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This file contains only a small portion of Chapter 8.
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2008 Edition Table of Contents

1. [Introduction](#)
So you want to be a teacher?
2. [Job Search](#)
The Best Places to Start Searching for Your Perfect Job
3. [Application Packet](#)
The Paperwork Schools Need to Receive from You
4. [Resumes and Cover Letters](#)
Looking Good on Paper
5. [References and Letters of Recommendation](#)
Finding the Right People to Promote You!
6. [The Teaching Portfolio](#)
Your Professional Brag Book
7. [Preparing for an Interview](#)
Professional Advice and Common Sense
8. [50 Common Interview Questions](#)
(and How to Answer Them)
9. [Building an Educator's Vocabulary](#)
Teacher Jargon and Buzzwords
10. [Will I ever get hired?](#)
- * [Bonus Section: Real Experiences from Teachers and Interviewers](#)

- Chapter 8 -

50 Common Interview Questions (and How to Answer Them)

Interview questions for teaching jobs usually are not unique or creative. The same questions are asked by almost every interview committee. The words in the questions may be changed slightly, but you'll be asked basically the same things at every interview you are invited to.

Use the 50 sample questions below to prepare for your interview. Depending on your learning style, you may want to write out answers for yourself to study or you might want to practice with a friend or family member. Just be sure you'd know how to answer each question below with confidence.

1. Tell us about yourself.

This will be the first question at almost every interview. Just give a brief background in about three sentences. Tell them what colleges you graduated from, what you're certified to teach, what your teaching and working experiences are, and why you'd love the job.

2. How do you teach to the state standards?

If you interview in the United States, you'll find that school administrators love to talk about state, local, or national standards! Reassure them that everything you

do ties into standards. Be sure the lesson plans in your portfolio have the state standards typed right on them. When they ask about them, pull out a lesson plan and show them the close ties between your teaching and the standards.

3. Where do you see yourself in five years?

They're checking to see if this is a career commitment for you. You see yourself in the classroom in five years! You can't imagine being anywhere else. Or, perhaps, you plan to pursue an administration degree and advance your career within the district. Whatever you do, don't imply that the job you're applying for is a short-term stepping stone to a job in another district.

4. Describe your discipline philosophy.

You use lots of positive reinforcement. You are firm, but you don't yell. You have appropriate consequences for inappropriate behavior. You have your classroom rules posted clearly on the walls. You set common routines that students follow every day. You adhere to the school's discipline guidelines.

Also, it's important to emphasize that you suspect discipline problems will be minimal because your lessons are very interesting and engaging to students. Kids tend to misbehave when they're bored and when they're not sure what they're supposed to be doing. A good teacher will always have the students engaged in interesting lessons and he/she will communicate expectations clearly.

Never tell the interviewer that you "send kids to the principal's office" whenever there is a problem. You should be able to handle most discipline problems on your own.

5. How would you handle a gifted student?

If there is an honors/gifted/advance-placement service, you can recommend the child. For the most part, they're looking to see what you would do with a gifted student in your own classroom.

There are a couple of answers that candidates give all the time that are just plain wrong.

- Wrong answer #1: "I will give him/her extra work"
Don't say you'll give him/her extra work because you don't want to punish the child for being gifted.
Correct answer: "I will modify assignments to make them more challenging. Differentiated instruction is the key to ensuring that all students are challenged."
- Wrong answer #2: "I will have the gifted child help other students."
Don't say that you will have the child "help lower students" because that implies that you'll use the child as your little servant because he finishes his work too fast.
Correct answer: "I will provide individualized attention and/or small-group instruction when possible so that children can maximize his or her learning."

6. What is your favorite subject to teach?

Elementary teachers get asked this a lot. If you're in an elementary school where you will be teaching all subjects, then tell them your favorite is Reading, Writing, or Math. Most administrators think these are the most important subjects because they are the basis to all learning. It's okay to like Science and

Social Studies too, but be sure they know you have a passion for teaching Math, Reading, and Writing. If you're in a middle school or high school, you may be asked to describe your favorite unit or topic within your subject area.

7. How do you motivate students to learn?

Your lessons are all exciting. If you're in elementary school, your lessons are fun, hands-on, and manipulative. Show them an example of an interactive lesson in your portfolio. If you're in high school, you keep your lessons interesting by presenting students with thought-provoking challenges. You do a lot of cooperative learning activities where kids can work together. You might also emphasize that you connect your lessons to real-life events that students can relate to. As always, back up your words with examples and evidence.

8. How do you meet the needs of special education students?

If they have an IEP (Individualized Education Plan) you follow it. You'll get bonus points for using the acronym IEP. You work together with the special education teacher to find out what the student needs and to provide it to him/her. You modify your assignments so that the special education child is challenged, but not overwhelmed. Give an example (without using names) of a special needs student you've worked with in the past. Tell what you did.

9. How do you integrate technology into your teaching?

You take the students to the computer lab. You use word processors with students. You teach students to use the Internet for research projects. You tell them you're anxious to put up a classroom Website. If you've ever used CPS Clickers, tell them about it. If you've ever used a PowerPoint in your teaching,

tell them about it. In fact, tell them you'd think it would be fun to teach the kids to make their *own* PowerPoint presentations. Tell them you downloaded this great eBook that has lots of interview questions on it...oh wait..don't mention that last one.

10. What will your classroom environment look like?

Interviewers ask this question often. Most people talk about the student work hanging on the walls and the arrangement of furniture. There's a trick to answer this question: Don't just describe your room, but describe the students in the room. Your classroom environment is filled with busy students participating in hands-on, exploratory learning.

11. Why do you want to teach at this particular school?

When you are asked this question, be prepared to flatter their pants off. Tell them: You love this school and this is where your heart is. This is where your dreams are. This school just happens to be in the community you want to live in. You can't say enough good things about the student population. It's wonderful because the parents are so involved here. You've known other teachers in the district who are very happy here. If you've student taught or subbed in this school, tell them how marvelous your experiences were. Let them know that you've applied to a couple of schools, but this school is by far your number one choice. (Don't talk about how your commute will be shorter. Interview committees don't care about your commute. Keep singing the praises of the school when you answer this question, and avoid talking about yourself.)

12. What do you do if a student confides in you and tells you about something serious (example: they tell you they are being abused), but asks you not to tell anyone?

You report it. For the student's safety, you must tell an appropriate authority. Depending on the school's policy, you might tell a social worker, counselor, or principal. Most students will understand that you're trying to make things better. If they're confiding in you that means they're looking for a solution. Since you cannot take this kind of matter into your own hands, reporting the incident is your way of helping the student find a solution to the problem.

13. How do you integrate higher-order thinking skills into your teaching?

You present students with open-ended assignments that require creativity and advanced thinking skills. Your test questions often feature subjective questions that require reasoning and logic. You challenge students to "discover" answers, rather than just tell them answers. Present examples from your portfolio.

14. How do you integrate creative problem-solving skills into your teaching?

You welcome creative thinking and don't expect a single right/wrong answer for each student. You pose challenging questions or thoughts and give students the resources to come up with a unique solution.

15. What is your philosophy on teaching Math?

You want students to "discover" math. If you're in an elementary school, emphasize manipulatives. Elementary teachers teach math using Unifix Cubes, Place Value Blocks, Counters, Judy Clocks, and Geoboards. (If you don't know

what these things are, do a Google search.) Elementary teachers should know the difference between "Everyday Math Program" (which is a "New Math") and a more traditional Math program.

Secondary teachers must emphasize the teaching of concepts in interesting ways that will keep students engaged. Emphasize that all instruction is aimed at preparing students for state assessments. Give specific examples of ways you connect math to real-life situations that kids can relate to.

Chapter 8 in the full version of the eBook will contain the 50 most common teacher interview questions and answers!



Scroll down for more information!

This is only a very small preview of the book's contents. The full version is over 95 pages long and includes:

- 50 Common Interview Questions and How to Answer Them
- Interview Tips and Strategies
- Seven Worst Things To Say at an Interview

- How to Build a Teaching Portfolio
- How to Use Your Teaching Portfolio
- Application Process Advice and Guidance
- How to Spice Up Your Cover Letter and Resume
- Perfect Places to Search for a Job
- And much, much more!

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