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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.

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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.”

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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?

# 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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