

# Interviewing for a Teaching Position:

*Common and Uncommon Questions*



KDP Webinar  
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# A brief introduction



- + Former middle school science teacher;
- + Former assistant principal;
- + Former principal;
- + Current educational leadership faculty member;
- + Author;
- + Kappa Delta Pi Public Policy Committee chair;
- + Husband; dad to three boys. Aspiring surfer...

# No interview is the same.

- + This is all about “fit”- I cannot promise you that:
  - + ...every question will be exactly what you anticipate....
  - + .... the position is the best one for you .... or that
  - + ... you are the best for the position.
- + Your role?
  - + Be professional.
  - + Share what *you know*, be who *you are*.
  - + Do your research on the school and the position.
  - + Consider possible *key words* on which to frame your answers.

# Question #1 What motivates you most about this particular teaching position?

- + **Think about-** Why do you want this specific job? Consider the subject/grade level. What will distinguish you from all the other applicants?
- + **Key words:** Fit, students, specific experiences, specific content examples, teaching strategies, the actual school's needs and improvement areas (School Improvement Plan).



## Question #2: As a teacher, how will you establish and maintain a *safe, student-focused learning environment*?

- + **Think about-** Principals are focused on [this](#) too! (See link for principal interview questions). S/he wants to know how you will take the initial steps, in your classroom, to establish a focus on trust, relationships, and learning.
- + **Key words:** relationships (rather than discipline or consequences), positive behavior, proactive approach or system, communication, affirmation, learning.



## Question #3: Describe a role model who influenced you as an educator.

- + **Think about-** In describing your role model, you just might be speaking about the educator whom you hope to be. Why/how did that particular educator have an impact on you?
- + **Key words:** Engage, learn, aspire, specific strategies or approaches, quotes.



**Question #4:** A team member clearly doesn't like you and it's rumored he's even trying to sabotage your act in the upcoming School Talent Show.

- + **Think about-** It's often been said that working with students is the "easy part" of teaching. Stressed out adults (co-workers, parents, community members) can surprise you with their unprofessionalism. The question is, "How will you respond?"
- + **Key words-** Setting the example, problem-solving, working with a mentor, knowing boundaries and deciding when/if to seek an administrator's help, collaboration, communication, learning first.



**Question 5:** You notice a student in your class, “Jenny,” simply will not participate. She puts her head down on the desk and won’t say anything.

- + **Think about-** Is this a case of a “reluctant learner?” Or perhaps is there something else going on? Do you know Jenny well enough to understand her? Who else might be able to help you in addressing her needs?
- + **Key words-** Learning, your “toolbox” of resources and ideas, data, objectives, differentiation, communication, child study, school counselor.



**Question 6:** What would an effective lesson look like in your (seventh grade math) classroom? What is most important?

- + **Think about-** Consider your ultimate learning objectives (Goals). Consider how will gauge student progress (Data or assessment). Consider how you will teach them (Strategies or plan). What sort of learning environment can students expect?
- + **Key words:** goals, objectives, curriculum, standards (yes, they are important to many!), formative data (not just summative), engagement.



**Question #7-** What's on your iPod's "recently played" list right now? (ok, this one may be a stretch...)

- + **Think about-** Teachers have to deal with surprises. A savvy hiring panel may just throw an "odd" question to see how you respond, communicate, and interact. They might ask you about a interest or goal that you have. They may want to better understand you.
- + **Key words-** *No earthly idea.....*(Use wait time if needed... pause..... Smile..... Respond with a sense of humor).... Be yourself! Don't feel that you have to divulge sensitive information, but show a humorous, personal side.



# Breathe . . .

+ . . . .Wait time is ok . . .



**Question #8** Talk about a recent conference or workshop you attended (or perhaps a book you've read). *What* did you learn and *how* might you apply it in your classroom?

- + **Think about-** You should be a lifelong student teacher. You are graduating and entering the teaching profession, but you need to stay on the cutting edge of learning and growing.
- + **Key words-** Book, organization, professional development, action steps, continual growth, collaboration.



**Question #9** Are there any extracurricular activities that you are interested in? Do any leadership initiatives interest you?

- + **Think about-** School leaders want to know if you are interested in serving in leadership initiatives. However, it's important to again "be yourself" and only indicate interest in what you are interested in. Are there sports, tutoring initiatives, or perhaps a school-wide mentoring program in which you might serve? How might you be a team player on a PLC?
- + **Key words-** Learning, relationships, mentoring, engaged, extension, enrichment, closing the achievement gap.

## Question #10- We've asked you a lot of questions. Do you have any questions for us?

- + **Think about-** This is your opportunity to again show that you “get” the school, understand the school’s mission, and realize that you are the “best fit” for the school.
  - + This is not the best time to ask, “How much will I get paid?” (those sort of “HR” details can be addressed with HR as you are offered a position.)
- + **Key words-** Target areas (school improvement), immediate challenges, staff development initiatives, opportunities to lead, short term (or long term) vision.



# How to answer?

- + Be yourself.
- + Speak to action. Don't filibuster. Leave room for follow-up.
- + Be student-focused.
- + Be collaborative.
- + Be confident.
- + Realize that you may not get every job (and that's ok).

**Bonus Question:** “We’d like to learn more. Would you be willing to come in and teach a demo lesson?”

- + **Think about-** They are interested! This is your chance to showcase how you can adapt, engage students, and respond quickly. How will you provide a glimpse into the kind of teacher you will be?
- + **Key action items-** Relevant content, engagement of students, collaboration, formative assessment, strategies.

# Final tips and suggestions

- + Shake everyone's hand (and repeat their name if you can) as you leave. Confident. Competent. Collaborative.
- + Follow up with a handwritten thank-you note immediately.
  - + In your letter, mention specific take-aways or key ideas that excite you about that particular school.
- + Stay active and engaged in the search. There are no guarantees, but you should always strive to give your best effort.
- + After you get a job, continually learn, grow, and contribute (and keep that resume' updated and current!).
- + "Never quit student-teaching." "Always be 'on the job market'."

# References & Additional Resources

- + Information about the 2013 KDP Convo here:  
<http://www.kdp.org/convocation/index.php>
- + Web link to the **KDP Public Policy Committee** here:  
<http://www.kdp.org/aboutkdp/publicpolicy.php>
- + A KDP **New Teacher Advocate** article that accompanies this webinar will be released here: <http://www.kdp.org/publications/nta/>
- + Sterrett (2013). Interviewing for the principalship. ASCD EDGE Blog post: (more school-wide perspective) available here:  
<http://edge.ascd.org/Interviewing-for-the-Principalship-Nine-Possible-Questions/blog/6492381/127586.html>

# Questions?

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