

# TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEW

The *interview* is an opportunity for the interviewer to get to know an applicant in ways that cannot be gleaned from a resume. While an applicant addresses a mix of questions about background, teaching experience and the "ideal" classroom, the interviewer also learns about an applicant's enthusiasm for teaching and dedication to the profession.

In order to discover if the applicant is the best person for the job, an interviewer will specifically seek to identify:

- Professional skill sets:

- How broad/deep is their knowledge base in their specific field of study?
- How prepared are applicants for various aspects of the job beyond the specific subject matter of their field of study?
- Do they show confidence in their abilities?
- Are applicants knowledgeable about current trends and practices in education?
- Are applicants interested in continuous learning about educational change, trends and practices?

- Interpersonal skill sets

***Interpersonal skills*** refer to how you are perceived by your colleagues in the workplace and it plays a large role in things as minor as your day-to-day happiness at your job. No matter how hard you work or how many brilliant ideas you may have, if you can't connect with the people who work around you, your professional life will suffer. The fundamental elements associated with *interpersonal skills* are verbal communication, body language and collaboration.

- Verbal Communication:

- ◆ Do applicants have good listening skills?
- ◆ Do applicants ask questions that are relevant and logical for the situation?
- ◆ *Refer to the Active Listening Handout for more information*

- Body Language:

- ◆ Do applicants seem self-aware about their personal presentation and appearance?

- ♦ Do applicants manage their body language appropriately?
- ♦ *Refer to the Body Language handouts for more information*
- Collaboration skill set
  - Do applicants communicate a knowledge of and interest in working in groups/teams?
  - Do applicants seem well rounded? Have outside interests?
  - What are applicants' views on:
    - ♦ How teams work effectively?
    - ♦ How to effectively deal with conflict?
    - ♦ How to set team standards?
    - ♦ How to create achievable goals for teams?
- ✓ **The Bottom line is...**working with other people is all about interpersonal skills.
 

It involves:

  - Being willing and able to support and encourage others
  - Being able to give and receive constructive criticism
  - Being able to negotiate and compromise
    - Listening to and valuing others' opinions
    - Being able to convey your point clearly and positively to a group.
  - Interpersonal skill areas that an interviewer may focus on are:
    - How do applicants interact with the interviewer?
    - Do applicants' verbal and body language communicate a consistent message?

## NEW TEACHER INTERVIEW TIPS

Interview questions are typically tailored toward a candidate's level of experience

- Questions asked of prospective new teachers might include:
  - Why do you want to be a teacher?
  - What is a strength(s) of the teacher training program at \_\_\_\_\_ (university or college)?
  - How have your former teachers influenced your teaching?
  - Describe the positives and negatives of your student-teaching experience.
    - Be careful here...an interview is not the forum to criticize the student-teaching school or program. State negatives in neutral terms as "ways to improve in the future"
  - What do you most look forward to in establishing your own classroom?
- Be prepared to ask questions that address specific issues related to the subject matter and grade level the position involves.
- In the nervousness of interviewing, some applicants forget to share their portfolios. Be sure to 'show off' your best work!

While the interview is primarily intended to 'sell' yourself as the right person for the job, don't forget that you are also 'interviewing' the institution to find out if it is a good fit for *you*. If you leave the interview feeling like "this would be a great place to work!", then you'll hopefully be offered a job. If you don't leave feeling so positive, then you might want to keep interviewing with other schools.

If you don't get a job offer after a 'good' interview, keep in mind that this could be the result of the particular needs of the school rather than a reflection on you. Nevertheless, you should critically evaluate the interview to try to identify ways you can improve for the next encounter.