

Job Interviews Tips for Teacher Candidates

You'll need to do some research!

The School District

- ◆ What does their public relations literature say about the district/school?
- ◆ What is the funding base of the district/school?
- ◆ Who makes the decisions in the district/school?
- ◆ How large are the classes?
- ◆ What are the facilities like?
- ◆ What is the curriculum?
- ◆ Who is on the school board?
- ◆ To what extent are the parents involved in the school?
- ◆ What are the geographic boundaries of the district?
- ◆ How many students are enrolled?
- ◆ What grade levels are served?
- ◆ How many teachers are employed?
- ◆ Study the statistics of pupil achievement in reading and math. Are most of the district's students below grade level? At grade level? Above grade level?
- ◆ Research your possible work environment. Ask if the district's teachers are represented by a union. If they are then get a copy of the union contract and study the contractual agreements between the teachers' union and the school district.
- ◆ Obtain a salary schedule for the district.
- ◆ Does the district have a residency requirement?
- ◆ Learn whether the district has received any special honors or recognition by state or federal agencies for academic excellence.
- ◆ What sports are offered in the district?

Read as much school district literature as you can to help answer some of the above questions and write down a list of questions you have regarding the district. Save the list. Know the basic demographics of the district. Even if you do not have pre-interview access to specific district information, brainstorm a list of questions you need to ask.

The Community

- ◆ What is the community like?
- ◆ Who are the community leaders?
- ◆ What does the community think of the school district?
- ◆ What kind of financial and volunteer support does the community give to the schools?

If possible, read current and back issues of the local newspaper. The articles will inform you about the activities and issues in the school district and the philosophy of school board members as well as the various kinds of support and opposition you can expect from the community.

Research Yourself: Self Awareness

- ◆ Why did you choose teaching?
- ◆ What are the special qualities you will bring to the classroom?
- ◆ What are your accomplishments, your strengths, your goals for the future and your philosophy of education?

Remember you are checking out the school district as much as they are checking you out. Keep an open mind. Look for the right match. This district may seem like the right match, but sometimes the perfect job is the second or third choice. You don't want to get into a situation that isn't a good fit.

Tips

- ◆ Know your accomplishments. Interviewers are interested to know about your volunteer or extra-curricular activities.
- ◆ Be on time. Do a trial run to see how long it actually takes you to get to the school. If you aren't able to do a trial run, make sure to give yourself extra time to find the school, find a parking place, find the office...and be 15 minutes early. *Allow for the unexpected.*
- ◆ Dress professionally. Teachers' attire can be more relaxed in the classroom—once you have the job. For interview purposes, suits and conservative clothing are appropriate.
- ◆ Maintain eye contact with the interviewer.
- ◆ Listen carefully to the questions and repeat them if necessary to ensure you are answering what the interviewer is asking.
- ◆ Don't be intimidated by silence. If you've answered a question fully and there is silence, pause and wait...don't panic. Many people feel that they need to talk more and may end up rambling on unnecessary information.
- ◆ Shake hands at the beginning *and* the end!
- ◆ Clarify your next step with the interviewer.
- ◆ *Send a thank you note promptly.*

Potential School Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Why did you enter the field of teaching?
3. What experiences have you had related to teaching?
4. What qualities do you have that make you an effective teacher?
5. What grade levels/or subjects do you prefer to teach?
6. Have you taught or are you interested in teaching combination classes?
7. Do you have experience with special education students?
8. Do you have (multicultural, urban, learning problems) teaching experience?
9. Why do you want to teach in our district?
10. What do you remember most about your own education?
11. How do you meet the range of skills and need commonly present in a classroom?
12. When do you use an individual, group and/or whole class teaching approach? Why?
13. Let's imagine we are going to observe a teacher teaching a lesson. I tell you in advance to expect a superb lesson. What would you expect to see in that lesson?
14. How do you diagnose your student's needs?
15. If a teacher wants to be sure pupils will learn a skill to be taught, what should he/she be sure to do when teaching?

16. How do you make sure your lessons are taught at the correct level?
17. How do you stimulate active participation in the classroom?
18. How would you use parents in the classroom?
19. What kinds of planning do you see a teacher doing?
20. How do you plan for a year? a week? a day?
21. How do you know what you will cover?
22. What types of resource materials do you like to use?
23. What are some characteristics of a well-managed classroom?
24. Tell me about classroom control.
25. What discipline methods work for you?
26. What is your primary goal with student discipline?
27. Give me some examples of rules you would have in your classroom.
28. How would you be sure your rules are carried out?
29. How much responsibility for their learning do you feel students should have to take?
30. Are you a "let 'em go to the pencil sharpener whenever they want" type of person or a "raise your hand and ask permission" type of person?
31. What types of rewards and consequences would you use?
32. Describe your most difficult student discipline situation and how you handled it?
33. What do you see yourself doing over the course of the next several years to improve your abilities as a professional?
34. What professional development topics most interest you?
35. As a teacher new to a school, what would you see yourself doing to contribute to healthy staff relationships and to become part of the staff?
36. What should a principal expect from teachers?
37. What should teachers expect from the principal?
38. What grading system works for you?
39. Under what conditions, if any, would most of your pupils receive D's and F's? How and why could this happen?
40. What additional talents and skills do you have?
41. What extracurricular activities can you sponsor?
42. Do you have questions or additional comments for me?

Sample Questions for the Candidate to ask the School Interviewer

If you plan ahead for your interviews, your questions can give the interview team an idea of how knowledgeable you are about educational issues. Your questions can also indicate your philosophy about working with students and staff and special expertise you may have. Most importantly, asking well-chosen questions helps you to make an informed decision about how well this school and position match with your teaching goals. The following questions are samples to give you some ideas and stimulate your own questions. **Choose 1-3 questions carefully.**

1. What grade levels are responsible for what topics?
2. Who has the responsibility for a particular topic?
3. May I have a copy of the scope and sequence?
4. Tell me about supervision visits.
5. How does the administration work with teachers to improve instruction?
6. Are there school psychologists, counselors or public agencies assisting students?
7. What types of media resources are available?
8. How is the budget for this academic program developed?
9. What textbooks do you use in this subject area?
10. Describe the district's textbook adoption policies.
11. How would you describe the typical professional staff member in this district?

12. What professional skills do you expect of the person you hire?
13. Does the staff spend time together outside of normal school hours?
14. How does the staff feel about new teachers?
15. How active are teachers in working with community organizations?
16. Tell me about the students who attend this school.
17. How involved are parents in school activities?
18. What do parents expect of their teachers?
19. What is the budget for extracurricular activity?
20. What does the community expect of activity sponsors?
21. Are there auxiliary groups involved in the activity?
22. Are there fund-raising requirements that are part of this activity?
23. May I have a copy of this year's activity calendar?
24. Are other faculty members also assigned to this activity?