

EDUCATOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

How to Answer Questions

You never know what question to expect. From “Tell me about yourself” to “If you were an educational tool, what would you be and why,” there are a variety of questions asked for a variety of reasons. Be prepared for anything. Behavioral questions are very common in educational interviews. A behavioral question focuses on how you handled various work situations in the past. Answers to these questions demonstrate your skills, abilities, and personality. These questions reflect your past behavior and can help an employer predict how you might respond and/or behave in the future. A behavioral question can often be identified by the way it begins. For some examples:

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| “Tell me about a time when...” | “How did you handle...” | “Describe a...” |
| “Give an example of...” | “Share an example...” | “Talk about a time when...” |

When asked a behavioral question, we encourage you to use the S.T.A.R. method.

Situation **T**ask **A**ction **R**esult

Below is a behavioral question and an answer provided in the S.T.A.R. format.

Situation – **The Setting of your story.** Explain to the employer what the particular situation was.

“While I was working in the office of a local car dealership, I often had to deal with difficult customers. One particular situation occurred on a Saturday night while I was working alone. A woman came in to pay her service bill and the amount on the invoice was \$50 more than she had been quoted. The customer was furious, refused to pay, and claimed that our company was trying to rip her off.”

Task – **What was the goal?** Describe the task you were asked to complete or if there was a particular problem or issue you were trying to solve.

“Being the only one available at the time, I knew I had to address the situation. Not only did I need to calm the customer down, but I also needed to help resolve the issue and try make things right.”

Action – **How were you incredible?** Tell the employer the action you took.

“Although I was not in charge of the billing process, I acknowledged her concern and offered to contact the appropriate manager right away. I looked up her account, called the manager in his office to explain the situation, and then personally escorted her to his office.”

Result – **The result.** Explain the direct results of your actions.

“The customer could see that I cared about the situation and she calmed down. She even thanked me for my concern and apologized for being angry at first. After escorting the customer to the manager’s office, the manager was able to look up the customer’s account and identify the mistake. In the end, the problem was resolved and the customer left satisfied.”

Top 20 Interview Questions: What they are really looking for

1. What can you tell us about yourself?

What they're really asking: What makes you special? What might you bring to our children?

****See "How to Answer 'Tell Me a Little Bit About Yourself'" below*

2. What is your greatest strength as a teacher?

What they're really asking: How do you perceive your talents and abilities as a teacher? Will you be an asset to our school and our students?

3. What is your greatest weakness?

What they're really asking: How honest are you being with us and with yourself? What skeletons do you have in your "teaching closet" that we should know about?

4. What is your philosophy of classroom discipline?

What they're really asking: Do you have a plan? Are you going to be able to control kids?

5. What steps would you take with a student who is disruptive in your classroom?

What they're really asking: Can you handle most discipline problems yourself, or will you send students to the principal's office at the drop of a hat?

6. What kind of classroom management plan do you like best? How would you implement it in your classroom?

What they're really asking: How will your lessons be planned? Will your students be on task and challenged?

7. Why do you want to be a teacher?

What they're really asking: Do you have a passion for children and the teaching profession? How will our children benefit by having you as their teacher?

8. Why do you want to teach in this district/school?

What they're really asking: Do you care where you teach? Did you take the time to research our district/school?

9. Why should we hire you for this position?

What they're really asking: Can you convince us that you're the one? How much confidence do you have in yourself?

10. What are your goals in education? Where do you see yourself five years from now? How does this position fit into your career plans?

What they're really asking: Do you want to stay in one position for the long haul, or will you be here a year and move on? Are you a stable person?

11. What would we see if we walked into your classroom?

What they're really asking: Do you have a well-managed classroom? Are your students interacting with you and the other students?

12. What are some trends, issues and methodologies in education that relate to your specific curriculum area or grade level?

What they're really asking: Do you know what's going on in education today?

13. What books are you currently reading or have you read recently?

What they're really asking: Teachers should be avid readers; are you a reader? How well-rounded are you?

14. What are some of your hobbies or leisure-time activities?

What they're really asking: What do you do outside of school that would transfer positively into the classroom?

15. What special skills or talents will you bring to your classroom?

What they're really asking: Do you have a wide variety of interests and experiences that will make you an exciting, stimulating teacher?

16. Would you be willing to teach at a different grade level (elementary) or teach a different subject (secondary)?

What they're really asking: Are you flexible? Do you have enough confidence to consider other grade levels or subject areas?

17. Would you be willing to pursue an extra certificate or credential?

What they're really asking: Are you a teacher who will increase our staffing options?

18. What is your philosophy of team teaching?

What they're really asking: Do you work well with others?

19. What were you hoping we would ask you today, but didn't?

What they're really asking: Is there anything special about yourself you want us to know?

20. Do you have any questions for us?

What they're really asking: Are you interested enough in our district to ask questions?

How to Answer "Tell Me a Little Bit About Yourself."

Almost every interview will start out with this question. It is encouraged that you have a 1-2 minute response that does not sound rehearsed. This is also known as an "elevator pitch." You should mention who you are, a little bit of your background, some of your skills, experience, and/or education. Most importantly, you should state what you can bring to the position you applying for. **The purpose of your response to this question is to briefly explain who you are, differentiate yourself, and show your qualifications and enthusiasm for the position.**

1. Demographics/Background (Name, Year in School, Major, Hometown, Why You Went to UNI, etc.)
2. Involvement (Volunteer Experience, Leadership Experience, Clubs and Organizations, etc.)
3. Relevant Experience (A Job or Two Highlighting Your Experience, What You Did, How it Benefits the Employer, etc.)
4. Closing (Why You Are Interested in the Position, Special Skills, etc.)

Sample Interview Questions

In addition, anticipate and practice answering these possible variances/other interview questions.

Describe why you want to be a teacher.

How does your philosophy of education meet the individual needs of students?

What role would you expect a parent to play in the education of his/her child?

List the personal and professional attributes you would bring to this position.

Explain the learning environment you prefer in your classroom.

How would you resolve a conflict between two students assigned to your classroom?

Describe the process you would utilize to plan a teaching lesson for your students.

What kinds of extra duty or extracurricular assignments are you willing to assist with or sponsor?

Explain the professional goals you have established for yourself during the next five years.

In your school building, what role do you expect the principal to play?

Talk about your personal philosophy of education.

List five characteristics of an effective teacher.

Describe how you will assess students in your classroom.

How will you communicate with students, other teachers, and parents?

What plans have you made for specialized training or advanced degrees?

Describe the skills you have developed to assist exceptional students.

What process would you follow if a student in your class exhibits characteristics of substance use?

What process would you follow if you suspect one of your students are being abused in their home setting?

How much time, if any, should an educator spend on his or her assigned area outside of the regular contact?

Describe your strengths and weaknesses as a classroom teacher.

How would students in your school describe you?

What was the title of the last book you read? What was your biggest take away from that book?

Describe the role that technology should play in the classroom.

Describe the current status of the teaching profession.

Relate your philosophy of grouping students for instruction.

Why are you the best candidate for this position?

Tell me about the last time a student got a hold of your "heart strings."

Do you believe rules or policies are necessary in a classroom? If important, how will they be established in your class?

Tell me about yourself.

Why do you want to work for our district/school?

What would you do if...?

Tell me about a time when....

How have your past experiences prepared you for teaching?

Describe an ideal curriculum in your area of study.

Define cooperative learning and give an example of how you have used it.

Describe a teaching strategy you used to maximize the learning potential of all students.

Describe your typical teaching style.

What teaching techniques do you use?

How would you handle a student who is a consistent behavioral problem in your class?

Comment on some leaders in education.

Cite several authorities in your subject and comment on them.

What are your concerns and outlook for the future of public education?

How will you appraise your own teaching performance?

How will you determine if your students are learning?

How do you communicate with parents about their student's progress?

Questions You May Want to Ask

If you are truly interested in working for a school district, you should have well thought-out questions. This is your chance to show your sincere interest in the school. Do not ask questions that you could easily find upon looking on their webpage. Do your research. Think of and ask what is important to you (opportunities for coaching, community involvement, culture, etc.). Develop questions accordingly.

- Do you encourage and accept suggestions from teachers on curriculum and instruction methods?
- How would you rate the comradery of the teaching staff?
- How do you keep parents informed about what is going on at school?
- How do you handle complaints from parents?
- How many extracurricular activities does the school offer?
- I noticed there are U, V, W, X, Y, and Z sports here. Are there opportunities for coaching?
- How much power do you have to determine the curriculum in the classes you teach?
- Are you free to choose any books you like for your classes?
- How much of your time is taken up non-teaching tasks like monitoring and lunchroom duty?
- Are the school's rules and regulations clear and consistently enforced?
- How often do you meet with fellow teachers, either formally or informally, to discuss school matters?
- In your classes, are you able to allow for differences in children's rates of development?
- How much information do report cards convey?
- How active is your student council/government?
- Public schools only: How strong is community support for local schools?
- Private schools only: Are parents pressured to contribute (above tuition) or to assist with fund raising?
- What is the current state of relations between the administration and the teaching staff?
- How accessible are teachers?
- Does the school encourage parental involvement?
- What percentage of parents are active in the PTA?
- How much emphasis does the school place on extracurricular activities like sports and music?
- What special assistance does the school offer?
- Do you have programs to deal with drug and alcohol abuse?
- Elementary and junior high schools only: Are there any special programs for latchkey kids?
- Does the school have community service programs?
- Overall, what type of atmosphere and culture do you feel you promote within this school?

Want to practice?

We welcome you to schedule a mock interview or conversation to help you prepare/answer your questions:

UNI Office of Career Services
102 Gilchrist Hall
(319) 273-6857

Visit our website for other helpful resources.
careerservices.uni.edu/educators

