

School Administrator Interview Questions

The following are 154 questions I have collected while interviewing for school administrative positions. Most of the questions were collected by friends and then passed on to myself. This collection is meant to give you a set of questions from which to select.

Tell us about your educational background.

Tell us about your work/professional experience.

Why do you want to become an administrator? Principal? Vice principal? Business administrator? Coordinator?

What are your professional goals for the next 5-10 years?

Suppose you have a new idea for parent-school communications that you want to try; how would you go about it?

Do you think social faculty functions are important? Why?

What is your greatest professional strength? weakness?

What are your three best leadership qualities? Describe at least one situation where one of these qualities was exemplified?

How would you improve school-community relations?

How do you view the current teacher evaluation procedure used by the school district? Would you change it if you could and how?

Describe your philosophy of discipline? In which methods of discipline have you been formally trained?

Please respond to the following: "Instruction and classroom management are related."

On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate yourself as a disciplinarian? Why?

What is the administrator's role in disciplining a child? The parent's role?

If problems arise with a student, what support services should the school provide?

Do you think schools should be "single-point-of-service" providers? Why?

What skills or interests do you have that would benefit our extracurricular programs?

In this era of fiscal belt-tightening, what are some ways which you would maintain services/activities without incurring extra costs? How would you cut costs?

How would you involve parents in the education of their children?

What are some ways you measure a teacher's effectiveness?

How do you deal with a teacher's deficits?

A teaching assistant in your building comes to you, in confidence, to complain about something a teacher has done. How would you handle it?

What methods/strategies have you used in resolving conflicts between students? Teachers? Parent vs. teacher?

How would you help teachers and staff improve student achievement?

What is the role of a Principal? Vice Principal? Intern? (position for which you are interviewing)

What is your vision of Special Education?

What is the impact of inclusion on the school community?

Why do you feel that you are the best candidate for this position?

What would you do if an angry parent came in unexpectedly to demand that their child Not be suspended for fighting?

How would you go about improving Instruction?

Correlate student achievement to teacher evaluations.

A teacher has an unusually high failure rate. What would you do? What if that teacher was uncooperative with you? What if that teacher started discussing these issues in the teachers' lounge?

Several teachers have been grumbling in the lounge, about lack of administrative support. What would you do?

An informant (student) comes to you and reports that another student has brought drugs into the building. What would you do?

You suspect a female student has hidden a box cutter in her undergarments. What would you do?

What have you done with your life?

Why do you want this position as Vice-Principal since it would be a lateral move?

After being with the same large school district for so long, do you think you'll be able to adjust to a small, rural district?

What was your biggest career disappointment? How did you deal with it?

What are the skills you most need to develop to advance your career?

What do your supervisors tend to criticize most about your performance? Did you agree or disagree with them?

What types of teachers (people do you find it most difficult to get along with?

Have you ever hired anyone? Was it a successful experience?

Have you ever had to write a critical Incident report on a teacher? What was the outcome?

A bus driver angrily demands that a disruptive student get off the bus immediately and at a place that is not the student's regular stop. The child calls home, the parent calls you and demands assistance in getting the child home. Are you responsible? What do you do?

What does the word "success" mean to you?

What does the word "failure" mean to you?

What does "Integrated Thematic Instruction" mean? What experience do you have with ITT?

Please elaborate on Learner Outcomes. What is your training experience in implementing Learner Outcomes?

What is a variance? Have you any experience in obtaining a variance? Developed a program involving a variance?

a.) Three students approach you, in confidence, and they state that a particular teacher has been hitting them with a ruler. What do you do? b.) This is the second time in two years that this complaint has been made. Now what do you do? c.) The teacher admits to this practice. Now what?

An angry cafeteria worker refuses to serve a very rude student and demands that the student be denied lunch for the next three days. What do you do?

What should a principal expect from teachers and staff?

What should teachers and staff expect from the principal?

Are there any questions that we did not ask you that you wish we had? If so, what are they?

The 3 most important roles of principal V. P . Intern

Discuss leadership style as it relates to organizational change How do you know when you've been successful?

Discuss the relationship between instructional improvement, teacher evaluation and staff development.

List three of your leadership strengths and provide an example of each.

Will you briefly describe your leadership style?

What are your strong points as an educator?

In what areas do you feel need improvement?

How would students in your school describe you?

If I were to walk into your faculty workroom and ask teachers to describe you, what would they say?

What is your most significant achievement in education?

What have you done to keep abreast of developments in your field?

What steps would you take when developing a budget for your school

What do you see as the role of the department head?

How would you involve the professional staff in the decision making process?

What do you do for recreation?

How would you involve your community?

How would you describe your staff evaluation procedures?

What is the role of students in your building?

What is your position on competency-based education?

What is the most exciting thing going on in education today?

What changes have you made in your school since becoming a principal (or in your classroom if not a principal)?

What means of communication do you rely on most?

What in-service programs have you developed for and with your staff

What curriculum changes have you made?

How do you make curriculum changes?

What role does student council play in your school?

What is the ideal role of the public school principal?

How important are athletics at your school?

What activities do you rely on to improve or maintain staff morale?

What do you consider a principal biggest pressure?

What are your educational goals, personal goals?

Where do you plan to be five years from now, ten years from now?

What methods do you use to evaluate your school and its programs?

How would you involve parents in your school?

What do you like most about being principal? Which part of the job do you least like?

Would you enjoy living in this community?

How important is it that people like you?

What are the major qualities you seek in a new teacher?

How do you resolve conflict between staff members, students and staff?

What is your personal philosophy of education?

How would you describe the appearance of an effective classroom?

What special programs have you developed?

What is your school doing for the special needs children?

Can you site evidence of recent professional growth?

What is your experience with management by objectives, or with working a management team?

How would you organize the administrative staff for a school of this size?

How would you describe the role of the student counsellors?

How would you react to a student calling you by your first name?

What are the most crucial issues facing a principal today?

What motivates you?

Why do you want to leave your current position?

How would you describe your last superintendent.

How would you describe your last day at work? How do you deal with personal stress?

What process do you use to understand all facets of a problem?

If you could, what would you change about your current situation?

Are there yearly goals established for your current staff? If so how are they determined and how are they achieved?

Will you tell me about your personal experiences with school?

How do you resolve parental complaints when you know the teacher is in error?

How would you describe an effective drug policy for schools?

How do you manage your time effectively in school?

What are the last three books you have read?

How would you describe an effective public relations program for a school?

Can you tell me about your most successful professional experiences?

What personal qualities do you think are important for a principal to possess?

How often and in what manner do you conduct faculty meetings?

Do you work with a faculty council or similar group? If so, how are members selected?

Can you cite evidence of your efforts in staff development?

What has been your biggest contribution to your school system?

How many days have you missed in the last three years?

Can you describe how you organize meetings?

Why did you desire to go into school administration?

How would you use the following: assistant principal, office manager etc.?

What are some of the actions for which you would suspend students?

Do you think a school can be too student oriented?

Do schools need to return to basics?

How important is it to you to be the best at what you are doing?

What is your opinion of the teachers' association?

If you were to take us on a tour three years from now, what would you say is significant about the educational program and philosophy of the school?

How do you involve students in the decision-making process?

How do you involve teachers in the decision-making process?

Can you cite evidence of your position on professional development of support personnel?

What concept would you insist be contained in the education philosophy of your school?

What role does the principal play in curriculum development?

Can you site evidence of steps you have taken to eliminate sexual and racial stereotyping in the instructional program?

How do you define a high quality education program?

What instructional programs have you developed for the handicapped

Can you name the two or three books or concepts that have influence you most in your professional career?

What factors do you consider when allocating money for the educational program?

Can you site your experiences in developing a schedule of classes for a school?

Can you cite effective teaching techniques that you look for when evaluating a class?

Can you site steps you have taken to improve the performance of a poor teacher?

How do you view negotiated employee contracts?

What aspect of your current position consumes most of your time?

How would you describe an effective antivandalism program?

What energy-saving programs have you implemented in your school?

Why should you be hired instead of the other candidates?

What questions do you wish I would have asked?

If you are selected for this position, what do you think we can do to help you be successful?

What does "student as learner" mean to you?

QUESTIONS TO ASK

May I ask, what aspects of my background attracted you to my resume?

Why is this position open?

How would you describe your administrative style?

If I am your candidate of choice and accept the position, what are the top priorities you would want me to address during my first few months on the job?

Is there any aspect of my candidacy/resume that is unclear or might concern you that I can clarify before I leave?

How soon can I expect to hear from you?

Are there additional individuals/committees with whom I'll be interviewing prior to the final selection?

What is your hiring timetable?

What specific qualities/experience/credentials are you seeking? How do you intend to utilize those strengths?

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS BASED ON SCENARIOS

What follows are some sample interview questions which we have used with some success in the past. We believe the quality of an interview question can be judged by its ability to provoke spontaneous thought and rich reflection. The candidates need to be gently challenged into revealing themselves, their values and their passions.

If I were to visit your classroom next week, what would I see? (The key word is see. For example, how does the teacher organize the students' desks? What is displayed on the classroom walls and why? How do the children behave?)

Tell me about a mistake you have made recently in your teaching and what you have done about it.

Describe to me how you would teach the concept of _____ (the seasons, absolute zero, the Third World, the beauty of mathematics, tragedy, the interdependence of global supply and demand, etc.).

How would you respond to the following student question: "Why are we studying (quadratic equations, Romeo and Juliet, entropy, etc.)?" Is the student's question fair?

What are the most influential factors in the success or failure of a lesson?

What specific strategies do you use to ensure that your students are engaged in active learning?

If I were the parent of a child who learns differently (e.g. ESL or Highly Capable), why would I want my child in your class?

What specific aspects of your teaching are you currently working to improve?

How has recent educational research affected your teaching?

Sentence completion questions:

When I am criticized. . .

When I am not sure about something. . .

When I am told what to do. . .

When someone doesn't agree with me . . .

What is your own preferred learning style?

How do you know that you are continuing to learn how to learn?

What has been the most significant learning experience of your life?

What do your students learn from you that you don't explicitly teach?

All egos require gratification; what satisfies yours?

Give me a metaphor for a _____ (pre-school child, middle school student, high school student, etc.)

What is the most important outcome for a parent conference? What strategies do you use to accomplish this outcome?

Develop a higher level critical thinking question that is related to _____ (the AIDS epidemic, human rights, ocean tides, Romantic poetry).

What is the most difficult aspect of co-planning and co-teaching? How have you addressed this issue?

What does differentiated instruction mean? Can you give me a recent example of how you have provided individual accommodation to make a lesson more accessible for an exceptional student?

SAMPLE INTERVIEW SCENARIOS

Some of the longer scenarios can be given to candidates in advance of the interview so they have a chance to prepare.

You have prepared a brilliant lesson plan, but when you reach the classroom (candidate's choice of subject and age level) you find your briefcase empty except for a large potato. How do you use the potato to teach _____ (mathematics, reading, music, etc.)?

It is seven weeks after the start of the school year and your class has just begun to bond nicely. A group identity is emerging. The principal informs you that a monolingual Japanese child will be joining your class next week. How do you respond? What preparations might you make?

As you know, professional development is very important at our school. Let's imagine that you have been appointed as a teacher and that you have enrolled in a graduate level course entitled "Recent developments in neuro-psychology." The course is taught by a professor from a leading US university and 30 other teachers are in the class. 25 minutes into the first lecture you find yourself completely lost. What do you do?

Reflect back on a recent field trip you have organized. What large concepts were you attempting to teach? How did you make the trip relevant for the students? What other implicit learning objectives did the trip include? Was there any learning that took place on the trip that surprised you?

Nishad's mother is waiting to see you for a parent conference. Nishad is in the fifth grade and is struggling in virtually all his subjects. His frustration threshold is low and you have noticed an increasing number of temper outbursts. Nishad has not been formally assessed for a learning disability. Informal observation suggests he is reading on a first or second grade level. He steadfastly refuses to write but loves to draw pictures in art. He is constantly losing his books and papers.

Nishad's mother is a single parent. She is aggressive and domineering and blames the school for Nishad's difficulties. She has her heart set on Nishad becoming a medical doctor. What specific objectives would you have for the parent conference? What specific strategies might you use?

Shamneez is a hardworking, although somewhat withdrawn 12 year-old student in your class. At the end of today's lesson she tells you that she will be absent from school tomorrow because her god is arriving on the KLM flight tomorrow morning. She has to be at the airport to meet him. How do you respond, and what do you do next?

Marina poses a problem in terms of admission and placement and your advice has been sought. Originally, Marina comes from a primitive hunter-gatherer tribe in the remote southern islands in the Philippines. Her first language was her tribal mother tongue. Following the death of her parents, Marina at age 7 was moved to an orphanage in Manila where she was spoken to exclusively in Tagalog. Two years later, she was adopted by German missionaries and began to learn German.

Marina is age appropriate for the 7th grade but there are serious questions whether she can cope with the level of work. Physically mature, Marina is socially quite shy and withdrawn. What advice would you give about her admission? About her placement?

Matthias is a learning disabled child in the third grade. He was evaluated and diagnosed some 12 months ago and since that time has been making excellent progress in your class. This has been due in large part to the partnership you have formed with Matthias's mother. You have worked closely with her and a trusting friendship has resulted.

Matthias understands that he learns differently than other children in the class. However, he also believes that he is a capable student who can succeed in school.

The school year is coming to an end and Matthias's mother requests that he be retained in the third grade next year. You are puzzled by the request and telephone her about it. When questioned further, Matthias's mother bursts into tears and admits that her concern centers on the personality of the one fourth grade teacher who has a reputation for no nonsense discipline and sarcasm. What do you say to Matthias's mother? What do you do next?

Carmen is in your ninth grade homeroom. Her last report card was mixed but the comment of her music teacher has stayed with you: "Carmen continues to function adequately in music, but I sense there is a wealth of untapped talent – not just musical talent, intellectual talent – which we, as her teachers are missing. I have watched Carmen take a back seat to her peers in class discussions and projects. It is almost as though if she showed herself to be gifted, this would in some way ostracize her from her peers."

Her English teacher was more prosaic: "Carmen is an above average student who is going through all the usual ninth grade girl boy stuff which is, of course, interfering with her school work."

Last year, Carmen won a prize for writing an operetta entitled "Codex 1181," a work inspired by the 1633 trial of Galileo Galilei.

Last month, Carmen's father wrote to the school complaining that his daughter was not being assigned homework.

Last week, Carmen was found smoking in the girls' toilet.

Yesterday she cut school and was suspended by the principal.

As her homeroom teacher, what might you do?

Stefano joined the school earlier this year as an ESL student in your 6th grade class. Before entering the school, Stefano spoke almost no English. His previous schooling was in Italian and his reports indicate that he had been an above average student. The transfer to the present school has been a difficult one for Stefano. He left a close circle of friends in Italy and for the first few weeks appeared insecure and reticent. In addition to his regular schooling Stefano attends Italian language classes twice a week and on Saturday mornings goes to catechism class.

At the present time, Stefano's English is insufficient for him to deal with the abstract concepts that he will have to encounter in the 7th grade. The question you have been asked to address is whether Stefano should begin the study of a foreign language in the 7th grade. His father wants him to study French. The guidance counselor believes that an additional language will simply serve to confuse him and that Stefano should use the time for additional English.