

THE WINNING INTERVIEW

A presentation to Texas A&M University Student Teachers

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Career Fair Tips

1. Smile! It helps to relax you and is welcoming to the interviewer.
2. Shake hands (firm hand shake, “web to web”) with the interviewer while looking him/her in the eyes and use their name in your greeting. If carrying a purse, portfolio, briefcase, etc., be sure it’s in your left hand so your right hand will be free to shake hands.
3. Begin by thanking the interviewer for participating in the Career Fair and for the opportunity to interview with their district.
4. Explain up front why you are interested in working for their district. It’s OK to take notes during the interview so you will remember each district distinctly.
5. Be aware of your body language. Sit/stand tall and straight. Be poised and self assured but not arrogant.
6. Let your voice be warm, energetic, and similar to the interviewer’s pace.
7. Utilize the three Ps—Positive – put a positive spin on everything. Pertinent – Choose the most relevant story or information and resist any urge to tell tall tales or bare your soul. Precise – be brief, succinct, and specific, always backing up stories with numbers.
8. SOS attitude. Enter the interview with a Solve or Serve (SOS) attitude. Focus on making the district’s life easier and your campus/district/class successful. It’s about them, not you.
9. ASK questions but not about salary or benefits. (See handout for possible questions to ask.)
10. When concluding the interview, restate your interest in working for the district. THANK THE INTERVIEWER for the opportunity to interview w/them, and use the interviewer’s name. Write a “Thank You” note to each interviewer within 24 hours.

DRESSING FOR THE INTERVIEW

(Ladies)

- ❖ **Suits** with shirts: Two-piece suits of the same fabric give the best impression. Solid colors or subtly patterned fabrics in deep blue, black, or grey are best. Pant suits are acceptable, but the suit with a skirt is the preferred. Blouses or sweaters of a solid color are the recommended item to wear with a suit.
- ❖ **Dresses:** A dress with matching or coordinated jacket make a nice interview outfit.
- ❖ **Fabrics:** Select a tried and true fabric that are tasteful, hang well and don't wrinkle excessively. Linen, for example, is lovely but usually wrinkles. Reserve fabrics with high sheen for evenings. Avoid cling, see-through fabrics.
- ❖ **Hosiery:** Wear hose that are a natural color with no patterns.
- ❖ **Shoes:** Close-toed shoes or flats will compliment a suit or dress. Avoid extremes in heel height or extreme fashion. Avoid sandals or strappy shoes. Be sure shoes are in good condition, clean and polished.
- ❖ **Jewelry:** Avoid anything that clings, jingles or makes noise. Limit jewelry to one ring per hand (unless you wear engagement and wedding rings), one bracelet per wrist, and one earring per ear. Necklaces are appropriate as long as they do not detract from your face. You want the interview to see concentrate on you and not your necklace. Avoid any visible body piercings beyond earrings.
- ❖ **Tattoos:** Ensure that any/all tattoos are covered by fabric, band aids, make up or other apparel. Most school districts prohibit the exposure of tattoos for all employees.
- ❖ **Hair:** Clean and neatly cut. If you wear your hair long, pull it back or put it up so you are not distracted by pushing your hair back. Avoid an overly styled hairdo with excessive mousse or hairspray. If you color your hair, make sure the roots are not exposed.
- ❖ **Makeup:** Conservative and natural-looking is the recommended look. Avoid bright colors and excessive face powder that gives a pan-caked appearance.
- ❖ **Nails:** Be sure nails are clean and well manicured. Use neutral or clear polish—no bright colored nail polish. French manicures are acceptable.
- ❖ **Scents:** Fragrances should be subtle or not worn to an interview as some people are allergic. (If you want a very light scent, spray cologne into the air and walk through it. This will give a light fragrance without being overwhelming.)
- ❖ **Special Touches:** For some individuals, a signature item is worn consistently such as lapel pen, monogrammed shirt cuffs, broach or silk scarf.
- ❖ **Modesty:** Avoid low-cut blouses and skirts that go no more than two-inches above the knee when sitting. Blouses should not expose the mid section.
- ❖ **SMILE:** The best thing you can wear to an interview is a SMILE!!!!

DRESSING FOR THE INTERVIEW

(Men)

- **Suits and shirts:** A navy blue or gray suit with a dress shirt and tie is the best outfit for male applicants. Choose a white, long-sleeved dress shirt to accompany your suit, even in summer. Make it crisp, clean and not frayed. Ties should coordinate with the suit and be conservative in pattern.
- **Belts:** The belt should fit the suit pants and is typically one inch wide. There should be no unusual styling or distracting buckle. It should be in an appropriate color such as black for black, navy or gray suits.
- **Socks:** Dark dress socks are required with suit pants or dress slacks. Avoid socks that do not match the color of the shoes worn.
- **Shoes:** No athletic shoes!! Wear leather, preferably lace-up shoes. They should be clean, in good condition and freshly polished.
- **Jewelry:** A watch and one ring per hand are fine. If wearing a French-cuffed shirt, cuff links are appropriate. Avoid chains and earrings, even a small diamond in one ear.
- **Hair:** Make sure your hair is clean and freshly cut with your neck neatly shaved. Facial hair might be a part of your normal look, but it may be against school/district policy.
- **Nails and facial care:** Preparing for a job interview is the time to go the extra mile in grooming. A trip to the spa might be in order. Hands should be clean with fingernails and cuticles neatly shaped. Consider exfoliating your face and remove excessive hair from the nose, ears, or upper back that might extend above the collar.
- **Scents:** Avoid splashing fragrances prior to an interview. Many people have chemical allergies to them. Be sure to use an under arm deodorant and if you want a light fragrance, spray into the air and walk through it. This will give you a light scent without being overpowering.
- **SMILE:** The best thing to wear to an interview is a SMILE!!!!!!

DRESSING FOR THE JOB INTERVIEW

(Color)

What color outfit will you wear to your job interview? What will it communicate? When selecting an interview suit or outfit, consider these color implications:

- ✚ **Blue:** Researchers say wearing blue to an interview indicates dedication and loyalty. Blue also relaxes the viewer's nervous system. Men, stick to dark navy. Ladies have a broader range of choice—one of the best power shades of blue is a deep blue, which falls between the blue of a hyperlinked e-mail address and midnight blue.
- ✚ **Black:** Black is formal and sophisticated, conveying authority and power in the business world. It is associated with reliability, discretion and wisdom, some researches attest. Black can also camouflage a few pounds if needed. Women can soften black with a complementary blouse color.
- ✚ **Gray:** Gray cycles in and out of fashion. Psychologically, gray suggests caution, focus, dedication and commitment. When wearing a gray suit, consider a lively accent color. For example, a red tie for men or a red scarf for ladies.
- ✚ **Brown:** Reminiscent of earth, brown communicates credibility, strength and maturity. Be careful in choosing brown for interviews as some shades appear dull or drab. It is not perceived to be as powerful as blue or black.
- ✚ **Red:** Although red is considered powerful, uplifting, and energizing, be cautious about wearing it to an interview. Some authorities say red communicates confrontation, and this is not your goal in an interview. Consider wearing red as an accent color in a tie or scarf. When considering red as an accent color, consider the deep-hued reds and avoid orangey reds.
- ✚ **Purple:** This is the color of royalty, symbolizing luxury, wealth and sophistication. For ladies, if considering purple, lean toward the deeper amethyst colors and away from pastel hues.
- ✚ **Green:** Associated with nature and wealth, certain shades of green are acceptable such as dark green, olive, and (only for women) emerald green or a deep teal green. Avoid yellow greens. Some researchers have found that green is not a recommended color to wear in an interview in this part of the region.

Sample Questions for Beginning Teachers

1. Why did you decide to become a teacher?
2. Tell me about your student teaching experience. What did you find most rewarding and what was most difficult for you.
3. How will you set up your classroom management system?
4. How will you differentiate your instruction to meet the individual needs of your students?
5. Why did you choose to apply to teach in our district?
6. What is the role of discipline in the classroom? Explain how you will maintain effective classroom discipline.
7. Johnny is a persistent discipline problem and fails to complete his assigned work. What will you do to enable him to be successful in your class?
8. Which, if any, packaged instructional programs did you use during your student teaching?
9. What are the critical components of an effective lesson?
10. Tell me about a problem that you have encountered and how you approached solving the problem.
11. Tell me about experiences you have had working with children other than student teaching. Why did you do them? What was most rewarding about the experiences?
12. Share with me an experience that you have had that demonstrates that you care about students.
13. (For teachers grades 3-5) After administering the outdated TAKS exam, the results reveal that three of your students did not meet minimum expectations on the test. What will you do?
14. (For teachers in grades PK-2) As a result of monitoring students' learning, three students demonstrate that they have not mastered the expected objectives. What will you do?
15. What was the last book you read?
16. What are your hobbies?
17. How do you define success?

18. Who are your heroes? Why are they your heroes?
19. How will you establish a positive relationship with parents?
20. What do you foresee as being the most challenging aspects in your first year of teaching?
21. How effective are you in resolving conflicts between or among students? Please give an example of how you have done or would do this.
22. Discuss your organizational skills. How do you assure that multiple tasks are completed on time?
23. Describe your strengths and how these strengths will contribute to your success as a teacher.
24. How will you communicate with parents?
25. Describe the ideal teacher.
26. Briefly describe how you plan, schedule, and delegate work for yourself.
27. Where do you hope to be in your career five years from now? Ten?
28. From a work perspective, what adjectives best describe you?
29. What do you consider to be your strongest personal qualities? How have these qualities benefited you?
30. What adjectives would your peers use to describe your personal style? On which of these qualities would they most likely agree?
31. What do you feel your peers would agree is your strongest personal trait or attribute?
32. How would your friends describe you? What adjectives would they use?
33. What personal traits and characteristics do you feel are important to success as a teacher?
34. What are some of your shortcomings—those areas where you most need to improve?
35. What has been your greatest success? Why were you successful? What did you do?
36. What has been your greatest failure? Why did it occur, and what did you learn?
37. How would you describe the perfect or ideal teaching position?

38. What did you enjoy most about your student teaching experience? Why?
39. What did you enjoy least about your student teaching experience? Why?
40. How do you prioritize?

QUESTIONS APPLICANTS MIGHT ASK

1. What staff development opportunities are available for beginning teachers?
2. Does the district provide separate in-service/orientation for teachers new to the district? How many days?
3. What type of mentoring program does the district/campus provide for beginning teachers? Will my mentor be a teacher at my grade level or my subject matter?
4. How does the district/campus serve students who do not meet minimum expectations of the TAKS tests?
5. What are some of the packaged instructional programs your district/campus uses? Does the district/campus provide staff development on the packaged instructional programs for teachers new to the district?
6. Is the enrollment of your campus/district increasing/decreasing? What is the rate of increase/decrease?
7. To what do you attribute the rate of increase/decrease?
8. Does the district/campus use a specific discipline management program? If yes, could you briefly describe it?
9. How do grade level and/or subject area teams work together?

Resume Writing Tips

1. Be sure your resume is readable.

Use a font that is 11 or 12 point, professional, and easy to read. Make an impression with the content and not with fancy fonts. Use your name and the word **Resume** in the header for easy identification. Use a good quality paper and consider ivory to stand out from white copies.

2. Determine your objective.

Before putting your pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard), decide on your objective. State your objective clearly and concisely. “To obtain a position as a kindergarten teacher.” Know which of your skills best relate to your objective.

3. Organize information.

Arrange and group your information under headings such as contact information, work experience, education, honors and awards, etc.

4. Use action words.

Words like implemented, collaborated, managed, founded, developed, promoted, monitored and surpassed will cause your resume to stand out. (See accompanying handout.)

5. Highlight your strengths.

Market yourself; you have this one chance for your reader to want you. Put the strongest and most relevant points first where they are more likely to be read. Doing this will hook the reader and the rest of your resume will reel them in.

6. Get an outside opinion.

Ask a professor or someone in educational administration to review your resume. Objectivity helps!

ACTION VERBS

(This is not an exhaustive list but some you might consider.)

Acquire
Administer
Advise
Analyze
Complete
Conduct
Create
Determine
Develop
Examine
Establish
Facilitate
Implement
Interpret

Maintain
Manage
Obtain
Organize
Perform
Prepare
Promote
Review
Serve
Supervise
Support
Taught
Tutor
Utilize

Protect Your Virtual Resume'

Many school districts are utilizing the internet to screen applicants just as many businesses do. You would be wise to review your online persona from a prospective employer's view. Here are some suggestions to protect yourself and enhance your employment possibilities when your virtual resume is reviewed.

- Don't post anything obnoxious, lewd or risque', and don't bash former employers, schools or professors.
- Switch your Facebook or MySpace profile to "private".
- Edit what friends write on your "wall." You'll be held accountable for their comments.
- Don't write anything on someone else's profile that can come back to haunt you.
- Avoid crazy e-mail addresses. A representative from JobBound, an on-line company, knows people turned down for jobs because of e-mail addresses like spychica2, the dirthead and imstired.
- Google yourself regularly or sign up for a Google Alert which will tell you when your name is mentioned online.
- Check your voice mail recording and be sure it is not unprofessional.
- Think of your profile as your public relations tool. Use it to present your accomplishments and creativity, not to settle scores and attack others.

Employment Applications

You will soon be completing an application for employment. Perhaps you have already completed several applications, but now you are entering the professional world and want to take special care. To have the best application possible, certain guidelines should be followed. Some of the most important ones are below:

- Practice on a sample application
(http://www.dli.state.pa.us/landi/lib/landi/CWIA/2003_resource_guide/M-Sample_Job_Application.pdf; obtain an application on-line from a school district and complete it for practice)
- Make a copy of the application to use as a rough draft and then transfer the information to the final application
- Take your social security number and be prepared to list pertinent information
- Read the entire application before you begin
- Print clearly, simply, and neatly (black or blue ink only)
- Complete all requested information, write 'NA' if not applicable or 'none'; never leave anything blank
- Proofread and check for spelling and grammatical errors (ex: <http://www.uwec.edu/Help/Office03/splchck.htm>)
- List your most recent job first with the month/year started and ended; include your supervisor's contact information with his/her full name (Be sure to include substitute teaching if you have been a substitute teacher.)
- List your most recent education first with the name and city; don't forget training programs, workshops, conferences attended, professional development activities, etc.
- List any special skills such as another language(s), computer skills, machine operations, keyboarding speed, etc.
- Use action verbs to describe your duties
- List references with the full name or initials, address and phone numbers of three to five people who have agreed to recommend you
- Be sure to sign your application
- Double check the completed application
- Make a copy of your completed application for the interview
- Use the copy of your completed application to make it easier to complete future applications

Helpful Websites

Region Service Centers

School Districts

<http://libraries.mit.edu/guides/subjects/findjob/application.html>

http://jobsearch.about.com/od/jobappsamples/Sample_Job_Applications.htm

TEN COMMON INTERVIEW MISTAKES MADE BY APPLICANTS

- ✓ **UNPREPARED**
 - No knowledge of district/school/campus
 - Unsure of what teaching position requires
 - Unsure if they want to be a teacher
- ✓ **LACK OF INTEREST/ENTHUSIASM**
 - No questions asked
 - Unable to communicate why they want to be a teacher
- ✓ **INAPPROPRIATE ATTIRE**
 - Too casual, too much perfume/cologne/makeup/jewelry
 - RULE OF THUMB: Always dress conservatively in business attire!
- ✓ **POOR BODY LANGUAGE**
 - Poor eye contact/flat facial expressions
 - Leaning on chair/desk/table
 - Fidgeting
 - Weak handshake
- ✓ **LACK OF RESUME KNOWLEDGE**
 - Unable to articulate accomplishments/ provide specific examples
 - Overstated/incorrect work history
- ✓ **LACK OF PUNCTUALITY**
 - Reporting to interview late without reason
 - Arriving much too early
 - RULE OF THUMB: Arrive 10-15 minutes before the scheduled interview time
- ✓ **UNPROFESSIONAL**
 - Talking negatively about past professors, schools, employers, etc.
 - Chewing gum
 - Using inappropriate language
 - Complaining for having to wait if interviewer is delayed
- ✓ **RAMBLING ANSWERS**
 - Talking so much that question is not answered
 - Bragging/displaying arrogance rather than confidence
 - RULE OF THUMB: Keep answers concise (2-3 min.)
- ✓ **CELL PHONES**
 - TURN THEM OFF!!!!!!
- ✓ **POOR LISTENING**
 - Missing the point of the questions
 - Responding before the interviewer finished the question
 - Not taking notes

Follow-Up After The Interview

- **Evaluate yourself**
 - What does the position require?
 - What do you like/dislike about district/campus?
 - What mistakes did you make or questions you had trouble answering?
 - How prepared were you?
 - How can you improve your future performance?
 - List questions asked for future reference
 - What questions did you ask?
 - What questions are still unanswered?
 - What did you learn from the experience?
 - What will you do differently next time?
- **Send thank you letters/notes to each interviewer**
 - Express appreciation for being considered
 - Convey enthusiasm for the position/district
 - Recap your strengths
 - Individualize messages by clarifying a question the interviewer asked that you may not have answered fully or add some additional information related to a question the interviewer asked
 - State your interest to hear from the district
- **Follow-up by phone is acceptable**
- **Send a follow-up letter after the decision thanking them for the opportunity to interview and indicate your interest for other positions in the district/campus**