



Interview Success: Basic Questions

❖ Pacific U. Seminar

AGENDA:

- ❖ Chart Your Questions
- ❖ PowerPoint Presentation
- ❖ Practice Interview Questions/Feedback



What should I do before an interview?

- ✓ Let your references know
- ✓ Ask your references, mentors and network contacts for “inside information”
- ✓ Log on to the district’s & school’s website
- ✓ Ask for information from a receptionist or office manager: newsletters, goal documents, etc.
- ✓ **Practice, practice, practice!**

What You Should Do Leading Up to the Interview





How do I get an interview?

Talk to people!

- **Colleagues:** they know your potential
- **Friends and Relatives:** ask the right question: "Do you know anyone in the --- School District?"
- **Oregon Professional Educator Fair:**
www.teachoregon.com/OSPA/OPEF/ePage.aspx
- **Membership in Professional Organizations:** attend meetings and conferences to get in touch with key people
readoregon.org/telinks
- **Volunteer Activities** improves skills, and give you a broader base of contacts
- **Complete your paperwork!** have **everything** turned in, or you won't be considered "active"

What should I bring?

- When scheduling/confirming **ask some questions**: what you'll need, length, how many questions, how many people?
- Bring extra copies (resume, reference letters, certificate, reference contact info),
- a blank index card and pen
- *Optional*: portfolio of **pictures**, a bottle of water, and a handkerchief!



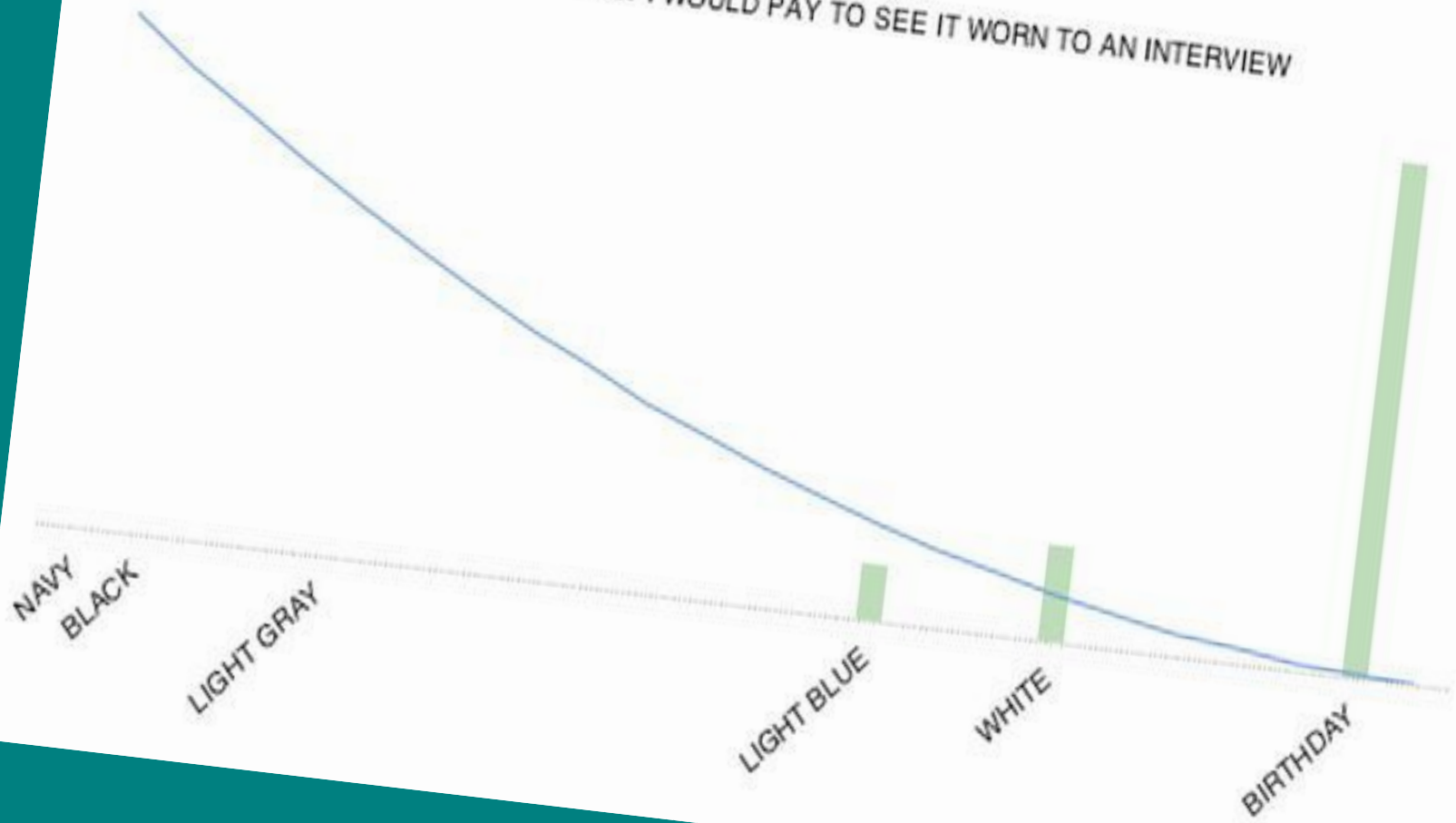
What should I wear?



- First impression is important!
- Dress “professionally” -- better than you would for a normal day of teaching
- Clothing should enhance your “style”
- You should look like someone your employer would want as a representative of the school
- The “interview uniform” is a dark suit, traditional shoes, tasteful accessories, and a white shirt/blouse
- Avoid: heavy cologne, perfume, multiple piercings, (visible) tattoos

The Suit

— LEVEL OF APPROPRIATENESS
■ AMOUNT I WOULD PAY TO SEE IT WORN TO AN INTERVIEW



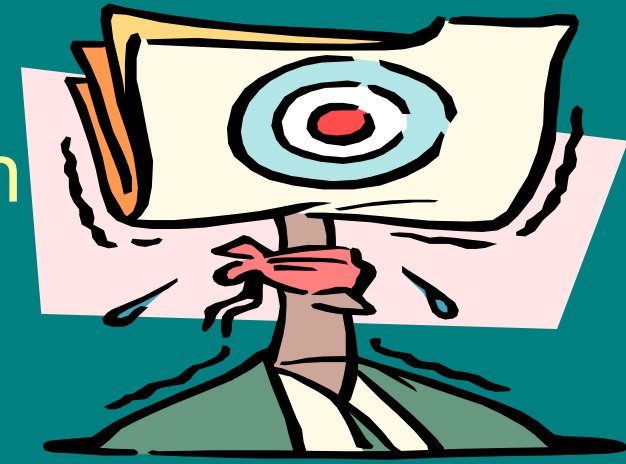


Remember:

- Your image is a tool you use to accomplish an objective.
- The way you dress indicates how you want an employer to think of you.

How do I answer questions?

- **Breathe** and take a moment to think
- Keep it concise: think “**stump speech**”
- Keep it **positive**
- If you really don't know, **be honest**, assure them you'd be willing to find out
- Maintain eye contact
- Manage **weakness to strength**



What should my body say?

- Smile (*I'm friendly!*)
- Firm handshake (*I'm confident!*)
- Sit back in the chair and lean forward slightly (*I'm poised and interested!*)
- Avoid: gum, hair twirls, fidgety hands, verbal "tics" (*I'm not nervous!*)
- Clean up (*I take care of details/myself!*)

Remember, in what we communicate :

- Words = 7%
- Vocal Tone = 38%
- **Body Language = 55%**



What's a good format for my answers?

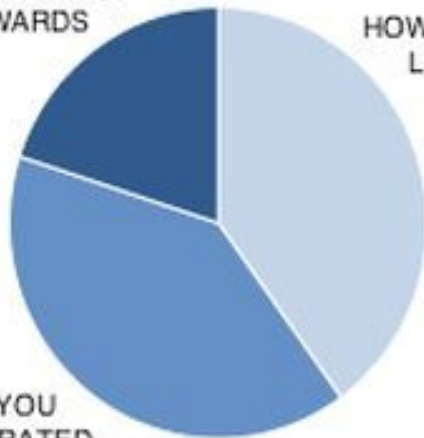
- Use examples from your own experience – *tell your story!*
- Talk about how you did a similar job
- Use the PAR technique:
 - **P = Problem (describe positively)**
 - **A = Action (what did you do?)**
 - **R = Results (how was the problem solved?)**

Can you turn a negative positive?

Describe a Time You Had Difficulty Working with a Coworker.

OFFER

HOW WELL YOU GOT
ALONG AFTERWARDS

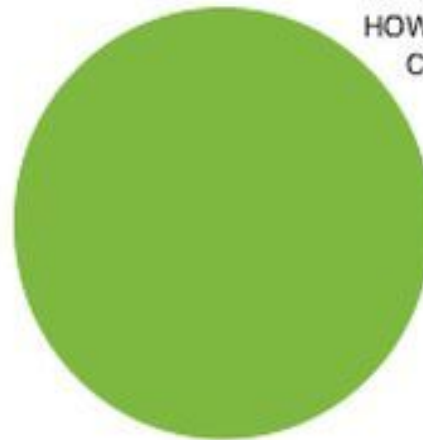


HOW MUCH YOU
LISTENED

HOW MUCH YOU
COLLABORATED

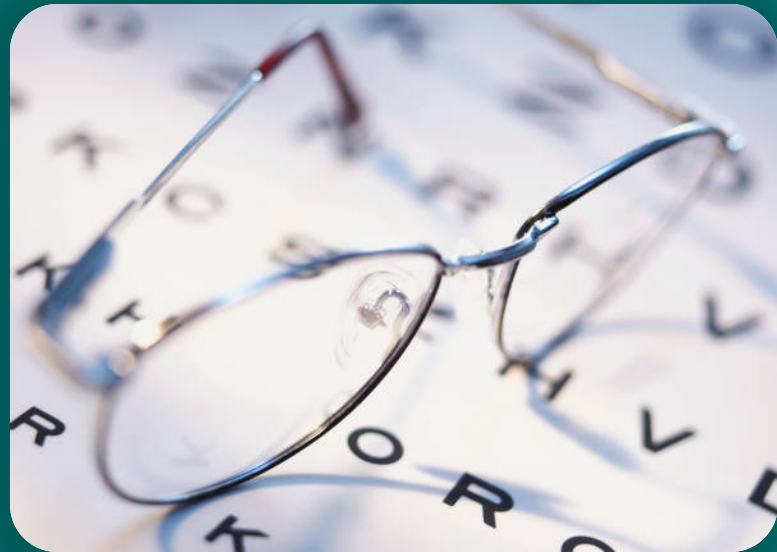
NO OFFER

HOW MUCH THE
COWORKER SUCKED



Where do I look?

- Look at **everyone** on the panel
- If they don't introduce themselves at first, ask for names/roles



How am I rated during an interview?

- non-verbal mannerisms
- energy and enthusiasm
- confidence and poise
- knowledge/quality of answers
- quantity/length of answers
- appearance and grooming
- communication skills



What are the most common types of questions?

- ❖ Personal information and motivation
- ❖ Skills/Competence
- ❖ Career Goals
- ❖ ***Cultural competence, equity***
- ❖ College activities and experiences
- ❖ Hypothetical scenes/dilemmas
- ❖ Academic preparation, achievements
- ❖ Prior experiences
- ❖ Knowledge of the organization

Expect variety and an occasional surprise!

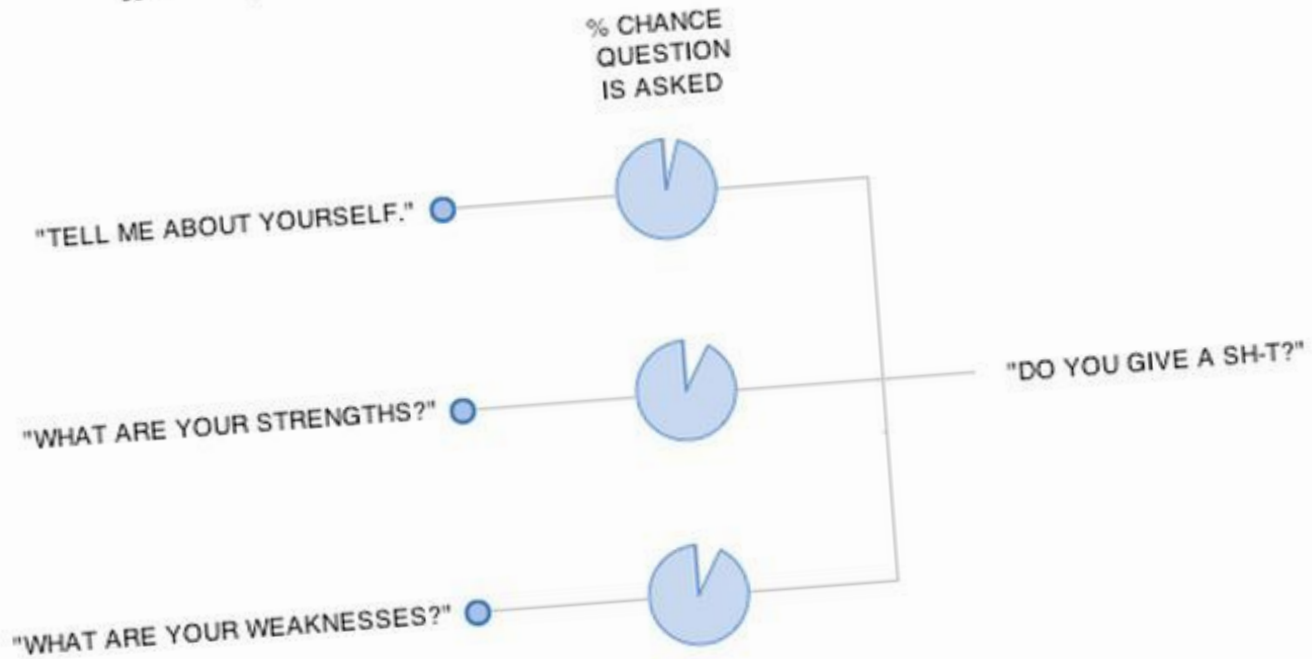
- *My personal favorite:*

What book have you read recently that made a significant impact on you?

How might it influence your teaching?



Question Category Overview: What I (the Interviewer) am Really Trying to Figure Out



THESE ARE THE MOST BASIC INTERVIEW QUESTIONS. IF YOU HAVE NOT PREPARED AN ANSWER, I WILL ASSUME YOU DO NOT, IN FACT, GIVE A SH-T.

Are there questions I shouldn't hear?

Yes!

- Questions about age, race, religion, citizenship, marital status, pregnancy status, childbearing plans, age of children, military service, arrests (conviction Qs ok), height, weight, physical impairment or handicap not related to job requirement, medical history

How do I answer an inappropriate question?

- Be tactful (vs. “I won’t answer that.”)
- Answer if it’s harmless to you
- “Could you explain to me how this question is relevant to the job?”
- Reassure: “Regardless of --- I can excel at this job and help your school.”
- Start taking notes: exact wording, time, location, witnesses, interviewer

“Do you have any questions?”

- The absolute **worst** answer to this common closing question is, *“No.”*
- Prepare question(s) in advance, do some research!



Advice you won't find in the guidebooks!



- Drive the school's attendance area
- Ask for a tour of the school (student-led are the best!)
- Get a good night's sleep!
- Plan on how long it takes to get to the interview site, and pad it!
- In your car: soothing music and AC on high!

Remember: an interview is a 2-way street!

- You should leave the interview knowing more about the school, and having a better impression of the school's administrator, staff, morale, and challenges

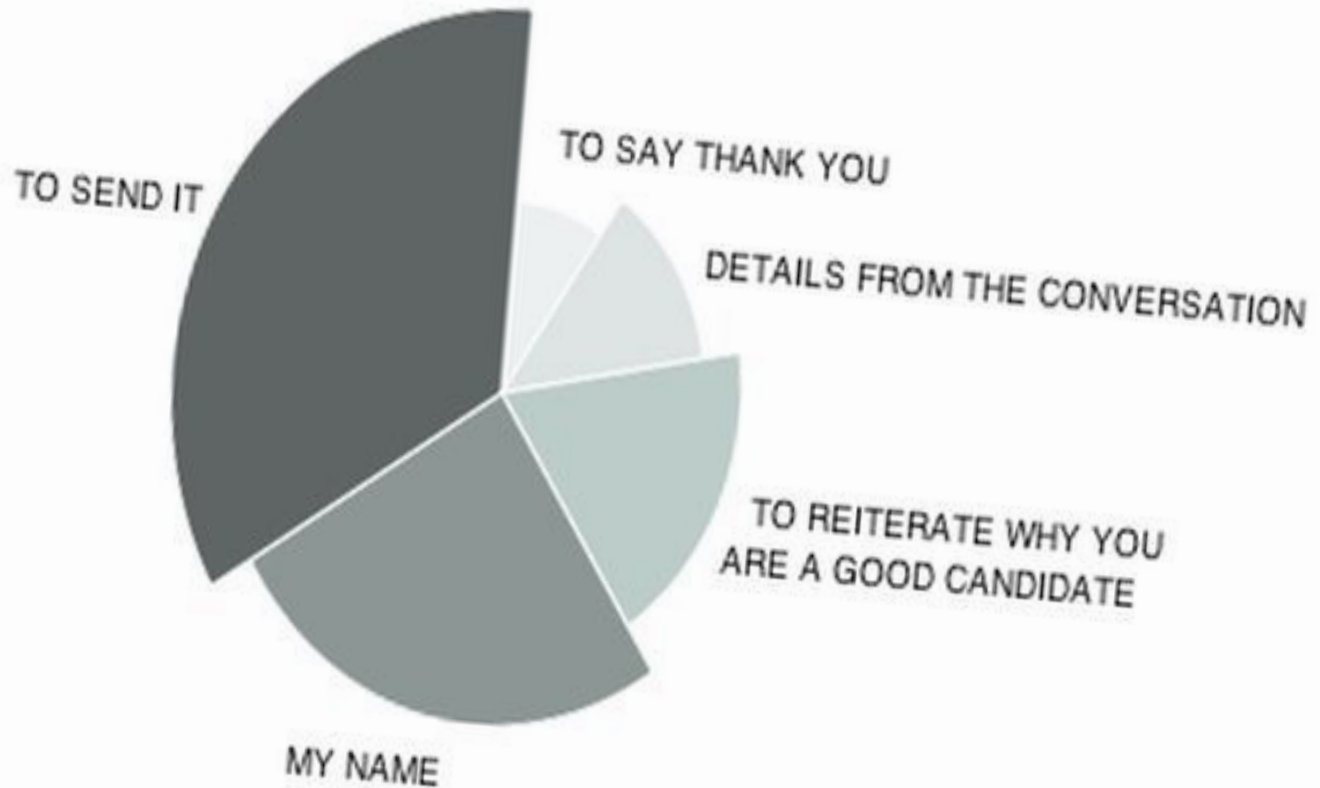


What do I do after the interview?

- Write a **brief, hand-written, specific** thank you note to the Principal



What to Remember Regarding a Thank You Email



What if I don't get the job?

Ask some questions:

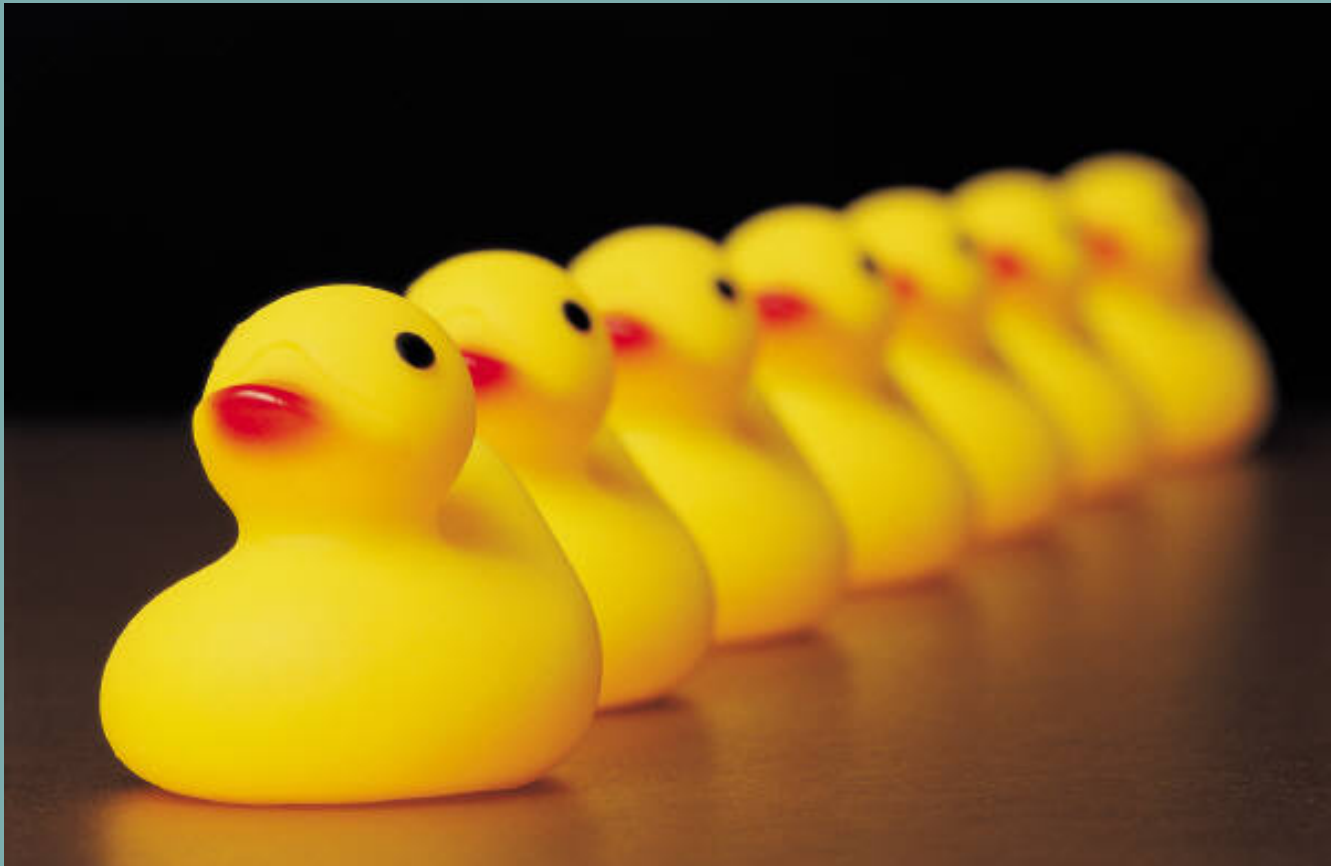
- ✓ Can I get some feedback?
- ✓ Would you be willing to positively mention me to your colleagues?
- ✓ How can I improve my chances during my next interview?

Don't despair!



- Consider each interview a learning and networking opportunity
- Realize a rejection is not personal -- each hire is made for a specific “fit”
- Budget timelines, vacations, and applicant scarcity makes for varied interviewing periods: April - August, *and beyond!*

Now, let's practice!



Some favorite questions, re: personal info, motivation:

- Who or what had the greatest influence on you wanting to be a teacher?
- What are the greatest personal challenges you have faced?
- What are, and how have you achieved your personal goals?
- What are five words your friends/colleagues would use to describe you?

... re: skills and abilities:

- How do you use technology in your everyday life, and in the classroom?
- Tell us about your role in a difficult group decision with a successful outcome.
- Could you describe the most difficult person you've ever worked with?
- How does a child learn to ---, and what is your role as a teacher in the process?

... re: career objectives:

- Where do you see yourself in 3/5/10 years?
- Please describe your ideal job/classroom.
- Why do you want to work for us?
- What are some assets that would make you valuable for our district?

...re: activities/experiences:

- What extracurricular activities have you been involved in?
- What did you enjoy doing the most in college?
- What leadership roles/responsibilities did you have in your college life?

...re: cultural competence & equity:

- What does “cultural competence” mean to you?
- How do your teaching practices and workplace habits reflect your beliefs?
- What are the causes of the achievement gap between white students and students of color? How will you close this gap?
- What are your expectations for administrators, colleagues, students, and parents at this school?



...re: “hypotheticals”



- Imagine I am touring your classroom, what would I expect to see and hear?
- How would you communicate with a parent of a student who is struggling in your classroom?
- What did you admire most in your previous supervisors and colleagues?
- How would you describe the ideal teacher?



...re: academics and achievements...



- What is your proudest academic achievement?
- Should grades be used as an indicator of future success when a school district is considering teacher candidates?
- What were your favorite/least favorite college courses? Why?

...re: prior accomplishments:

- What prior experience proved to you that you'd be a good teacher?
- What do you see as your major strengths/weaknesses in prior jobs?
- What have you done that makes most proud?
- What else would you want us to know about you in order to make a good decision?



Ask good questions:

- What future changes do you see for --- School?
- What direction do you see --- School going in the future?
- What is the biggest challenge facing --- School?
- What makes --- School different?
- What trends have you seen in the financial stability/socioeconomic status of this school/district?

Morale questions to ask:

- Why did you accept work with this school district?
- What do you like most about your school district?
- Would you want your son/daughter to work for this school district too?
- Why should I take this job, or work for your school district?

Work environment questions to ask:

- What kind of training/support is offered to new teachers?
- What faculty teams/committees/groups can I join?
- How does the school and community support one another?