

EFFECTIVE TEACHER INTERVIEWS

How do I hire good teachers?

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How Do I Start?

When a teacher position opens, consider what your students and school need the new hire to know and be able to do. Think of the teacher selection process as an investment in your school's success. We'll start with the research to make the process efficient and effective and then you'll be able to transfer what you're doing and learning from one interview to the next. Keep in mind that an instructional leader hires many individual teachers—decisions that matter greatly to the achievement of students and will cost the school system millions of dollars. That money is well spent when effective teachers are selected. *Effective Teacher Interviews* empowers instructional leaders to positively affect student learning through intentional selection of teaching faculty.

So how do you find good teachers? Despite the far-reaching ramifications of any hiring decision, I found that 73 percent of U.S. principals weren't trained by their school systems in how to conduct fair, legal, and effective interviews (Hindman & Stronge, 2009). Many just borrowed their interview questions from other administrators. Of course, professional collaboration is fine if the questions are good, but disastrous if they are poorly constructed or contain impermissible inquiries. In my research, mostly in the discipline of applied psychology and, to a lesser degree, in K–12 literature, I discovered how to refine the teacher interview to

get better outcomes and will guide you through the process of writing and conducting an effective, legal interview.

Briefly we will explore related topics of recruitment, evaluation, performance interviewing, and retention. Also, knowing what the effective teacher research says is important to constructing a valid and reliable interview and assessing the quality of the interviewees (see James Stronge's *Qualities of Effective Teachers*, 2007). The goal of this volume, however, is to help you create an effective interview by learning how to do these five tasks:

1. Apply teacher selection research and interviewing best practices to your school's interview process
2. Develop meaningful interview items and avoid questions that are not legally permissible
3. Select and train an interview team
4. Match candidates' skills and experiences to your school's needs
5. Get the most from your interview time

With budgets tight, you can use the hiring process to improve your school without writing a single plan or sending staff to professional development. When hiring a teacher, instructional leaders possess the opportunity to select someone with the knowledge, skills, and abilities that complement their staff and initiatives (Donaldson, 1990). A well-constructed interview solicits information from the interviewee about the glows and blows of past performances. I recommend that you address the four research-based interview facets when you write the interview questions. A star

☆ next to an item indicates the best practice identified in the research literature for its specific purpose.

Facet 1: Write Good Questions

What gets asked gets answered. How interview items are phrased influences the response given. If you ask a candidate about high-yield instructional strategies, he or she can tell you about them; however, if you really want to know how well or if an interviewee has used those strategies, the item or question needs to be written differently. Researchers have examined and determined which question types most effectively predict future job performance. Four types of questions are described:

1. *Opinion questions* are good for assessing how an interviewee works with other teachers and for assessing the interviewee's ability to communicate; however, assessing the response is highly subjective. An example, "What is your teaching philosophy?"

2. *Fact questions* are knowledge or skill-based with right and wrong responses. They do not necessarily inform an interviewer of whether the interviewee knows what to do with the information. During a science teacher interview, a fact question is, "What are MSDS?"

3. *Situational questions, also called hypothetical questions*, are better than fact or opinion questions. The question provides a situation from which the applicant is to respond. The notable pitfall is that situational questions may be answered too generally or in exhausting detail.