

INTERVIEWING APPLICANTS

One of the most difficult and important responsibilities of a Catholic school principal, is to hire the right people. Since you generally don't know most applicants, the interview is a critical part of the hiring process in which you get to know the applicant. Asking good questions and listening carefully are critical to choosing the right person for your team of teachers.

Purpose

The interview is probably the single most important phase of the entire selection process and is generally the decisive step.

The candidate to be interviewed will have been chosen on the basis of information from his or her application papers and as a result of contacts with the individuals listed as references. The interview is an opportunity to supplement this data with information that is not readily available in order to achieve as complete a picture of the candidate as possible. The interview also affords the candidate an opportunity to ask any questions and secure information needed for his or her decision regarding employment.

The function of the interview is to reduce the element of chance in personnel selection and to improve the possibility of selecting the best possible teacher(s) for your school.

Prior to the Interview:

Before you begin an interview, you must decide what you are looking for in each candidate. These characteristics must be firmly fixed in your mind before the interview begins.

Faith and Vision. Seek a person with a strong faith and a sense of Church.

Select a person with initiative and perseverance. Initiative and perseverance are vital to successful teaching. Teachers must be self-starters. They either make themselves work, or they don't. If they don't, the children suffer.

Question reliability. A teaching candidate must be reliable because teachers are entrusted with the task of forming the hearts and minds of our youth. She or he must be a person upon whom students, parents, colleagues and the principal can rely to do the job well and with integrity.

Seek mental ability. Teaching is a complex and intricate task requiring thought, preparation, instant decision making and reflection, along with imagination, creativity and curiosity.

Make sure the applicant is dedicated to Catholic education. The primary task of Catholic schools is to transmit the faith and secondly to develop each and every student, in all their capacities of mind, body and spirit, to realize their God given potential and work to become the person that God is calling them to be. This work requires great dedication and commitment.

Look for a willingness to absorb pressure and select emotionally balanced people.

Teaching is tough! Every teacher will be required to take criticism and absorb punishment during the course of the year. Teaching requires a solid measure of self-confidence and humility.

Teachers must “live through” frequent discouragements. They have to be polite to a discourteous parent when they prefer not to be. Often they have to listen when they prefer to talk. A liking for people helps to cushion the pressures. Therefore, look for people who like other people. Teachers often don't see the fruits of their labors, so look for people who are dedicated and committed to helping children learn and who don't quit or despair easily.

NEGATIVE QUALITIES TO AVOID IN A CANDIDATE

- A. Authoritarian or bossy
- B. Lacking human skills
- C. Poor organizational skills
- D. Lack of confidence/fear of failure/poor self-concept
- E. Rigid, threatened by change, insecure
- F. Negative attitude
- G. Withdrawn, inability to communicate
- H. Inability to discipline
- I. Impractical/full of theory/little common sense
- J. Does not understand role
- K. Poor instructional skills
- L. Uncommitted to teaching
- M. Resists suggestions to improve
- N. Loud or abrasive personality
- O. Does not enjoy children
- P. Lack of commitment to/lack of understanding of Catholic schools

FORMING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Questions should be written to:

Fill in any gaps in the information provided in the application form.

Clear up any contradictory information.

Determine if the candidate's aspirations fit the job (is this the kind of job she/he really wants, or just the only job she/he can find?).

Determine the precise nature of the candidate's knowledge, abilities and past experience.

Determine if the candidate's philosophy of education fits with the school and more broadly, fits with Catholic educational philosophy.

Determine the candidate's personal qualities. Is she/he really what you are looking for?

Reduce-stress and give the interviewee a chance to tell you what they believe, feel, do, etc.

Be open-ended, requiring more than a "Yes" or "No" answer.

LAWFUL AND UNLAWFUL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

	<u>Lawful</u>	<u>Unlawful</u>
1. Asking the applicants if they have ever worked under another name.	X	
2. Asking the applicants to name their birthplace.		X
3. Asking for the birthplace of the applicant's parents, spouse or other close relative.		X
4. Asking the applicants to submit proof of age by supplying birth certificate or baptismal record.		X
5. Asking the applicant for his/her religious affiliation name of church, or religious holidays observed.	X	
6. Asking the applicants if they are naturalized citizens.		X
7. Asking the applicants if they can work in the U.S.	X	
8. Asking the applicants if they have ever been convicted for any crimes and to indicate where and when.	X	
9. Asking the applicants to indicate what foreign languages they can read, write or speak fluently.	X	
10. Asking the applicants how they acquired their ability to read, write or speak a foreign language.		X
11. Asking the applicants about their past work experience.	X	
12. Asking the applicant for wife's maiden name.		X
13. Asking for full names of the applicants brothers/sisters.		X
14. Asking the applicant for a list of all clubs, societies, and lodges to which she/he belongs.		X
15. Asking about marital status.		X
16. Asking about applicant's children (number, ages, etc.)		X
17. Asking about spouse's occupation, etc.		X

**NEVER HIRE A PERSON WITHOUT CHECKING AND VERIFYING
THE REFERENCES AND CONDUCTING
A CRIMINAL HISTORY BACKGROUND CHECK**

ALL LISTED REFERENCES MUST BE CONTACTED

Decide who should call for a reference check on the candidate. The pastor of the parish school is probably the most appropriate person to call the candidate's current pastor. You should also consider calling persons NOT listed as references such as past supervisors, co-workers, etc.

General Guidelines:

1. Always give the reference information about who you are and why you are calling, e.g., "My name is Tom Jones, I'm a member of the St. Louis School search committee and I'm calling about Barbara Smith who has applied for the principal opening here at St. Louis. Barbara has listed you as a reference, so I'm calling to verify her work history and to try to understand her a little better to determine if her background and qualifications meet our job requirements."
2. Prepare a list of questions ahead of time to help you to get to know the candidate better, or to fill in gaps in the information in the application. Some experts suggest that the caller begin by asking for confirmation of factual data to put the source at ease, then get into work experience and work habits and finally into personal characteristics.
3. Carefully review the questions to make sure that you are not asking the source to violate legal requirements. **Catholic schools may not discriminate in their hiring practices on the basis of gender, age or race. You may not ask questions like "How soon does Barbara expect to retire?" "Is Barbara pregnant?" "Does she have any children?" or "Is Barbara married?" Questions should focus on job performance – how well has the candidate been performing.**
4. Is the source obviously biased in favor of this candidate? Can you contact other, less biased sources? One way is to ask the source for the names of other people who know the candidate well.
5. In general, the best sources of information are: 1) people who have knowledge of the candidate's recent performance, 2) someone who was an immediate supervisor of the candidate, and 3) people who have worked closely with the candidate and would be well aware of the candidate's strengths and limitations.

BACKGROUND CHECKS

Prior to making an offer of employment to a principal, the search committee must perform a criminal history background check on the applicant (as per Diocesan Policy DBA 4112). Forms are provided in the *Policy Handbook*.