

Education Interviewing Guide

STEP 1: RESEARCH

How well you have researched the organization/district demonstrates your interest and enthusiasm and is a critical factor in the interview process.

What to research:

- Recent news articles
- History and potential growth of district
- Educational trends
- Student demographics
- Statistics of pupil achievements
- Organizational structure and key names
- Location and community resources
- Use of technology
- School board minutes
- District and school mission/vision
- Instructional program and learning objectives

Where to research:

- District/organization website
- Internet search engines
- Professors
- Your network
- Local newspaper articles
- Education journals (AAEE Job Search handbook)
- LinkedIn
- Twitter
- Facebook
- Visit the school

STEP 2: PREPARE

It is essential to understand and articulate what skills and qualifications you have to offer, as they relate to the position and district/organization. Below are things to think about and prepare prior to your interview.

- Know your skills and talents
- Understand areas of improvement
- Know your resume and the job description inside and out
- Create a list of 5-10 “selling points” related to the position and the district/organization
- Understand and practice using the **Problem Action Result (PAR)** technique
- Dress for success by planning your interviewing attire
- Map out your interview destination, know where you’re going, and how long it will take to get there
- Items to bring to an interview: directions to the interview site, padfolio, name(s) and title(s) of interviewer(s), extra copies of your resume, references, portfolio (not required), a writing utensil, copy of position description, and a bottle of water
- Prepare questions to ask the administrator/interviewer to show your interest in the position or district/organization

Example Questions for the Administrator/Interviewer

- What type of orientation/training process is provided for new teachers?
- What types of school activities do you have that promote parent-teacher-student interaction?
- Do teachers participate in curriculum review and change?
- What type of discipline program do you have in place?
- To what extent do staff members work collaboratively to solve problems and respond to the needs of students?
- What percentage of your students go on to higher education?
- What makes a teacher successful in this school/district?
- How do you evaluate teachers? How often are teachers evaluated?
- What facilities do you have in the way of technology, library, laboratories, etc.?
- Does your school make use of teacher aides or parent volunteers?
- What specially trained personnel are available to assist students and teachers (counselors, therapists, psychologist, etc.)?
- What are the next steps of the hiring process?

STEP 3: PRACTICE

- Visit Career & Professional Development for a mock interview
- Rehearse your Elevator Pitch
- Practice in front of a mirror or with a friend
- Practice your handshake with a friend
- Participate in MIRT (Mock Interview Relay for Teachers) in the spring of your senior year
- Practice answering behavioral-based questions:

These types of questions predict future performances by examining past behavior. Think about how you have dealt with specific education related situations in the past and how those experiences enhanced your leadership, initiative, and problem-solving abilities. Utilizing the PAR technique is the key to answering behavior-based questions.

Problem

Explain the situation or problem.

Action

What action did you take?

Result

What was the outcome?

Example PAR Question & Answer

Question: *Tell me about a critical issue in your area of study that you've recently dealt with and how you handled the issue.*

Answer: (Problem) *During my student teaching at Green Bay High School, I encountered the issue of whether or not to allow the use of calculators in the classroom. I feel calculators are useful teaching aides; however I did not want my students to rely on them to complete an assignment. (Action)* *Instead I made a game out of learning fundamental math but still allowed them the opportunity to use the calculator. Students worked in teams of 3-4 to solve a number of word problems. They worked without their calculators to determine the answer and when at least 2 had the answer, they were allowed to solve the problem using the calculator to check their results. The student(s) who found the correct answer then had to explain to the others in their group how they got their answer. (Result)* *By working together, the children learned the importance of team work, developed reasoning skills by discussing individual problem solving, and gained basic calculator skills.*

Example Behavioral-Based Questions

- Describe the worst discipline problem you have experienced during student teaching.
- Tell me about a situation in which your authority was questioned.
- What was the most difficult task you have faced on the job?
- Describe a positive impact you had on a student.
- Give me an example of an obstacle you have encountered and how you overcame it.
- Tell me about a time that you met with an unhappy parent.
- Tell me how you have handled a situation dealing with a behavioral problem.
- What would you do if the project you had been working on was rejected?
- What is a recent risk that you have taken?
- Tell me about your greatest accomplishment.
- Describe a situation that demonstrated good communication between you and a colleague, administrator or parent.
- Tell me about a memorable experience you have had as a student teacher.

Example Interview Questions

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS/SKILLS/STRENGTHS

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why are you interested in this position?
- Why did you choose teaching as a career?
- Who most influenced your decision to become a teacher?
- What passions do you bring to teaching?
- What grade level do you prefer? Why?
- What unique qualities do you possess that we should consider?
- What activities or clubs would you be willing to advise?
- What is your strongest personal asset?
- Name three of your strengths.
- What would your cooperating teacher/supervisor say about you?
- What three words would your students use to describe you as a teacher?
- What are your interests outside of teaching?
- Describe your technology skills.
- What sets you apart from others interviewing for this position?
- Think of a teacher that you consider being top notch. What characteristics does this person have?
- Is there anything we haven't discussed today that you feel is important for me to know about you as a teaching candidate?

WEAKNESSES

- What is one of your weaknesses?
- Based on your past experiences, what areas do you need to improve on?
- What would you change about yourself and why?

PERSONAL PHILOSOPHY

- What is your philosophy of education?
- How do you feel about thematic (unit) planning?
- What are your thoughts about Parent Teacher Associations and other community organizations?
- Please give me your thoughts on a recent educational issue.
- What constitutes an effective classroom? An effective study hall?
- What is "right" about American education today?

- What should be improved in American education as it exists today?
- Describe an effective teacher for me.
- What do you consider an ideal class size?
- How do you personally feel students learn?
- What motivates you?
- What is your philosophy on homework?
- What is your philosophy on team teaching?
- What is the toughest aspect of teaching today?
- What are some of the challenges of being an educator?
- What are your concerns and outlook for the future of public education?

GOALS/DIRECTION

- What are your plans for furthering your education?
- How have you recently improved your professional skills? What are your plans for future skill development?
- What are your short-term and long-term goals?
- How do you see this position fitting into your career goals?
- What do you believe to be the major trends in your career field at this time?
- How would you implement the school's mission/goal into your classroom?

HUMAN RELATIONS/INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

- How would you utilize the services of the guidance and counseling staff? Parents and teacher aides?
- As a teacher in our district, what would be your role in our community?
- What, in your opinion, is the best way to communicate with parents?
- What is your concept of the role of the administration in relation to teachers? To students?
- What are your expectations of a building principal?
- What are the best ways to establish rapport with students?
- How would you develop a good working relationship with your colleagues?
- How do you facilitate collaboration between home and school?
- When confronted by a parent on an issue, how do you best respond?
- How would you deal with a colleague who has teaching styles and philosophies completely opposite of your own?

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT/ORGANIZATION

- What classroom management system do you use?
- How would you handle cheating?
- Explain the structure of your discipline plan. What rules do you establish in your classroom?
- How would you handle a student who is a consistent behavioral problem in your classroom?
- How would you handle a student who refused to do what you asked?
- How do you handle discipline?
- What is the toughest aspect of discipline?
- How would you handle controversial issues as they came before your class?
- How is your classroom organized?
- What type of learning environment do you try to create?
- How do you structure your class to achieve maximum benefit from student/teacher contact?
- How would you develop student independence and self-discipline in your classroom?
- If you are having classroom management difficulties when and who would you ask for help?
- What would your homework policy look like?

EVALUATION/ASSESSMENT

- Describe the ways you assess student performance.
- How do you evaluate your teaching performance?
- How do you determine if your students are learning?
- What evaluation techniques do you use? Do you grade on ability or effort?
- How do you feel about observations by supervisors?
- How do you assess whether your curriculum is appropriately matched to your students' needs?
- How does standardized testing affect your teaching?
- Should students have a part in the evaluation of teachers? Why or why not?
- How would you use assessments to shape your classroom instruction?

TEACHING TECHNIQUE

- What teaching methods do you find most effective?
- How do you know when students are engaged?
- How would you differentiate your instruction to accommodate the varied needs of students?
- How did you incorporate technology into your student teaching?
- Describe your typical teaching style. What teaching techniques do you use?
- Describe a teaching strategy you have used to maximize the learning potential of all students.
- What innovative ideas would you like to initiate in your classroom?
- Define cooperative learning and give an example of how you have used it.
- How do you motivate students? Name 3 effective ways to motivate students.
- What are the components of an effective lesson plan?
- Describe a lesson that was particularly successful. What was your objective? What strategies did you use? How did you evaluate student learning?
- Please explain your experience teaching in a block schedule.
- How would you adapt instruction to meet the needs of a 21st century learner?

STEP 4: THE INTERVIEW

- Arrive 10 minutes early
- Give a firm handshake
- Show enthusiasm, confidence, and smile
- Keep a positive attitude about former cooperating teachers, employers, supervisors, and co-workers
- Remember to use the PAR technique to answer questions
- Be aware of your body language
- Avoid slang, profanity, lying, and filler words such as "um", "like", "ah", "you know"
- Do not inquire about salary, bonuses, or benefits in your first interview
- Remember to ask questions to show your interest
- Ask the interviewer when you can expect to hear back from them
- Express your interest in the position and thank the interviewer for their time
- Ask for a business card from each interviewer to ensure you have their name and address so you can send a thank you note

STEP 5: AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- Send a thank you note or e-mail within 2 business days; send a separate, individualized note to each person who interviewed you
- Evaluate your performance to address areas for improvement
- If 1-2 weeks has elapsed since the date the interviewer said they would make contact, it is appropriate to make a follow-up call to express your interest in the position

Writing Your Thank You Note

Following an interview, **ALWAYS** write the interviewer(s) a thank you note. This note should be sent within 2 business days.

PURPOSE

- Show appreciation for the administrator's interest in you and the opportunity to interview
- Reiterate your enthusiasm/interest in the position and in the district/organization
- Remind the administrator about your qualifications for the position; include something you forgot to mention in the interview
- Demonstrate you have written communication skills by writing a professional thank you note
- Follow up with any information the administrator may have asked you to provide after the interview

FORMAT

- Thank you notes can be typed, handwritten or e-mailed
- Typed notes are the most formal, whereas handwritten are more personal
- E-mail is acceptable when that has been your means of contact with the person you want to thank, if your contact has expressed a preference for e-mail or if there is a tight timeline in which the interviewer will make the hiring decision

Dear Ms. Smith,

Thank you so much for the opportunity to interview with you for the 4th grade teaching position at Heritage Elementary School. I found our meeting both enjoyable and informative.

After meeting with you, I am even more excited about this potential opportunity. My education at St. Norbert College and experience working with children make me a good fit for the 4th grade teacher position. In addition to my enthusiasm, I will bring to this position my ability to quickly establish rapport with students, strong classroom management skills, and bilingual skills in English and Spanish. Through my experience student teaching abroad in Mexico I gained a strong appreciation of diversity, which I hope to instill in my students in the classroom. I believe my three years of experience working in a daycare center has given me the confidence and ability to manage my own classroom. As we discussed, I am also interested in becoming involved as an advisor for extracurricular activities.

Thank you again for taking the time to interview me. I welcome the opportunity to become a staff member at Heritage Elementary School and believe I would be a strong contributing member to your staff. Please contact me if you have additional questions. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Sam Knight