



Written by: Tim Wei

Website: www.iwantateachingjob.com

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Fifty Common Interview Questions (and How to Answer Them)

Interview questions for teaching jobs usually are not unique or creative. Some variation of the same set of general questions is asked by almost every interview committee. Even though the words in the questions may be changed slightly, a prepared candidate will be familiar with the types of questions that will come up.

Use the 50 sample questions below to prepare for your interview. Depending on your learning style, you may want to write out answers for yourself to study, or you might want to practice with a friend or family member. Just be sure you know how to answer each question below with confidence.

1. Tell us about yourself.

This will be the first question at almost every interview. Just give a brief background in about three sentences. Tell them what colleges you graduated from, what you're certified to teach, what your teaching and working experiences are, and why you'd love the job.

2. Why do you want to teach at this particular school?

When you are asked this question, be prepared to flatter their pants off. Tell them: You love this school and this is where your heart is. This is where your dreams are. This school just happens to be in the community you want to live in. You can't say enough good things about the student population. It's wonderful because the parents are so involved here. You've known other teachers in the district who are very happy here. If you've student taught or subbed in this school, tell them how marvelous your experiences were. Let them know that you've applied to a couple of schools, but this school is by far your number one choice.

Don't talk about how your commute will be shorter. Interview committees don't care about your commute. Keep singing the praises of the school when you answer this question, and avoid talking about yourself.

3. Describe your discipline philosophy.

Most effective teachers use lots of positive reinforcement. They are firm, but you don't yell. Hopefully you have appropriate consequences for inappropriate behavior. You may want to mention that you have your classroom rules posted clearly on the walls. You set common routines that

students follow every day. And, of course, you adhere to the school's discipline guidelines.

Also, it's important to emphasize that you suspect discipline problems will be minimal because your lessons are very interesting and engaging to students. Kids tend to misbehave when they're bored and when they're not sure what they're supposed to be doing. A good teacher will always have the students engaged in interesting lessons and he/she will communicate expectations clearly.

Never tell the interviewer that you “send kids to the principal's office” whenever there is a problem. You should be able to handle most discipline problems on your own.

4. Where do you see yourself in five years?

They're checking to see if this is a career commitment for you. You see yourself in the classroom in five years! You can't imagine being anywhere else. Or, perhaps, you plan to pursue an administration degree and advance your career within the district. Whatever you do, don't imply that the job you're applying for is a short-term steppingstone to a job in another district.

5. How would you handle a gifted student?

They're looking to see what you would do with a gifted student in your own classroom. How would you challenge the student, so he or she does not become bored with school. You want to ensure that they're learning as much as they possibly can.

There are a couple of answers that candidates give all the time that are just plain wrong:

- Not-so-great answer #1: “I will give the student extra work.”

Don't say you'll give them extra work because you don't want to punish the child for being gifted.

Better answer: “I will modify assignments to make them more challenging. Differentiated instruction is the key to ensuring that all students are challenged.”

- Not-so-great answer #2: “I will have the gifted child help other students who are struggling.”

Don't say that you will have the child "help struggling students" because that implies that you'll use the child as your little servant-tutor because they finished their work too fast.

Better answer: “I will provide individualized attention and/or small-group instruction when possible so that children at all ability levels can maximize their learning. I will make the assignments more challenging and encourage gifted students to use advanced problem-solving skills and higher-level thinking.”

6. How do you communicate with parents?

This question will come up at almost every elementary school interview. It's fairly common at the middle school and high school level as well. Perhaps you send home a

weekly or monthly parent newsletter. (Pull out an example of a newsletter from your portfolio.) Some teachers even publish assignments, homework help, and newsletters on a classroom website. (If you do this, print out a copy of your website and stick it in your portfolio.)

For grades 3 and up, you may require students to have an assignment book that has to be signed each night. This way, parents know what assignments are given and when projects are due. When there are discipline problems, you might call home and talk to parents. Some teachers invite parents to communicate via email. It's important to have an open-door policy and invite parents to share their concerns at any time.

While it is important to keep parents informed of any problems a child is having in school, positive communication is important too! Sending congratulatory notes home to parents shows that you notice when a student does well!

7. Do you feel it is appropriate for kids to be using the Internet in school? If so, how can you protect them from inappropriate websites?

The Internet is a wonderful teaching resource for students, but they must be monitored closely. When possible, teachers should specify which sites students should be on at any given time during class. Never give students free reign of the computers. When you're in the computer lab, you should give students specific tasks or websites to visit. Most schools already have filters installed on their computers, but they cannot be used as a substitute for close adult supervision.

8. How much homework do you give?

Students do have other responsibilities after school (taekwon do, family dinner, sports, Scouts, music lessons). Kids should have some homework to build responsibility and learning outside the classroom, but you don't want to overwhelm them.

You might want to describe the rule of 10s: Teachers should give no more than *grade level times ten*. In other words, if you teach third grade: $3 \times 10 = 30$ minutes of homework. Fourth graders should have less than 40 minutes. Fifth graders should have less than 50 minutes. High school teachers might want to be careful if using this formula—120 minutes of homework (12th graders) is too much for any student!

Chapter 8 in the full version of the eBook will contain the 50 most common teacher interview questions and answers!



Scroll down for more information!

This is only a very small preview of the book's contents. The full version is over 125 pages long and includes:

- 50 Common Interview Questions and How to Answer Them
- Interview Tips and Strategies
- Seven Worst Things To Say at an Interview
- How to Build a Teaching Portfolio
- How to Use Your Teaching Portfolio
- Application Process Advice and Guidance
- How to Spice Up Your Cover Letter and Resume
- Perfect Places to Search for a Job
- And much, much more!

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