Interview Tips

During the Interview

1. **Carry these items to the interview:** several copies of your resume on quality paper, copies of your references, professional looking portfolio to take notes following the interview and carry your resumes/references, directions to the interview site.

2. **Leave these items at home:** cell phones/pagers, friends/family, bad manners/negative attitude, gum.

3. **Upon arrival:** arrive 10-15 minutes before the interview, treat the receptionist with respect, check your appearance in the restroom, take along a breath mint, try to relax and take a few deep breaths.

4. **Be aware of your disposition.** Greet everyone you meet with a smile, good eye contact and a firm handshake. Always be aware of your nonverbal behavior. Maintain a relaxed, but professional posture and a positive tone of voice. Show excitement for the position.

5. **Listen and relax!** Enjoy the conversation and listen carefully by focusing and giving the interviewer your full attention.

6. **Think before you speak.** Before you answer a question: take a deep breath, organize your thoughts, understand the question and clearly communicate your response.

7. **It is ok to ask for a minute to think about a question.** It is perfectly acceptable to pause for a moment to collect your thoughts before responding to a question. Simply say to the interviewer “May I have a minute to think about that?” Interviewers would rather you take a minute to think about your response and give a well thought out answer, rather than have you ramble on because you did not take enough time before responding. If you are really stumped on a question it is acceptable to ask “Can we return to that question later?”.

8. **Be specific and give examples.** Do not diminish past experiences. You can provide examples from a wide variety of experiences including: student teaching, academics, career-related experience, volunteer work, activities, etc. It adds to your credibility when you can give specific examples with a few strong points.

9. **Be honest!** Under NO circumstances is it ever acceptable to lie or make up an example. If you are struggling to come up with an answer, ask for a minute to think about the question or ask if you can come back to that particular question later.
After the Interview

1. **Collect business cards from each interviewer.** This ensures you have the correct contact information if you have questions after the interview and so you can send a thank-you note.

2. **Evaluate your performance.** What parts of the interview went well? What parts need improvement? Be sure to address the areas for improvement to ensure that it goes better during the next interview.

3. **Thank the interviewer.** Always write a thank-you note to the interviewer. Send a letter within 1-2 days to each person you met with. If you are limited by time, an e-mail thank you is acceptable. This is your opportunity to remind the interviewer of your great qualities, share something you may have forgotten in the interview and again express your interest and enthusiasm for the position.

**Behavior Based Interviews** - The basic premise of behavioral-based interviews is that past behavior predicts future behavior. Behavioral-based interviewing is designed to minimize personal impressions that can affect the hiring decision by focusing on your actions and behaviors rather than subjective impressions. These types of questions are structured to obtain specific, behavioral examples. Recall situations that highlight favorable behaviors or actions, such as student teaching, observation, other career-related experiences, course work, class projects, volunteer experience, work experience, coaching experience, leadership, teamwork, or activities. Utilize the **PAR** technique to help you highlight relevant pieces of your examples and give structure to your answers.

**S/P** = Problem (Describe a problem or situation)
**A** = Action (Explain the action you took, individually or as part of a group - focus on skills you used)
**R** = Results (Talk about the positive results, quantifying if possible)

Examples of Behavioral-Based Questions

- Tell me how you have dealt with unmotivated students / employees.
- Discuss a challenge you encountered within your courses/work. What did you learn from it?
- Describe a situation that demonstrated good communication between you and a colleague, customer or superior.
- Tell me about a memorable experience you’ve experienced/
- What accomplishment has given you the greatest satisfaction?
- How do you work under pressure?
- When have you failed?
- How do you deal with conflict?
- Describe a stressful situation that demonstrated your coping skills.
- Describe a situation where you had to do several tasks at the same time.
- Tell me about a time when you had to exert leadership in a crisis situation.
- Tell me about a time when you went above and beyond expectations.
Questions to Ask the Administrator/Interviewer

- Typically at the end of the interview, the interviewer will ask you if you have any questions. You should ALWAYS have questions prepared to ask the interviewer. If you don’t have questions prepared you might damage your chance of a successful interview. This is your opportunity to gain valuable information to determine if this position/school/district are a good fit for you.

Topics to avoid asking questions about include: salary/benefits, information about the school/district that is readily available on the web site or brochures, personal questions, and questions that have already been answered during the course of the interview.

Topics to consider asking questions about include: specific questions about the position/company/industry, qualities and skills the employer is looking for in candidates, advancement and promotion, and training programs.