SAMPLE Interview Protocol—Teacher

Overview of the Resource

This resource was developed to support district staff in recruiting and hiring classroom teachers. The sample interview process and protocol guidance builds-on the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Core Propositions and Standard Indicators and describes the essential responsibilities for classroom teachers. Specifically, the resource attracts teachers who:

* Plan, organize, and assess an appropriate instructional program and create a learning environment that enables each student to fulfill his or her academic potential.
* Provide an educational program that is developmentally appropriate in an environment favorable to learning and personal growth.
* Establish effective rapport with students to promote positive attitudes of self-worth.
* Motivate students to develop the skills, attitudes, and knowledge needed to provide a good foundation for further participation in the total school program, in accordance with each student's ability.
* Establish positive, productive relationships with parents and other staff members.

Purpose

District and school leaders can use this interview process and protocol guidance in the hiring process toselect teachers who reflect district expectations. This resource is divided into two parts:

* Part 1: Operationalizing the Interview Process
* Part 2: Sample Interview Protocol

Part 1 offers a recommended set of steps for establishing a comprehensive approach for teacher recruitment. Information for this section comes from the Learning Point Associates *Quality School Leadership Identification Guidebook* (February 2010) and includes steps that help a district hiring team prepare for, conduct, and finalize the teacher interview process. The second part of the guidance provides a sample interview protocol for district hiring teams to screen teacher candidates in pursuit of a best fit*.* The protocol questions are aligned with the Core Propositions and can be used to identify high-leverage teaching practices in teacher candidates. Finally, Appendix A offers an additional set of questions that district teams can add to the interview protocol based on their specific goals and expectations.

Part 1: Operationalizing the Interview Process

Introduction

This section of the interview process and protocol guidance offers a process for district and school teams interested in recruiting and hiring teacher candidates. The process identifies five steps that can help to ensure efficient recruitment, interviewing, selection, and hiring of the highest quality candidates. Figure 1 offers a general timeline for the recruitment and hiring process. The five steps include:

* Form the Hiring Committee and Set Priorities
* Recruit Candidates
* Develop Screening Materials and Prepare for Screening
* Screen Candidates
* Rank the Finalists and Make a Recommendation for Hiring

Figure 1. Sample Timeline for Teacher Hiring

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| January | February | March | April | May | June | July | August |
| Forming committee | Recruiting and screening  Setting priorities |  | Phone screen | Finalists  On-site visit | Enacting succession plan |  |  |

Step 1: Form the Hiring Committee and Set Priorities

The first step is to create an interview team that includes representation from the central office, school and teacher leaders, and additional staff (e.g., school counselors) for the hiring school.The hiring process will go more smoothly if the committee first reaches an agreement about the qualities of the ideal teacher candidate needed for the school. To do this, the hiring teams can review the job description, examine school or district data, establish priorities of teacher candidates, and be aware of pertinent research and policy on desirable attributes of teachers.

The hiring committee conversation on priorities will be influenced by the district’s authority for hiring (see Table 1). For districts with high centralized hiring authority, individual schools will have little determination in the priorities. For those with less centralized authority, the hiring committee will set the priorities based on their individual schools.

Table 1. Authority for Hiring

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Highly Centralized | Somewhat Centralized | Not Centralized |
| Degree of Centralization and Responsible Party | Central office administrators: | A local hiring committee comprised of central office staff, school staff, and community members: | A local hiring committee of school staff and community members: |
| Setting Priorities | * Set all priorities and hiring criteria. | * Sets hiring priorities to reflect a mix of district and local concerns. Although the district has core priorities or criteria, there is some variation among schools. | * Sets priorities; therefore, teacher hiring criteria may vary from school to school. |
| Recruiting Candidates | * Manage the recruitment activities. | * Coordinates candidate recruitment. Both district and local resources are used. | * Manages recruitment activities, with little help from the district administration. |
| **Screening Candidates** | | | |
| Application Screening | * Screen applications and determine semifinalists. | * Screens applications and determines semifinalists. | * Screens applications and determines semifinalists. |
| Telephone Screening | * Screen semifinalists by telephone and determine finalists. | * Screens semifinalists by telephone and determines finalists. | * Screens semifinalists by telephone and determines finalists. |
| On-Site Screening | * Screen finalists on-site and identify the best candidate(s) for hire. | * Screens finalists on-site and identifies the best candidate(s) for hire. | * Screens finalists on-site and identifies the best candidate(s) for hire. |

Step 2: Recruit Candidates

Once the hiring committee has established its priorities, it will need to recruit candidates for the open positions. Districts can use a mix of formal and informal methods to recruit candidates, including sharing job openings at a university or college, in a local newspaper, and on the school or district website. Hiring committees also can work closely with preparation institutions on long-term planning for anticipated vacancies, attend job fairs in other states, and invest in Grow Your Own programs. Most school districts will likely have a recruitment strategy already; however, Maine Schools for Excellence also has developed recruitment advertisements and job descriptions that can be customized by the hiring committees.

Step 3: Develop Screening Materials and Prepare for Screening

The purpose of the on-site interviews is for the school or district stakeholders to gather in-depth evidence about each candidate’s potential fit with the position. Such interviews provide opportunities for interviewers to observe a candidate’s spontaneous responses to carefully selected and posed questions. In addition, the on-site interviews allow each candidate to learn more about the school, district, and community.

On-site interviews tend to be either semistructured or structured. A *semistructured* interview protocol includes a list of agreed-upon questions asked of each candidate, but each interviewer has opportunities to ask follow-up and clarifying questions. In contrast, a structured interview protocol provides a list of questions, but panelists have few opportunities for follow-up questions.

The Sample Interview Protocol is an example of an on-site interview protocol that incorporates expectations defined in the Teacher Evaluation and Professional Growth Program. To align the sample protocol to their priorities, hiring committees can review the interview questions chosen in light of these priorities and, for each interview question, choose the appropriate ranking as follows:

Performance tasks gauge the ability of each finalist to observe instructional practice, assess the quality of instruction, and provide the hiring team with feedback about instructional quality.

* 2=essential
* 1=useful
* 0=not useful

The hiring team determines which questions must be asked, which are optional, and which should be omitted. The hiring team also can determine which approaches are best to ask the questions. These can include initial phone screening, on-site interviews, or performance tasks.

Step 4: Screen Candidates

As with all aspects of the hiring process, it is important that the committee reach a consensus about interview questions prior to meeting with candidates and to consistently use the same interview questions with each candidate so that all have equal opportunity when answering questions. If different questions are asked of different candidates, this could be considered biased. This does not mean, however, that committee members cannot ask follow-up or clarifying questions to get more information from candidates. When screening candidates, there are several actions the hiring committee can consider, including:

* Welcoming the candidate. Setting a positive and professional tone from the start.
* Dressing appropriately.
* Staying actively engaged throughout the interview. Being courteous and respectful.
* Never arguing with a candidate.
* Creating a comfortable atmosphere that encourages free-flowing conversation.
* Adhering to the interview protocol and respecting the schedule so that all interviewers are able to be involved as planned.
* Planning for monitoring the time and communicating among interviewers if adjustments are necessary.
* Being aware that follow-up questions are acceptable, provided they do not disrupt the interview schedule.
* Keeping all follow-up questions job related.

Step 5: Rank the Finalists and Make a Hiring Recommendation

However you choose to facilitate the meeting, you will want to end the meeting by scoring each candidate against the interview rubrics and creating a rank-ordered list of scores. After reviewing candidate responses to interview questions and discussing the meaning of their responses, each committee member should independently score each finalist by using the rubric in the interview protocol. After the rubric scores of all committee members have been turned in, you should analyze the individual scores and look for both agreement and disagreement among the scores. The hiring team also can facilitate an evidence-based discussion of candidate strengths and weaknesses observed. The goal of this meeting is to bring the committee to a consensus decision or at least a decision that the majority of committee members can agree on and support. Once the conversation is complete, the hiring committee will determine the final recommendation for the candidate.

Part 2: Interview Protocol

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Candidate Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_  Interview Team: | **Effectiveness Level** | | | |
| **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** |
| **Ineffective** | **Developing** | **Effective** | **Distinguished** |
| 1. **Commitment to Students and Their Learning** | | | | |
| * 1. Understanding of Students. The teacher recognizes individual differences and knows the backgrounds, abilities, and interests of his or her students and uses this information to differentiate his or her approaches to students and instruction. |  | | | |
| Describe how you have used or would use what you know about your students as individuals and as a group to inform your teaching, including a specific example of how you might use this information to adjust your practice to accommodate students’ needs to provide access to the learning. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **Evidence:** | | | | |
| * 1. Application of Learning Theory. The teacher demonstrates an understanding of how students develop and learn. |  |  |  |  |
| Describe how you have or would ensure that your instruction is developmentally appropriate for all students. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Give examples of different strategies you have used or would use to help students to input new learning and demonstrate understanding in a variety  of ways. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| In what ways have you or would you facilitate learners in choosing approaches that will be effective for them and help them produce quality work? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **Evidence:** | | | | |
| * 1. Classroom Climate. The teacher creates a respectful environment that provides opportunities for equitable participation and supports students in developing positive dispositions toward learning. |  | | | |
| Describe for us the elements that you believe are essential to a respectful and productive classroom environment that promotes student learning and the approaches you have used or would use to create this environment in your own classroom. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Describe a scenario in which you had a disrespectful student or situation and how you handled it. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **Evidence:** | | | | |
| 1. **Knowledge of Subjects and How to Teach Those Subjects** | | | | |
| * 1. Subject Knowledge. The teacher demonstrates an understanding of how knowledge and skills in his or her subject domain are created, organized, and linked to those of other disciplines as appropriate. |  | | | |
| Share with us one discipline or subject area that you feel represents a particular strength for you with regard to content knowledge and why you feel this is the case. Give one or more examples of strategies you have used or would use to integrate reading, writing, listening, and/or speaking into other content that you are teaching. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Explain how content within your discipline has changed or evolved and share examples of how you have incorporated this into your instruction. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **Evidence:** | | | | |
| * 1. Pedagogical Content Knowledge. The teacher creates learning experiences that make the discipline accessible and meaningful for learners to ensure mastery of the content. |  | | | |
| Explain ways you have had to or would incorporate a variety of strategies and approaches that are appropriate for the content you are teaching and that are engaging and relevant to students. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Tell us about lessons where you incorporated both teacher-directed and student-directed learning opportunities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Describe how you have kept current with new technologies, tools, strategies, and resources related to the content that you are teaching. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **Evidence:** | | | | |
| * 1. Goal-Focused Planning. The teacher plans instruction rich in higher order thinking to meet clearly identified goals and objectives for student learning. |  |  |  |  |
| Tell us what goal-focused planning means to you in your practice. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| What are some of the strategies you have used or would use to communicate the goals of each lesson to students and determine the extent to which students have achieved them? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Describe some approaches you have or would include in your planning to facilitate cognitive engagement and higher order thinking from your students. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **Evidence:** | | | | |
| 1. **Managing and Monitoring Student Learning** | | | | |
| * 1. Managing Classroom Routines and Expectations. The teacher establishes an organized and efficient learning environment that involves and engages all students, maximizes learning time, and enhances student learning in a variety of individual and group settings. |  | | | |
| Tell us about a time when you were challenged by a student or students while teaching and how you responded to maintain the learning for all students. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| What strategies do you use to ensure student success and enhance learning and engagement in settings and groupings that are less teacher directed? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Give one or more examples of ways in which you have varied the physical arrangement, groupings, and seating structure of your classroom on the basis of student needs, interests, and/or goals for student learning. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **Evidence:** | | | | |
| * 1. Student Engagement. The teacher encourages and clearly communicates expectations for student involvement in the learning process, which results in a high level of student engagement. |  | | | |
| Describe strategies, tools, and tasks that you have used or would use to motivate students, capture minds, and foster enthusiasm for learning beyond the required coursework. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Tell us how you have or would build upon student interests to connect learning to real-life situations. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Describe ways you have or would communicate expectations and hold students accountable for their involvement in their learning. In what ways have you involved students in making these decisions? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **Evidence:** | | | | |
| * 1. Assessment of Student Progress. The teacher employs multiple methods to regularly measure student growth and progress and uses this information to provide feedback and adjust instructional decision making. |  | | | |
| Share some examples of how you have incorporated both formative and summative assessments into your instruction. In what ways do you involve students in the assessment process? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Share some examples of how you track student growth for individual students, groups of students, and a classroom. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Tell us about approaches you have used to provide regular, specific feedback to individual students and their parents. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **Evidence:** | | | | |
| 1. **Thinking Systematically About Practice and Learning From Experience** | | | | |
| * 1. Reflective Practice. The teacher analyzes sources of evidence as he or she continually reflects on professional practice, using information about the needs of students to make decisions about adjustments to practice and goals for professional growth. |  | | | |
| Describe the process you use to reflect on and assess the effectiveness of your practice. Include the ways in which you use these reflections to make adjustments to your teaching practice. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **Evidence:** | | | | |
| * 1. Continuous Professional Growth. The teacher uses current research-based resources, feedback from others, and professional learning opportunities to accomplish professional growth. |  | | | |
| How have you gone about determining your professional growth goals? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| What resources have you used in the past to expand your skills and knowledge about content and teaching strategies? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Describe ways you have solicited feedback from others regarding your professional growth and used that feedback to improve planning and instruction. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Share some examples of how you have demonstrated enthusiasm for ongoing professional development that exemplifies a disposition you want to nurture in students. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **Evidence:** | | | | |
| 1. **Members of Learning Communities** | | | | |
| * 1. Professional Collaboration. The teacher contributes to school effectiveness by collaborating with other professionals on activities that support school improvement and student learning. |  | | | |
| In what ways do you collaborate with others in and outside your content area to support student learning and coordinate services? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Describe ways you have utilized the knowledge of other school professionals in the interest of student learning and your own professional growth. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Tell us how you have built effective relationships with colleagues that are based on mutual support and cooperation. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Tell us about a time when you had to collaborate with an individual who was not motivated by the goals of the process or contributing positively to its outcome. How did you handle this situation? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **Evidence:** | | | | |
| * 1. Engagement With Caregivers and the Community. The teacher engages in ongoing communication and collaboration with students’ homes and caregivers and takes advantage of community resources to enhance student learning and school effectiveness. |  | | | |
| Describe strategies you have used to communicate with parents and caregivers and make them feel comfortable and welcome in your classroom. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| What resources have you used to help parents understand how to best support their children’s learning? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| What approaches have you used in the past to make yourself available to parents and solicit their input? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Describe how you have collaborated with the community to provide opportunities for enriching projects and lessons to support student learning. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Tell us how you have leveraged the diversity of the community and backgrounds of your students to enhance teaching and learning in your classroom. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **Evidence:** | | | | |
| Overall rating is based on the preponderance of evidence collected during the application and interview process. | | | | |

Appendix A. Potential Additional Interview Questions

Professional Experiences

1. Please tell us about yourself and why you are a strong candidate for this position. Also, what has been your most outstanding contribution to your present school district and why?
2. What is your philosophy of education?
3. Describe your student teaching experience(s). What are some of the most significant things you learned from your cooperating teacher(s)? What did you like or dislike?
4. What is your knowledge of and experience with standards-based education?
5. What experience have you had with students from culturally diverse backgrounds?
6. When did you first become interested in teaching?
7. What opportunities have you had to bring multicultural education into your classroom?
8. Describe any experience(s) you have had working in an urban setting.
9. How well has your college or university prepared you for the teaching profession?

Instructional Skills

1. Describe the teaching techniques or strategies that are most effective for you.
2. How would you include cooperative learning in your classroom?
3. How would you identify the special needs of your students?
4. What do you include when you write learning objectives?
5. What techniques do you use to keep students actively involved during a lesson?
6. What methods would you use to assess student learning?
7. Describe different student learning styles and how you adjust lessons to benefit those differing styles.
8. Do you feel that the teacher should be responsible for developing objectives or should they be provided in the curriculum?
9. How do you deal with the unmotivated student?
10. Is drill and practice important? How and when would you use it?
11. What would you do if 50 percent of your class did poorly on a test?
12. What do you see as the relative strengths and weaknesses of norm-referenced tests?
13. How would you use authentic assessment?

Technology/Computer Skills

1. How would you incorporate technology into your classroom?
2. What are your computer skills? What software have you used for instructional or classroom management purposes?
3. Assuming you have adequate equipment, how would students be allowed to use technology in your classroom?

Classroom Discipline

1. Describe your philosophy regarding discipline.
2. What techniques would you use to handle discipline problems that may arise in your classroom?
3. What was the most challenging discipline problem you’ve encountered and how did you handle it? Were you prepared to handle this situation? In hindsight, would you have handled this situation any differently?
4. What kind of rules do you have in your classroom? (Share an example.) How are they established?
5. How would you create and promote a safe atmosphere in your classroom?

Classroom Management

1. What is your classroom management plan or style? What are your goals?
2. Describe what you consider to be the model classroom. What would a typical day look like in this classroom?
3. Share three interesting classroom management techniques used in your classroom.
4. When students say they want their teacher to be fair, what do you think they mean?

Knowledge of Content/Materials

1. What kinds of materials have you used to assess student strengths and/or weaknesses?
2. What kinds of tests do you like to give?
3. Are there any materials you have used that you find are especially effective for slow learners or bright students?
4. What coursework have you taken that has made you especially suited for this position?
5. What kind of materials and supplies would you need to do your best job?
6. How do you stay current in your field?
7. What curricular changes do you hope to see over the next few years?

Planning Skills

1. What do you include in your daily lesson plans? How closely do you follow your plans?
2. Describe a good lesson you’ve planned and implemented. Explain why it was good.
3. Describe a time when a lesson was not going well. What did you do about it?
4. How would you integrate language arts across the curriculum?
5. How would you go about setting up your reading program?
6. How would you handle varied reading abilities in the content areas?
7. How much homework will you assign? How do you know how long it will take your students?

Relationships With Administration, Staff, Parents, and Students

1. Describe an outstanding teacher. What makes this educator outstanding?
2. What does “teamwork” mean to you? Give an example.
3. What should a principal expect from teachers? What should teachers expect from their principal?
4. What kind of principal would you like to work for?
5. How would your students describe you as a teacher?
6. How do you approach parent/teacher conferences?
7. What do you feel is important to know about your students? How do you gather this information?
8. Describe your approach with a parent who is upset with you—and you know you are right.
9. How can you get students to be excited about learning?
10. Describe your use of paraprofessional aides and/or parent volunteers in your classroom.
11. How do you develop self-esteem in your students?
12. How do you keep parents informed about the daily or weekly progress of their son or daughter? What vehicles do you use to communicate with parents?
13. What kind of people do you find it difficult to work with and why?
14. Do you want students to like you? Why or why not?
15. What do you value most in a child?

Personal Qualities

1. Why have you selected teaching as a profession?
2. What are your career goals, short term and long term?
3. What makes you an effective teacher?
4. Describe yourself with three adjectives and explain why you chose them.
5. Describe your fears as you begin your first year teaching.
6. If I were to contact your references, what do you think they would say about you?
7. Would you describe yourself as a team player or an individual achiever?
8. What is your most successful accomplishment?
9. Tell me whom you would like to emulate. Why?

Miscellaneous

1. What activities would you like to become involved in within our school, district, or community?
2. Why do you want to work in our school system?
3. Tell me about yourself.
4. Describe your thoughts about student and teacher accountability.
5. What professional development topics interest you? What are your plans for professional growth?
6. What gives you the greatest pleasure teaching?
7. What do you think is wrong with public education today?
8. At which grade level do you think you would do the best job?
9. Would you be willing to teach at a different grade level (elementary) or teach a different subject (secondary)?
10. What are your greatest weaknesses?
11. Why should we hire you over the two other finalists who have comparable qualifications?