



# Hindsight Is 20/20 Vision: Six Things Teachers Wish They Had Known Before Interviewing

## INTERVIEW PREPARATION

You have completed your teaching degree. Now, as a teacher education graduate, you must land your first position, as your degree is only the first step in your teaching journey. Your job interviews are next, and they are a necessary step for both candidates and schools who want to hire the best possible teachers (Paolini, 2015). Interviewing is competitive, and candidates are measured against one another. School administrators will ascertain candidates' skill levels and decide who best qualifies for the job. They are responsible for selecting quality candidates who match their school's needs (Hindman, 2014). Likewise, you are responsible for demonstrating an ability to plan and prepare lessons, foster an appropriate learning environment, deliver quality instruction, and exhibit professionalism.

Knowing what is necessary for a successful interview is critical. Realizing what was necessary after the interview is too late. Kramer (2012) states clearly what job candidates need to do: "Prepare, prepare, prepare" (p. 6). Demonstrating knowledge about the field of

teaching through the use of academic language is necessary during the interview; however, walking the walk may not easily translate into talking the walk during an interview. This is where purposeful preparation is important. Even though you may have implemented various

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instructional strategies many times, you might not recall the academic term that describes what you did.

The good news is that you can learn from the hindsight of those who have preceded you. After reflecting on past interviews, several elementary in-service teachers in a suburban Pennsylvania school district peered through the interviewing lens to identify six areas they wish they had considered before their interview. Review these tips and terms to help you better prepare for your job interview.

### 1. Lesson Planning

You have written many lesson plans, focusing on things like active student engagement, Common Core Standards, and reading and writing activities. Reflect on how you tied those standards to the activities and what you were thinking regarding your students' involvement. Consider how that would look in different grade levels and across varying content areas such as social studies and science.

### 2. Differentiation

You know the benefits of organizing students into small groups based on skill levels and planning instruction based on students' needs, then rearranging groups further, again, based on their needs. State that you differentiated instruction for skill-based grouping, using ongoing assessments to guide your data-driven decisions; further explain that one-size-does-NOT-fit-all.

### 3. Student Background

You recognize the importance of knowing each of your students' backgrounds, taking into consideration socio-economic, social, emotional, and academic needs. Examine how knowing about your students will influence daily classroom instruction. Communicate an awareness of available resources within the school and community, and the importance of parental involvement and collaboration among collegial peers.

### 4. Balanced Literacy

You can recite verbatim the five components of a balanced literacy framework, and you know why you should be able to explain how children use language structure, visual information, and meaning to problem-solve new text. Be able to describe a lesson on each conceptual

area—phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension—in different grade levels.

### 5. Technology

You know that classroom technology is more than saying, "My students use an iPad." When asked about using technology in the classroom, explain how doing so will enhance your instruction through such means as iPads, thereby reinforcing that you are a 21st-century educator.

### 6. Classroom Management

You recall your experiences handling difficult behaviors in the classroom. Reflect on those experiences, conceptualizing which management strategies you implemented and the effectiveness of each strategy.

Practice and prepare! You cannot predict every possible question that might be asked, but you can spend time thinking about and, subsequently, talking about the essentials of planning and preparation, classroom environment, pedagogy, and professionalism, all of which are fundamental indicators of teacher performance. Present yourself as confident, knowledgeable, and capable. Your answers matter. Prepare for the interview experience and get comfortable with academic language and transforming theory into action. The more comfortable you are with verbally sharing and confirming your knowledge and experience, the more confident you will be during your interview. 🍏

### References

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- Kramer, E. (2012). *101 successful interviewing strategies*. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.
- Paolini, A. (2015). Enhancing teaching effectiveness and student learning outcomes. *Journal of Effective Teaching*, 15(1), 20–33.



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### Strategies That Will Impress Interviewers

- A professional, positive attitude
- Knowledge of content and pedagogy
- Familiarity with the school system's initiatives and demographics
- Ability to interpret data and test scores
- Capacity to be poised under pressure