you are likely to be asked about your qualifications and achievements, your feelings about work, school, and students, your interests and extracurricular interests.
- Know how you will handle illegal questions if confronted with them.
- Develop relevant questions to ask, such as involvement of teachers in curricular decisions, performance evaluation procedures, role of the administrator, etc.
- Plan your appearance. Look professional! (Shined shoes and wrinkle free!)
- Take a list of questions, copies of your resume, and samples of your work (if appropriate) to the interview in a briefcase or portfolio.
- Double-check location and time of the interview. **BE ON TIME!** (Actually early.)

## Initial Stages of the Interview

- Greet the interviewer by name, with a smile and direct eye contact.
- Offer a firm but gentle handshake if the interviewer extends a hand.
- Take a seat only after the interviewer invites you to be seated or has taken his or her own seat.
- Sit with an erect posture, facing the interviewer.
- Listen for cues that tell you what the interviewer wants to hear. (Listen to both the wording of the question and the emotions/attitude behind it.)
- Assume a calm and poised attitude.
- Avoid gum chewing, smoking, and other displays of nervousness.

## Body of the Interview

- Maintain a “YOU” attitude with focus on “employer” needs and interests.
- Display a genuine, not artificial, smile at appropriate times.
- Convey interest and enthusiasm.
- Listen attentively and actively so you can give intelligent responses.

- Take **NO** NOTES, but remember key points and record them later.
- Sell the interviewer on hiring you.
  - Relate your knowledge and skills to the position you are seeking.
  - Stress your positive qualities and characteristics.
- Answer questions wisely.
  - Keep responses brief, clear, and to the point.
  - If you do not know the answer to a question, say so.
  - Avoid exaggeration, and convey honesty and sincerity. Self-appraisal is acceptable but not self-praise.
  - Avoid slighting references to former employers. Stress the positive. Never criticize anyone or anything.
- Avoid cocktails if you are interviewed over lunch.
- Answer “NO” only when you add a positive qualifying statement.

## Salary Discussions

- Most salary information for positions in schools can be obtained prior to the interview since it is a matter of public record. Put off a discussion of salary until late in the interview.
- Let the interviewer initiate the discussion of salary.
- If asked, state that you would like to receive the standard salary for the position in question.

## Closing Stages of the Interview

- Watch for signs that the interview is about to end.
- Tactfully ask when you will be advised of the decision on your application.
- If you're offered the job, ask for time to consider the offer.
- With a warm smile and a handshake, thank the interviewer for meeting with you.

## Interview Follow-up

- Send a thank-you letter immediately following the interview.
- Stress your positive impressions; highlight your strongest qualifications again.
- **DO NOT** constantly check on status of decision.
- Evaluate your interview performance.

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## Top Ten Interview Topics

- Classroom Management
- Student Teaching
- Strengths
- Weaknesses
- Teaching Philosophy
- “What if” or “Tell me about a time when”
- Future Plans
- Teaching Style
- Motivational Theories
- Lesson Design

## Illegal Interview Topics

- Race, Religion, Ethnicity
- Age, Date or Place of Birth
- Family Information (i.e. marital status, significant other, name or occupation of spouse, name and ages of children, child care provisions)
- Arrest Record (Convictions, however, may be questioned.)
- Personal Data (i.e. height, weight, eye or hair color, health, photograph)
- Economic Status (i.e. own or rent home, current or past assets, liabilities or credit rating)

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# Interview Styles

## Screening Interview

- Short duration
- Determine whether candidate has sufficient basic qualifications
- Usually conducted by one person
- Often done by phone to decide whether to invite person for interview
- Screen-out function to save organization money

## Group Interview

- Most widely used when interviewing professional and managerial candidates
- All members can meet with interviewee simultaneously or in a series
- Typically 3 to 5 interviewers
- Two heads are better than one concept

## Structured Interview (i.e. Teacher Perceiver)

- Each team member has specific assignment
- More thorough and comprehensive
- Assures all important areas of candidate’s qualifications are covered
- Problem: All interviewers may not be equally skilled in gathering required data to make decision
- Little to no opportunity for candidate to receive feedback or ask questions

## Behavioral Interview

- Employer selects certain performance dimensions and defines situations
- Candidates are asked how they have handled similar situations
- Based on belief that past behavior is a good predictor of future behaviors
- Typically look at logic, creativity, resourcefulness, conceptual ability, verbal communication skills
- Gives candidates opportunity to give a wider range of information, qualifications, and experiences

## Assessment Centers

- Used to measure and predict the probability for successful performance of key job elements
- May be asked to teach a lesson or complete a writing assignment
- Try to recreate the work environment physically-real life situations

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“The interview is a rehearsable, predictable, controllable event.”

(Jeff Allen, [Get the Interview](#))

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# SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR EDUCATORS

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**Anticipate and practice answering these possible interview questions.**

- Describe why you want to be a teacher.
  - How does your philosophy of education meet the individual needs of students?
  - What role would you expect a parent to play in the education of his/her child?
  - List the personal and professional attributes you would bring to this position.
  - Explain the learning environment you prefer in your classroom.
  - How would you resolve a conflict between two students assigned to your classroom?
  - Describe the process you would utilize to plan a teaching lesson for your students.
  - What kinds of extra duty or extracurricular assignments are you willing to assist with or sponsor?
  - Relate the professional goals you have established for yourself during the next five years.
  - In your school building, what role do you expect the principal to play?
  - Talk about your personal philosophy of education.
  - List five characteristics of an effective teacher.
  - Describe how you will assess students in your classroom.
  - How will you communicate with students, other teachers, and parents?
  - What plans have you made for specialized training or advanced degrees?
  - Describe the skills you have developed to assist exceptional students.
  - What process would you follow if a student in your class exhibits characteristics of substance use or abuse?
  - How much time, if any, should an educator spend on his or her assigned area outside of the regular contact?
  - Describe your strengths and weaknesses as a classroom teacher.
  - How would students in your school describe you?
  - What are the titles of the last two books you read?
  - Describe the role that technology should play in the classroom.
  - Describe the current status of the teaching profession.
  - Relate your philosophy of grouping students for instruction.
  - Why are you the best candidate for this position?
  - Tell me about the last time a student got a hold of your "heart strings."
  - Do you believe rules or basic policies are necessary in a classroom? If important, how will they be established in your class?
  - Tell me about yourself.
  - Why do you want to work for our district (school, organization, etc.)?
  - What would you do if . . .? or Tell me about a time when . . .
  - How have your past experiences prepared you for teaching?
  - Describe an ideal curriculum in your area of study.
  - Define cooperative learning and give an example of how you have used it.
  - Describe a teaching strategy you used to maximize the learning potential of all students.
  - Describe your typical teaching style. What teaching techniques do you use?
  - How would you handle a student who is a consistent behavioral problem in your class?
  - Comment on some leaders in education. Cite several authorities in your subject of preparation and comment on them.
  - What are your concerns and outlook for the future of public education?
  - How will you appraise your own teaching performance? How will you determine if your students are learning?
  - How do you communicate with parents about the student's progress?
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# Questions You May Want to Ask When Applying for Positions in K-12 Schools

Taken from "Can Your Kid's School Pass This Quality Test?" Money Extra, by John Sims. 1990.

- What is the school's educational philosophy?
- Do you encourage and accept suggestions from teachers on curriculum and instruction methods?
- How would you rate your teaching staff?
- How do you keep parents informed about what's going on at school?
- How do you handle complaints from parents?
- Do higher officials intervene in the affairs of the school?
- How many extracurricular activities does the school offer?
- Do you still teach?
- How many sports programs does the school offer?
- How much power do you have to determine the curriculum in the classes you teach?
- Are you free to choose any books you like for your classes?
- How much of your time is taken up with administrative chores and non-teaching tasks like monitoring lunchrooms?
- How often are your classes interrupted by kids acting up or other disruptions?
- Are the school's rules and regulations clear and consistently enforced?
- How often do you meet with fellow teachers, either formally or informally, to discuss school matters?
- In your classes, are you able to allow for differences in children's rates of development?
- How much information do report cards convey?
- How much homework do students get each night?
- Do you understand the school's philosophical aim and approve of it?
- Would you be able to take over any of your colleagues' classes? Would they be able to stand in for you?
- How tough are your classes?
- Can you count on getting about the same amount of homework each night?
- How would you describe school rules - fair or unfair?
- How often do teachers praise your work?
- Do your teachers listen to you when you have problems or complaints?
- How would you describe the student government (elementary school may have class officers)?
- Public schools only: How strong is community support for local schools?
- Private schools only: Are parents pressured to make contributions (above tuition) or to assist with fund raising?
- What is the current state of relations between the administration and the teaching staff?
- How accessible are teachers?
- Does the school encourage parental involvement?
- What percentage of parents are active in the PTA?
- How much emphasis does the school place on sports?
- What special assistance does the school offer?
- High schools only: Do you have programs to deal with drug and alcohol abuse?
- Elementary and junior high schools only: Are there any special programs for latchkey kids?
- Does the school have community service programs?

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