

Commonly Asked Interview Questions

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From the 2008 AAEE Job Search Handbook

School district administrators who hire teachers typically place a great deal of emphasis on how candidates respond to interview questions. If you are like most candidates completing teacher education programs, you may be unsure what you will be asked and how best to respond. To help you prepare for interviews, we present here the most frequent responses from 260 elementary, middle school, and high school principals from two states who were asked to identify the one question they would be sure to ask.

Getting to Know You

- Why did you choose this profession as a career?
- What makes you the best candidate for this position?
- What research have you done about our school?
- Describe a personal experience which had an impact on your teaching?
- What are your interests outside teaching?
- What would your worst critic say about you?
- What would you like us to know about you?

Interpersonal Skill

- If I spoke with your students (cooperating teacher, university supervisor, principal, colleagues, or friends), what three words would they use to describe you?
- How would you facilitate collaboration between home and school?
- If confronted by an angry parent (colleague) on an issue, how would you best respond?
- How would your students know that you genuinely care about them?
- How important is it for you to be well liked by your students?
- How would you respond to a student who asked for your advice on a difficult personal situation?

Instruction

- Describe a typical class period.
- What instructional strategies have you found most effective?
- What are the components of an effective lesson plan?
- Describe a lesson which was particularly successful by walking me through each stage from planning through delivery.
- Explain what a strong balanced literary program would look like in your classroom.
- What research-based teaching strategies have you used?
- What specific strategies would you use to assist students who are struggling in read and mathematics?
- Describe how you have differentiated a lesson to accommodate varying student needs.
- What would you do to actively engage your students?
- What do you do when you see some students are not learning?
- How would you motivate the reluctant learner?
- What would you do with students who fail continually to complete homework?

Assessment

- How do you measure student success?
- What would you do to improve student achievement?
- How do you know whether your curriculum is appropriately matched to your students' needs?

Classroom Management

- What type of classroom management plan would you implement?
- How would you set up a student management system?
- How do you handle children who are difficult to manage?
- Describe the toughest discipline situation you encountered and how you handled it.
- If you were having classroom management difficulties, when and who would you ask for help?

Self-Analysis

- During your student teaching experience, what did you find most challenging?
- Describe a time that you were in a difficult situation and explain how you resolved it.
- If you were doing something for students that you know was right and your principal told you to stop, what would you do?
- Tell me a story from your experience that keeps you up at night.
- Describe in detail your best and worst days in a classroom.
- Describe the best lesson you ever taught and explain why it was great.
- Describe a challenge you encountered during student teaching. What did you learn from it?

Other

- What are your long term goals?
- What new ideas would you bring to our school?
- Give me an example of a time you went above and beyond to accomplish a task.
- What does loyalty mean to you?
- Is there anything that I didn't ask you that you were hoping I would?

Questions to Ask

Candidates are often asked at the end of the interview if they have any questions. This is an opportunity not only to learn more about the school, but also to demonstrate professionalism. You should avoid any negative-toned or salary/benefit questions. You will have the opportunity to ask financial questions when the position is offered. Here are several questions you may want to consider.

- What are you most proud of about your school?
- What would faculty, students, and parents say are the strengths of your school?
- What were your school's goals for last year?
- How do teachers integrate technology into the classroom?
- What priorities would you have for me as a new faculty member?
- Do you offer a mentoring program?
- How does the school district support professional development?
- What extracurricular activity opportunities might be available?

Additional Questions:

1. Please tell us about your training and experiences that led you to apply with our district.
2. What skills and interests would you be able to bring with you to our school?
3. It seems that teachers are constantly being overwhelmed with new information, practices, and methods for teaching. How do you feel about this? Tell me of something new you have discovered that excites you.
4. What is the toughest challenge you have encountered facing educators today.
5. Is it difficult for a student who misses your class 10 times a quarter to still achieve an A? Is regular attendance important? Why?
6. How would you plan to accommodate students in your class who have difficulty achieving to their highest potential?
7. Describe how you have shown your position concerning thematic or interdisciplinary units of instruction.
8. What strategies do you use to teach your students problem solving skills?
9. Describe your use of technology in education.
10. How do you handle discipline problems?