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PARTNERS

Interviews

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IV. Interviews

Congratulations — you've been called for an interview! Your first step is to find out as much as you can about the school, the school district, and the music program where you will be interviewing. Use your contacts and try to acquire a general history of the music program—former teachers, problems, successes, and traditions.

You will also need to get directions to the interview site. Don't forget to ask about parking. Plan your travel time so you arrive at your interview city early. Do not be late. If you're driving to another city, allow time to get lost and still arrive on time. If you're a little early, drive around the area. What services are available? What is housing like? Pick up a local newspaper and get a sense of community issues and housing prices.

What Should You Wear?

Dress conservatively. School officials are looking for role models—clean-cut, all-American individuals to whom they will entrust their district's children. This is not a good time to demonstrate your individuality, sexuality, marching band jacket, or collection of rock band t-shirts. The clothes you wore in college may not be appropriate for your teaching career.

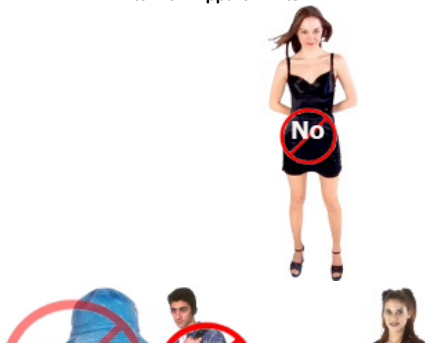
Keep your interviewer in mind when selecting what you'll wear, as clothes can be very distracting on a subconscious level. The person interviewing you may not be able to pinpoint exactly what it was about you that he or she didn't like. Select an interview look that says, "Look at me—I fit in here." Research has shown that the best interview colors for both men and women are gray, navy, and black.

Women need to be particularly cautious when interviewing with men. Don't wear anything that can be misconstrued as "flirtatious." Consider wearing an attractive suit or dress, and keep accessories to a minimum. Remember that wild earrings, low-cut or see-through blouses, and excessively tight clothing could project an image that an administrator (male or female) might not want to share with students. Style your hair so that it is neat and away from your face. Make-up and perfume should be kept to a minimum.

Men should wear a suit or a sports coat, tie, dress shirt, and polished shoes. A haircut is highly recommended. If you have long hair, tie it back. Facial hair should be neatly trimmed. Men's earrings should be tasteful, unobtrusive, or omitted.

Many interviews take place during the warm summer months. Don't waste your preparation by arriving wrinkled and drenched in perspiration. If you have a long drive to your destination, consider changing clothes somewhere after you arrive. This makes the long drive more comfortable, and you will feel more confident in clothes that are clean and wrinkle-free.

Interview Apparel Hints



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Body Language During Your Interview

Our bodies communicate a great deal about what we're thinking and feeling. What messages do you want to send during your interview? Do you have trouble maintaining eye contact? If so, you may be subconsciously telling your interviewer that you are not an honest, confident, self-assured professional. Do you habitually slouch when seated? This may indicate a sloppy, disinterested attitude. Do you usually fold your arms across your chest? This is a defensive posture that may indicate feelings of belligerence and closed-mindedness. Here are a few tips to help your body communicate to your advantage during the interview:

Maintain eye contact. Look at your interviewer when he or she is speaking and when you are responding (98 percent of the time). It's uncomfortable to maintain constant eye contact, so look away for an instant while the interviewer is asking you a question, and then return your eyes to your interviewer's face as you begin to answer.

Sit up straight. Place your hands together in your lap or rest them on the arms of your chair (no death grips, please). If you cross your legs, don't make this a distraction with unnecessary nervous movements. Don't make the mistake of trying to look too casual. It's normal to be a little nervous.

Smile frequently. Administrators want to work with pleasant, happy people. You may not be able to express your terrific personality with verbal responses alone, so use your face! Do not, on the other hand, go overboard and grin uncontrollably or try to impress your interviewer with your joke-telling ability.

Shake hands. It's customary for you to greet and bid farewell to other professionals by shaking hands. Many first impressions are destroyed by a limp and insincere handshake. Use a firm grip, but don't break their wrist by pumping too hard.

Body Language Tips



What Questions Will You Be Asked?

It is impossible to anticipate every possible question an interviewer may ask, but preparation can improve your confidence and enhance your verbal presentation. Find a partner and have him or her ask you the sample interview questions in the list running from pages 18-21. Remember to pause for 1-2 seconds before answering a question, and try to keep your answers as brief as possible. Don't ramble. Don't try to bluff on questions you can't answer.

Some questions need to be answered with a question before you can offer a personal response. For example, you might be asked how you feel about students who want to play football and participate in marching band at the same time. Your response might initially be, "How has this been handled in the past?" You should also be aware that every school experiences political problems between faculty and staff and that administrators may attempt to determine where you fit in on a specific issue. For instance, your response to, "Do you think it's necessary for all elementary school teachers to assist with the Thanksgiving assembly dress rehearsal?" should probably be, "I'm not sure. I would need to study that situation and consult with my fellow teachers." Find out if the administrator is hoping for a change.

Sample Interview Questions

- 1. Tell me a little bit about yourself.
- 2. What is the role of special education students in the teacher in the
- 35. How would you mainstream ensembles?
- 36. Define a superior
- 73. What is your philosophy concerning fund-raising?
- 74. How will you control behavior in large

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- classroom?3. Tell me about your student teaching.
4. What was your favorite course in college?
5. What techniques do you use to motivate students?
6. How do you know that what you are teaching is really being learned?
7. Where do you want to be five years from now? Ten years?
8. State a behavioral objective you taught in your last class.
9. What is the most exciting thing happening in music education today?
10. What have you found to be the toughest aspect of discipline?
11. Describe an ideal curriculum in music.
12. How do you introduce career education in music classes?
13. How do you individualize learning in your classes?
14. What are the current curriculum trends in music?
15. What is the ratio of time spent talking to students about music versus time spent having them make music?
16. Describe independent study projects your students have completed.
17. What's your favorite musical concept to teach?
18. What rules do you establish in your classroom?
19. What is most important—content, outcome, or process?
20. How do you handle the different ability levels in your classes?
21. What made you decide to become a teacher?
22. What are your plans concerning professional development?
23. What is the toughest aspect of teaching today?
24. Describe your most positive teaching experience. Describe your most negative.
25. How should music
- music teacher.37. What are your hobbies and recreational interests?
38. How much practice time do you expect from students?
39. What should schools do for students?
40. What makes your class different from other subjects?
41. How would your peers describe you?
42. How do you develop aesthetic responses in students?
43. Which five words would you use to describe yourself?
44. How would you deal with a student who was a habitual behavior problem?
45. What would you do if a student missed a performance?
46. How do you feel about using detention for managing student behavior?
47. Which units would you include in sixth-grade general music?
48. How will you manage and protect the school's equipment?
49. What are important components of a band method book? What are the important components of a general music textbook?
50. What kind of field trips would you be interested in organizing?
51. A student tells you that he or she has experimented with drugs. What would you do?
52. Are you well-organized?
53. How do you feel about corporal punishment?
54. How many performances do you expect from your students each year?
55. What do students gain from studying music?
56. How many years should a student participate in ensembles?
57. Will you be using any religious music?
58. What would you like to change about music teaching in the U.S.?
59. What do you like most about being a music teacher?
60. How important is it that students like you?
61. How do you cope with stress?
62. How do you involve parents in the music program?
63. Describe your last teaching day.
- ensembles?75. Would you ever punish an entire class? When?
76. How would you respond to a parent complaint about your attendance policy?
77. If you could change one aspect of your personality to help you get along better with people, what would you change?
78. Describe the perfect music student.
79. Why do you want to teach this age level?
80. How will you decide who plays which instruments?
81. How will you make sure that students are challenged in your music class?
82. What would you do if you caught a student cheating?
83. How much input should students contribute to a music program?
84. How can you tell if you've had a good rehearsal or class?
85. When you listen to a student who stutters, how do you feel?
86. Should students be allowed to evaluate their teachers?
87. When did you first decide to become a music teacher?
88. How much should a teacher know about the personal lives of his or her students?
89. Do you think that students are capable of self-discipline?
90. How much travel would you be doing with your groups?
91. What do you do when you're bored?
92. Do you think it's possible for a teacher to get too close to his or her students?
93. Describe a "failing" student in your class.
94. What do you consider justifiable reasons for being late to work?
95. How much time outside the school day should a music teacher be willing to work?
96. If you weren't able to teach music, what would you do for a living?
97. If you had a forty-minute class period, how would you divide that time in a rehearsal setting?
98. Can you play all the instruments in the band? In the

teachers contribute to the development of the total school program?	64. Name the titles of the last three books you read.	orchestra? How well?
26. What extracurricular activities could you assist with if you are hired for this position?	65. Who is your favorite composer for band? Orchestra?	99. How will you incorporate technology into your classroom?
27. Could a student of low academic ability receive a high grade in your class?	66. How do you feel about music competitions and festivals? Show choirs? Strolling strings?	100. How would you handle racial tension in your classroom?
28. What kinds of music would you program on concerts?	67. How many days of school did you miss last year?	101. Why do you want to work for us?
29. How do you intend to grade music students?	68. Why should we hire you?	102. What strategies would you use to help a student with a bad attitude toward music class?
30. What is your philosophy of music education? What is your philosophy of education in general?	69. What question have I not asked you that you were hoping I would?	103. What do you consider an adequate budget for your program?
31. Why is music an important subject in the curriculum?	70. What are three words that describe your teaching style?	104. What would a student have to do to get "kicked out" of your class or ensemble?
32. How do you feel about tracking students versus mainstreaming them?	71. Who is responsible for discipline in schools?	105. How do you feel about students who want to be involved in both music and sports? How would you handle scheduling conflicts?
33. What are your weaknesses? What are your strengths?	72. What would you do if a student could not afford to buy a uniform? An instrument?	106. Why did you choose to attend your college or university?
34. How do you encourage students who are musically gifted?		107. How often will your marching band rehearse?
		108. Can you coach any sports?
		109. How do you usually cope with stress and burnout?
		110. If you could write a book, what would the title of the book be? Describe the content.

Special Interviews & Screening Procedures

Some schools are utilizing special techniques to pre-screen applicants. For example, the Gallup Teacher Insight Assessment is an online interview subscription tool for school districts. It uses a combination of question types that includes multiple choice scales (strongly agree, strongly disagree, etc.) and open-ended essays. A computer scores the essays by looking for "keywords" and then compares the scores on all questions to the scores of outstanding teachers, before sending the results to the school. Sample questions include:

- How would you plan a lesson to reach both auditory and visual learners?
- How would you incorporate different cultures in your classroom?
- Why did you want to become a teacher?
- After school, you come across a student whom you know who is crying. He's 16 years old. You ask him what is the matter, and he says he was caught cheating. What would you do?
- One member of a team working on a curriculum project isn't pulling his or her weight. What would you do?
- How would your co-workers describe you?
- Other similar tools are available for administrators to use to determine various aspects of your personality and philosophy of teaching. These tools, similar to the Gallup Assessment, look for keywords in your responses and provide the administrator with a "pass" or "fail" rating scale for each question.

Security Screening

Be prepared for a district to ask you to undergo fingerprint screening at an external site. This is becoming more and more popular as a tool for districts to protect themselves from hiring individuals with criminal records. Background checks of any kind may also be a state requirement that protect schools from hiring the wrong people.

Auditions

In rare cases, savvy administrators may ask you to "audition" for a position. This could include having you teach a sample class, conducting an ensemble, sightreading a musical selection on an instrument, or playing the piano. You may also find yourself being interviewed by a committee of music students and parents. Be prepared.

Sample Questions You Could Ask During An Interview

- How often would my classes meet? For how many minutes?
- Who are the other music teachers? What are their responsibilities?
- Is music required or elective?

- How much say will I have in scheduling my classes?
- Is there an addendum contract (\$\$) for extra duties?
- How transient is the student population?
- When would I get to start?
- What would my budget be?
- How many students are participating in ensembles now?
- Are there any special commitments that would be expected of me or my ensembles? Assemblies? Traditions?
- How successful has the program been recently?
- What are the facilities like? Can I see them?
- What is the district policy on professional leave for conferences, etc.?
- Could I have a copy of the salary schedule?
- Does the district reimburse travel expenses if I have to work at more than one building?
- What other duties are expected? (Lunch monitor, etc.)
- When will you be making your decision?
- Is there a music parent organization in place?
- Have your music students traveled in the past? How often?
- How important is music competition in this district? Would this be required?
- What types of music technology are available? Will music students have access to a technology lab?

Interview Follow-Up

After the interview, write a brief thank-you note or e-mail restating your interest in the position. Remind the interviewer of your qualifications and why you want to teach for this particular school district. Mail this note immediately, as it won't help you if your interviewer receives the note five days after he or she has made the decision. Discuss what you learned during the interview with family, friends, and professors to help you prepare for a decision if you are offered the position.

Do not deluge the administrator with phone calls in the days that follow to see if the position has been filled. A call is appropriate only if you are offered another position while you are waiting and need to know if you must choose. If this happens, phone the person who interviewed you, say that you've been offered another position, and inquire about the status of their search.

If you've decided to accept another position, notify any potential employers of your decision with a phone call or withdrawal letter. Express your appreciation for their consideration, tell them you've found other employment, but do not tell them you found a "better" job. Never "burn bridges," as such actions may come back to haunt you.