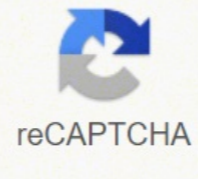




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## What questions to ask in a teacher interview

Consider choosing a few to ask, especially if you get the sense that the search committee is on a tight schedule. Your questions may provoke follow-up questions, such as, “I appreciate your interest in this area. What’s the basis for your question? Have you had some experience in this area?” Do teachers participate in curriculum review and change? How frequently does this happen? What types of activities do you have that promote parent-teacher-student interaction? What textbooks does the district use in social studies (or English, biology, etc.)? What technology resources will be available to me in my classroom? What discipline procedures does the district use? Does the school make use of teacher aides and parent volunteers? How? Do you encourage teachers to earn graduate degrees? How does the district support teachers pursuing graduate degrees? How do teachers and administrators work collaboratively to solve problems and respond to student needs? How many classes will I be expected to teach each day? What courses will the person in this position be assigned to teach? What kinds of staff development activities did the entire faculty participate in this past year? How are teachers assigned to extracurricular activities? Is compensation provided? Please tell me about the students who attend the school. What percentage go on to two- and four-year colleges? What challenges is the district facing this year or in the next couple years? (ask to learn about potential budget, space, policy issues.) As a new teacher, how will I be supported and evaluated? Will I be paired with a mentor teacher or a support team? What are the prospects for future growth in this community and its schools? (ask to determine economic stability of community.) Commonly asked interview questions you can anticipate—plus tips and links to resources you can tap as you polish your answers. By Robert Ward, Sonja CassellaCongratulations! You’ve landed an interview appointment for a teaching position at a new school, or for a different position at your current school. This is an important first step, but there will likely be a number of qualified candidates vying for the same spot—how can you distinguish yourself from the pack and land the job? Your résumé, references, and professional portfolio will help, of course, but it’ll always be the impression you make during your face-to-face interview that’ll get you hired. Luckily, there are only a few types of questions a teacher can be asked, so it’s completely possible to enter a teaching interview confident and prepared. In addition to questions related to your content area, anticipate that you’ll be asked questions based on your knowledge of and experience with meeting the needs of the whole child. Be ready to explain how you honor and attend to the social, emotional, and academic growth of your students—both individually and as a group. And be prepared for questions concerning classroom management, teacher-student relationships, student engagement, and learning outcomes. Here are the types of questions you’ll be asked, along with suggestions and links to resources to guide you in preparing your answers and in practicing citing specific strategies and relevant classroom anecdotes. 1. Why did you decide to become a teacher? Prepare a brief professional mission statement that explains not merely how you want to change students’ lives but also how your own life is enriched by being a teacher. Also, look up the school’s vision statement and reference how your teaching will reflect those goals. 2. How would you handle a student who is constantly disruptive or defiant? Instead of focusing on how you would react, explain the ways you approach classroom management proactively so that small misbehaviors rarely become chronic or severe. Here are eight ways to maintain student cooperation and courtesy. If the interviewers press you on the original question, this advice on students with oppositional defiant disorder may help. 3. How do you cultivate positive relationships with your students and create a sense of class community? Recount a time you bonded with a student who needed some extra attention and understanding. Show your concern for the emotional well-being of the most vulnerable students and describe your plan for developing students’ social and emotional learning skills. Also explain how you create a sense of empathy and inclusion among your students so classmates support each other on both a personal and academic level. 4. How do you use data to differentiate instruction and support students identified with specific learning disabilities so all students can learn? First, be ready with the names of a couple of data-rich student assessments you’re familiar with. Your interviewers won’t demand that they be the same ones they use, but the fact that you’re aware of testing practices is important. Then, here are 20 differentiated instruction strategies you can use to prepare your answer on how you respond to data. Also, show your knowledge of these 11 learning disabilities and describe a few ways you work with parents and school resource personnel to meet the individual needs of each child. 5. How do you support literacy for all students, including English language learners? No matter their content area, every teacher is a literacy teacher. Explain how you help develop your students’ reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. Here are 12 ways to support English language learners in a mainstream classroom. 6. Do you incorporate collaborative and project-based learning? Discuss the difference between cooperative and collaborative learning, and if you have implemented PBL, describe a specific assignment your students worked on. 7. How do you keep your students engaged and motivated, and how do you promote student voice and choice to help them become self-directed learners? Here are 10 engagement techniques that drive student motivation and enthusiasm. Also describe how you create a student-centered classroom that inspires creativity, passion, and purpose. 8. How do you teach 21st-century learners, integrate technology, and guide students to be global citizens? Be prepared to talk about how you teach global citizenship and encourage critical thinking, creativity, and good communication skills. Here are ways to integrate technology into content learning. 9. How do you include parents and guardians in their child’s education? Recount several ways you inform, engage with, and collaborate with parents and guardians—through face-to-face meetings, notes, phone calls, or digital channels. 10. How do you maintain your own professional development, and what areas would you select for your personal growth? You might read books and blogs, watch videos online, subscribe to journals, attend conferences and workshops, or be a member of an educators society in your field. Be ready to talk about the specific resources you use to keep up with the latest trends in education, such as growth and benefit mindsets, flexible seating, flipped and blended learning, STEAM, trauma-informed teaching, restorative practices, mindfulness, makerspaces, and gamification of learning. In discussing your personal growth, explain ways you want to further expand your teaching efficacy—don’t refer to teaching “weaknesses.” 11. What questions do you have for us? Try this: “Please tell me the most important thing you know now as an educator that you wish you knew before you began your teaching career.” The answers you receive will reveal what your interviewers most value about education, and this insight will allow you to tailor your closing conversation to their interests. The following questions to ask in a teacher interview can reveal to the interview committee or principal your values and expectations. They show how well you understand your role as an educator and the value you place on authentic relationships with colleagues and students. Consider asking your interviewer some following questions. What leadership opportunities are available for instructors at this school? This is a good question to ask if you seek to be in a leadership position in the future. It positions you in the mind of the interviewer as someone with leadership potential and goals. This question also communicates your intention to remain working on that campus for a longer time and shows you are ready to invest your efforts and guide the campus towards success. Does the district or school have any programs that support continuing education efforts for teachers, and what are they? Surfacing this question establishes your commitment to the art of teaching and that you strive to be the best. Your eagerness to improve shows you have a growth mindset and seek quality professional development opportunities to support your students and learning. How often are teachers directed to leave the classroom for professional development? Asking this question reveals that you expect district and campus leadership to support you in your professional development efforts, but that you place a high value on classroom instruction time. You reveal that you are planning ahead because you want to provide the best for students in your classroom. What is the best thing about working at this school? You can consider asking this question if you are unfamiliar with the neighborhood, campus, or general student population at the school. It shows your interest in the overall campus culture and that you are considering how you fit into the school culture. Phrasing your question in a positive light reveals you are an optimistic individual. It gives the interviewer an opportunity to share some strengths of the school and personalizes a very formal experience. What is the student to teacher ratio within a typical classroom? At first glance this may seem like a very standard question to ask but the answer will reveal how well-staffed the school is. It will also tell you the type of workload you can expect daily. Teacher to student ratios within the classroom has a powerful influence on student performance and impact the classroom atmosphere. The answer to this is an indicator also of the type of resources that may be available for classroom instruction. Larger classes can mean you may struggle with finding an adequate amount of instructional manipulatives, while a smaller student to teacher ratio will give you the opportunity to plan more group activities where students can practice their interpersonal skills. The smaller classroom allows for more thoughtful class discussions where you can build stronger bonds with your students. How involved are parents and community members with the school, and what community outreach efforts are in place? You can consider asking this question if you are interested in seeking out community support or establishing strong bonds with parents in order to help student growth and support overall well-being. Teachers are student advocates and when you bring up this question you indicate your understanding that teachers and parents must work in tandem to help students achieve their educational goals. An emphasis on community involvement at a campus indicates how welcoming school leadership is to the surrounding neighborhood and can give you an insight into the level of parental support you can expect from parents and guardians. What in-school structures do you have in place to support struggling students? Schools at all levels and states strive to provide students with a strong support foundation in case they begin to show signs of struggle in their studies. Teachers are most successful in helping students succeed when they have the help of the school administration. The built-in school structures and procedures to facilitate classroom instruction and student success illustrate the extent to which administrators are willing to go to support teacher efforts. What is the teacher evaluation process and how frequently is teacher performance feedback provided? An inquiry into the evaluation process shows your readiness to perform your duties and your eagerness to improve your skills. Most states have a standardized process to measure teacher performance that includes a number of elements such as an evaluation of lesson plan delivery and classroom management skills. Other aspects that are often considered in educator evaluations are the instructor’s parent outreach efforts, campus involvement, and student performance on district and state examinations. Additional questions to consider asking in your teacher interview Here is a selection of more questions to review so you can create your own unique set of questions that reveals your teaching style and values. Is there an established or required curriculum at this campus? What role do teachers play in adjusting lesson plans and creating benchmark assessments? Does the school provide resources to help the teacher? Is there an established mentor program to help teachers that are new to the profession or campus acclimate? What learning management system does the campus use to facilitate learning for students when they are off-campus? How has the school improved its efforts to ensure safety for all individuals on campus? What are some traditions the school has and what role do they play in student morale? Are there any school-wide efforts or initiatives to help build a positive student to teacher rapport? How often and for how long do teachers meet to plan lessons and evaluate student progress? What is the process for planning a field trip for students and what paperwork is needed? Are there any district-wide efforts to educate students on the negative effects of bullying? What is the school doing for senior students to help them prepare for the transition into college? How does the school support students in the lower grades to gain and practice their interpersonal skills? Is there a student to student mentor program to support student achievement? What positive reinforcements does the school use to motivate students to do well in their academics? If there is a disagreement between a teacher and a student and his or her parents, what are the steps administration takes to handle the situation? Can you describe the central characteristics of the typical student on campus? How are the kindergarten students supported in their transition to school? What forms of extracurricular activities are available to students, and what qualifications are needed for an adult to sponsor or coach? What is the policy on campus visitors and what methods are used to ensure student safety? Are there opportunities for teachers to contribute more hours in tutoring or other support for students? Does the school host a community night or present an annual pageant for community members? What are the characteristics of the ideal candidate for this position? What aspects of the school are you looking to build upon in the following years, and what role do you see faculty playing in those efforts? An interview is a give and take and a good opportunity to understand the requirements of the job and expectations of the future employer. Check here to discover real interview questions asked for thousands of job titles.



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