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# 01 Standards

What are they looking for?  
Professionalism, philosophy, competence & ethics

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Charismatic, Virtuosity, Leader, Dedicated, Musicianship, Motivator, Tirelessness, Creativity, Kind, Visionary, Sensitivity, Music Lover, Versatility, Exciting Teacher, Caring, Dynamic, Problem-Solver, Expertise, Good Coach, Good Humored

**Interactive #1: Who inspired you? Why?**

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## Definitions

**pro·fes·sion**  
a vocation or occupation requiring advanced education and training, and involving intellectual skills

**fi·du·ci·ary**  
a person or organization that owes to another the highest legal duty of trust & confidence; **being bound both legally and ethically to act in the other's best interests.**



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## Qualities of a Professional

- Succeeded in and continues to embrace "higher education"
- Updates self with "constant education" and retooling
- Seeks change and finding better ways of doing something
- Like lawyers/doctors, "practices" the job; uses different techniques for different situations
- Accepts criticism (always trying to self-improve)
- Proposes new things "for the good of the order"
- Can work unlimited hours (24 hours a day, 7 days per week)
- Is salaried (does not think in terms of hourly compensation, nor expects pay for everything)

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### Qualities of a Professional

- Is responsible for self and many others
- Allows others to reap benefits and receive credit for something he/she does
- Has obligations for communications, attending meetings, and fulfilling deadlines
- Values accountability, teamwork, compromise, group goals, vision, support, creativity, perseverance, honesty/integrity, fairness, and timeliness/promptness
- Accepts and models a very high standard of behavior, etiquette, appearance, language, and ethics.

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### Effective Teachers Score HIGH on\*

- Accepting
- Adult involvement
- Attending
- Consistency of message
- Conviviality
- Cooperation
- Student engagement
- Knowledge of subject
- Monitoring learning
- Optimism
- Pacing
- Promoting self-sufficiency
- Spontaneity
- Structuring

\*Source: "The California BTES - Overview of the Ethnographic Study" by David Berliner and William Tikunoff

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### Effective Teachers Score LOW on\*



- Abruptness
- Belittling
- Defiance
- Counting hours or "clock punching"
- Illogical statements
- Mood swings
- Oneness (treats whole group as "one")
- Recognition-seeking

\*Source: "The California BTES - Overview of the Ethnographic Study" by David Berliner and William Tikunoff

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### Ethical Equilibrium

Foundations of what's "right or wrong"




Troy Hutchings

- Personal **Morality**: "Personal values and beliefs derived from one's life experiences... subjective and may or may not align with community mores."
- Regulations of **Law**: "Policies, statutes, and judicial activity that articulate conduct absolutes."
- Professional **Ethics**: "Professional ethical standards that assist practitioners within situation and systemic contexts in choosing the best course-of-action."
- Professional **Dispositions**: "Agreed upon professional attitudes, values and beliefs to be held by educational practitioners."

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### "Moral Professionalism"

- Coming to work regularly and on time
- Being well informed about students and the subject-matter
- Planning and conducting classes with care
- Regularly reviewing and updating instructional practices
- Cooperating with, or if necessary, confronting parents of underachieving students
- Cooperating with colleagues and observing school policies so the whole institution works effectively
- Tactfully but firmly criticizing unsatisfactory school policies and proposing constructive improvement

Source: Wynne, E.A. (1995). The moral dimension of teaching. In A.C. Ornstein (Ed.) Teaching: Theory into practice. (pp. 190-202). Boston: Allyn and Bacon

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**Interactive #2:**  
**What's your goal?**  
**Imagine your dream job offer...**

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### The "Total Music Educator"

- Embrace the concept and needs of "The Whole Child."
- All course offerings are equal in importance.
- PDE & you are not focused solely on Orff, Kodaly, Dalcroze, or Suzuki.
- Avoid being labeled in a specific subject area or grade level.
- Multiple certifications and skills are helpful to land a job, although later they may become liabilities.
- Utilize your college resources now to "broaden your training" and lessen your insecurities.
- Figure out your worse area – work on it now! (Get lessons, join ensembles, ask help from your peers, etc.)
- Develop resources – people and programs to get and keep your job!

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### Your Teaching Philosophy

Popular interview questions:

- What is your personal mission? Why?
- What is the role of music in a child's education?
- **Are we creating performers, theorists, teachers... or "lifelong music lovers?"** – Jim Frankel

YOU'RE NOT "a choral director!"

NOR "an instrumental teacher!"

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## Prescription for Success

Identify your **weakest** skills...

- Piano playing
- Public speaking
- Jazz improvisation
- Singing
- Folk dancing
- Guitar
- String performance
- Band instruments, etc.

...and get to work on them **NOW!**

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## "On your mark..."

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## 02 Marketing

Personal branding, networking, & "selling yourself"

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## Life-long Quest: Professionalism

- 1 Engage**  
Join, associate, enroll, volunteer, seek new experiences, "make a difference!"
- 2 Network**  
Circulate, connect, attend, reach-out, introduce your "charming self!"
- 3 Confer**  
Grow, collaborate, build your knowledge base, find a mentor, stay current!

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### Self-Assessment

Make a private list of your strengths, weaknesses, and qualities you do and do not wish to convey to a prospective employer.

1. Education
2. Student Teaching, Observations, and Other Field Experiences
3. Community Service
4. Personal Accomplishments
5. Skills
6. Hobbies

This compilation of your positive attributes and achievements will become "the core" of a detailed résumé and portfolio

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### The "Liquid" Résumé

Customize a "walking document" for every job screening appointment

- Keep it **short and simple** (1-2 pages only)
- Focus on your **experiences in education**
- The format, style, and overall design should be clean and foster **clarity/readability**
- This is no place to broadcast a **limited vision** or reduced/specialized skills/goals!

<https://paulfox.blog/2016/01/12/music-teacher-resumes-revisited/>

2/21/26 <https://paulfox.blog/becoming-a-music-educator/> 23

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### Paper & ePortfolios

Bring a comprehensive dossier to the interview, leave a smaller version (duo tang folio) and/or flash drives with the screeners, & refer everyone to your professional website

<https://paulfox.blog/2015/11/15/planning-the-perfect-professional-portfolio/>

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## The "Perfect" Portfolio?

- References
- Student teaching evaluations
- Sample recital and concert programs
- Updated copy of résumé
- Philosophy of music education
- Classroom management techniques
- Copy of transcripts
- Certificates/award letters/scholarships
- Informal congratulatory notes on teaching (student, substitute, or private), shows, clinics, etc.

Start this today → 

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## Personal Website

- Warehouse your portfolio and all of your artifacts
- Research free offerings: web.com, weebly.com, wix.com, wordpress.com
- Incorporate your gmail
- Help from a buddy?



2/21/26 <https://paulfox.blog/2018/01/14/the-professional-website/> <http://www.daviddockan.com/> 26

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## Business Card

Your **personal brand** on a piece of cardboard

- Look professional & project a **positive image**
- Resist a **cluttered** layout
- Avoid clip art
- Consider the printing of a **QR code** with direct access to your website
- Don't try to save money and order **"cheap"**

2/21/26 <https://hbr.org/2012/08/the-surprising-secret-to-sell/> <https://paulfox.blog/becoming-a-music-educator/> 27

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## Business Card

"The Surprise Secret to Selling Yourself" by Heidi Grant in the *Harvard Business Review*

"People are much more impressed... by your **potential** than by your **track record**. It would be wise to start focusing your pitch on your future... rather than your past – even if the past is very impressive indeed. It's what you could do that makes people sit up and take notice – learn to use the power of potential to your advantage."

2/21/26 <https://hbr.org/2012/08/the-surprising-secret-to-sell/> <https://paulfox.blog/2016/04/04/networking-niceties/> <https://paulfox.blog/becoming-a-music-educator/> 28

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**"Get set..."**



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**03 Skills**

**The art & science of getting a job!**  
Interviewing, storytelling & organizing

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**Organize the "4-C's"**

- **C**ontacts
- **C**ourses and notes
- **C**oncerts attended and performed
- **C**onferences and workshops



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**Types of Interviews**

**Different Formats (Know what you're getting into!)**

1. Online
2. Informal
3. Structured
4. Unstructured
5. Sequential (rounds 1, 2, 3)
6. Panel or Group
7. Stress
8. Audition/Performance (on major and minor instrument, singing, piano accompaniment)
9. Lesson Demonstration



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## Purpose of Interview Questions

Employers will ask things to try to gauge your...

- Overall competence
- Knowledge of subject and teaching in general
- Experience
- Skill set (number of tools in your toolbox)
- Personality
- Creativity, critical thinking, and problem solving
- Whether you would be suitable – “a good fit” – for a particular job opening and the school district as a whole

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## Core Teaching Standards

Sample professional applicant rubric:  
**This is what they are looking for!**

Category	1 - Unsatisfactory	2 - Needs Improvement	3 - Good	4 - Excellent
<b>Professionalism</b>				
A. Educational Philosophy				
B. Assessment				
C. Classroom Management				
D. Instruction				
E. Planning and Organization				
F. Professionalism				
G. Leadership				
H. Collaboration				
I. Self-Insight and Development				
J. Energy and Enthusiasm				
K. Appearance				

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## Criteria for Prospective Teachers

- **Instructional**
  - Educational Philosophy
  - Knowledge/Experience
  - Classroom Management
  - Technology
  - Oral Expression
  - Written Communications
- **Professional**
  - Leadership
  - Teamwork
  - Judgment
- **Professional – continued**
  - Problem Solving
  - Planning & Organizing
  - Innovation
- **Personal**
  - Initiative
  - Dependability
  - Adaptability
  - Self-Insight and Development
  - Energy and Enthusiasm
  - Appearance

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**Interactive #4:**  
**Who are you?**  
**Describe yourself in 3 words.**

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## Storytelling 101

The Number One Skill to Land a Job – “SHOW, Don’t TELL!”  
“Paint a Picture” about Your Past Deeds, Traits, and Abilities

**Paper Route**

What did you learn about Mr. Fox?

**Personal Map**

Circles of your values, goals & life elements

**Indeed Tip**

How to tell a story in a job interview

Jennifer Henrick  
<https://www.indeed.com/learn-to-tell-a-story>

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## Storytelling is a critical skill

- Lists of personal examples
- Anecdotes of problem solving
- Positive interactions with children, colleagues, and music programs
- Meaningful answers to the questions

**93% Nonverbal**  
Body language 55%  
Tone 38%  
Professor Albert Mehrabian

**7% Verbal**  
How you say it may mean more than what you say

**Communication is...**

- Model your competence
- Something *solved* or *evolved* during your field experiences
- Don't say it, show it in a story
- Have these at your fingertips

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## All About Stories

**Four elements of successful stories:**

- Satisfy a goal
- Grab attention
- Engage and make compelling
- Enable others to share

- “Stories are up to 22 times more effective than facts alone.”
- “We are wired to remember stories much more than data, facts, and figures.”
- A story can illustrate a journey that may more than inform but **move** or **persuade** the listener.

JENNIFER AAKER  
PROFESSOR OF MARKETING AT HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL

<https://eduphil.org/education/harnessing-the-power-of-stories>

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## Strategic Storytelling

**Identify key impressions you want to convey**

**Pick interview stories that will “sell” the right message**

**Map out the plot of each story – even past struggles or “Plan B’s”**

**Practice your stories, out loud, in front of others, and often**

Source:  
<https://thecorystorytelling.com/blog/how-to-effectively-use-storytelling-in-interviews/>

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### Sample Questions

1. Tell us something about your strengths, challenges, and **goals for the future.**
2. Who had the greatest influence on you becoming a music teacher and why?
3. What are the most important qualities of an outstanding music educator?
4. Describe your **classroom management** procedures? How do you discipline your students?
5. Describe a successful lesson plan developed by you and how did you **assess the learning?**
6. How will you accommodate students with **special needs** or varied interests in your classes?
7. How would you **recruit students** and "grow" interest in your music program participation?
8. Why is it important for students to be actively engaged in the arts?
9. Describe the ultimate \_\_\_ (choral, band, string) program and types/make-up of ensembles.
10. What qualities do you possess that would make you an **effective leader... team member?**
11. Give some examples of materials you would use to build a **diverse repertoire.**
12. Discuss your process for developing the fundamentals of a **singing voice or steady beat.**
13. Discuss your approach for teaching **improvisation** for the first time.
14. How do you select soloists, leadership positions, or rank seating in your ensemble?
15. What concept is most important to you - **content, outcome, or process?**

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### S.T.A.R./Behavioral Questions

**A behavioral interview...**

is a popular interview technique employers use to assess job candidates based on their past behavior. For example, instead of asking hypothetical questions like, "How would you react if you were under a lot of pressure at work?" they would instead ask situational questions like, "Describe a time you were under a lot of pressure at work or school. How did you react?" - *Indeed*



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### S.T.A.R./Behavioral Questions

**Situation, Task, Action, Results**

- **Situation** = Set the stage for the story by sharing context around a specific situation or challenge you faced.
- **Task** = Describe your responsibility or role in the situation or challenge.
- **Action** = Explain the specific actions you took to handle the situation or overcome the challenge.
- **Result** = What was the outcome you reached through your actions?



<https://youtu.be/zGZ0atkoKe>

Permission granted to share Indeed's PowerPoint videos. More resources at <https://www.indeed.com/employer-articles/behavioral-interview-questions-177111>

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## S.T.A.R./Behavioral Questions

**S**ituation, **T**ask, **A**ction, **R**esults

- I. Give me an example of a difficult problem you solved. How did you solve this problem?
- II. Can you tell me about a challenge you overcame in teaching?
- III. Explain a situation in which you would have handled things differently.
- IV. Tell me about a time you handled a stressful situation when you were under a lot of pressure.
- V. Can you tell me about a time you set and achieved a certain goal?
- VI. What is your proudest professional accomplishment and why?
- VII. **Tell me about a past mistake that you've made. How did you handle it?**



**Hollowell Hooks**

"Tricky questions" like Mistake:  
<https://youtu.be/aXHe88IM8M>

Greatest weakness:  
[https://youtu.be/\\_fo90uVTJM](https://youtu.be/_fo90uVTJM)

Permission granted to PMEAs to share Indeed's PowerPoint videos. More resources at <http://www.indeed.com/resources/behavioral-questions> and <https://www.indeed.com/learn-more/behavioral-questions>

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**Interactive #6:  
Practice with a different partner!**

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## Super Lists of Interview Questions



### Coaching Advice on Acing Seven Common Interview Questions

*Ready for Hire: Interviewing Strategies to Land a Job*

This handout was shared during past PCMEA/collegiate sessions at PMEA Annual Conferences by Paul K. Fox, PMEA Retired Member Coordinator and Chair of PMEA Council for Teacher Training, Recruitment, and Retention  
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## Plan Ahead: Interview & Site

**Research...**  
The district, position, & interviewer(s)

**Prepare...**  
Your own set of questions

**Make a trial run**  
Know where you are going to arrive early

**Bring...**  
Updated sets of resume, portfolio

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## Ask your own questions

<p><b>Position</b></p> <p>Building, duties, schedule, classes</p>	<p><b>Curriculum</b></p> <p>Scope &amp; sequence, emphasis, support</p>	<p><b>Specialties</b></p> <p>Orff, Kodaly, Dalcroze, Gordon, Suzuki</p>
<p><b>Students</b></p> <p>Skills, percentages, class sizes, growth</p>	<p><b>Parents</b></p> <p>Concert attendance, boosters, support</p>	<p><b>Community</b></p> <p>Resources, education, socioeconomics</p>

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# "GO!"



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## 04 Assessment

Observing (peers), reviewing, diagnosing & improving

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## Tips for Better Interviews

<p><b>Positive First Impressions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote a positive &amp; cheerful attitude</li> <li>• Share a warm greeting &amp; firm handshake</li> <li>• Build rapport &amp; demonstrate an attitude of openness &amp; sensitivity to the interviewers' style</li> <li>• Show a feeling of mutual responsibility for creating a comfortable atmosphere &amp; establishing common ground</li> <li>• "Be yourself" and model relaxed speech, posture, and body language</li> </ul> <p><b>Other</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Back up statements with examples</li> <li>• Avoid "tough topics," "oversharing," and negative talk about last employer</li> </ul>	<p><b>Positive Nonverbal Cues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respond to interviewer with an occasion affirmative nodding of the head</li> <li>• Sit erect in chair with hands, feet, &amp; arms unfolded leaning forward slightly</li> <li>• Offer good eye contact &amp; smile appropriately</li> <li>• Angle your position so as not to sit directly – beside not across the desk (avoid barriers)</li> <li>• Look interested &amp; listen to the interviewer</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you don't know the answer, be honest. Inexperience is not a crime!</li> <li>• Say what you mean – if you get the job, you may be "stuck" with your promises</li> </ul>
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### Avoid These Interview Bad Habits

1. Repeated verbal pauses, or exclamations of “Umm” or “Ahhh” or “Like...”
2. Unsubstantiated or unsupported statements
3. Use of “weak words” that suggest a lack of conviction (“kind of” or “sort of” or “I feel like”)
4. Failure to look directly at the interviewer(s)
5. Verbal clutter (too many long run-on statements)
6. Fidgeting (tapping your foot, spinning a pen between your fingers, wiggling in your seat, etc.)
7. Fast talking or dropping the ends of your words
8. Answers that are too casual, personal, or informal, or “flip” conversation
9. “Bird walking,” changing of the subject, irrelevant or unclear responses to a question
10. Touching of your hair, clothes, nose, mouth, or anywhere else on your body
11. Responses that go overboard and/or volunteer too much
12. Forceful, dominating, one-sided, opinionated views or arrogant attitudes
13. Nonverbal cues that reflect nerves, insecurity or lack of confidence (slouching or poor posture, looking down, failure to smile, clenching or keeping hands in lap)
14. Hollow, insincere, or disingenuous conversation

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### 27 Interview Mistakes to Avoid

A. Going unprepared	J. Making it all about you	S. Not being prepared to answer salary questions
B. Arriving late	K. Sharing personal details	T. Selling yourself too much
C. Arriving early	L. Being too personal with the interviewer	U. Failing to sell yourself
D. Appearing unpolished	M. Using your phone	V. Neglecting the “biggest weakness” question
E. Displaying low energy	N. Badmouthing past employers	W. Failing to recover from a mistake
F. Displaying too much energy	O. Talking in circles	X. Not having any questions of your own
G. Not getting the tone right	P. Talking too much	Y. Not asking about next steps
H. No paying attention	Q. Messing up body language	Z. Forgetting to follow-up
I. Not rehearsing in advance	R. Bringing up salary and benefits first	ZZ. Following up too aggressively

**Required Reading:**  
 Career Blog <https://paulfox.blog/becoming-a-music-educator/>  
<https://paulfox.blog/becoming-a-music-educator/poster-27-interview-mistakes>

2/21/26 <https://paulfox.blog/becoming-a-music-educator/>

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### Debriefing After the Interview

- Write down everything you feel you handled right and wrong
- Note information you need to include in future correspondence/follow-ups
- Add names to your contact files.
- Write a personalized thank-you letter
- Follow-up your visit by making phone calls, sending requested materials, etc., but do not become a NAG!
- Prepare for next interview... “do better!”

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## The "Hot Seat"

It's time for the "final exam!"

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## Evaluate the Interviewee



Quality	Traits	Good?	Bad?
<b>Attitude</b>	a. Calm appearance, steady nerves b. Enthusiasm, positive and helpful mood c. Self-confidence/poise but no arrogance d. Sincerity e. Respect f. Attributes of a team player (collaborator) g. Attributes of a leader and innovator		
<b>Speech</b>	h. Vocal tone and volume i. Diction and clarity j. Speed k. Expressivity l. Pacing		
<b>Language</b>	m. Use of professional terminology and vocabulary n. Avoidance of "weak" words like "sort of" o. Avoidance of verbal clutter (uh/er/um/er)		
<b>"On Topic"</b>	p. Focus, relevance, avoidance of "bird walking" q. Careful listening/response to the interviewer r. Avoidance of unsubstantiated claims		
<b>Body</b>	s. Posture t. Eye contact u. Facial expressions, smiling v. Avoidance of fidgeting/touching face/hair		
<b>Preparation</b>	w. Knowledge of content x. Organization (distribution of resume/portfolio) y. Anecdotes/evidence of strength/challenges z. Research of district and qualifying interviewer		
<b>Comments</b>			

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## Homework

- Standards:** Define your personal mission, goals, and philosophy for teaching music, modeling the highest ideals of professionalism, ethics, and becoming the "total music educator."
- Marketing:** Design and distribute a "state-of-the-art" résumé, e-portfolio, website, & business card.
- Skills:** Compile a list of anecdotes and true stories of you overcoming challenges, solving problems, and demonstrating "best practices" of professionalism and self-improvement.
- Assessment:** Practice, record, and evaluate yourself answering behavioral & typical job interview questions
- Review** all the links here and other blog-posts at <https://paulfox.blog/becoming-a-music-educator/>

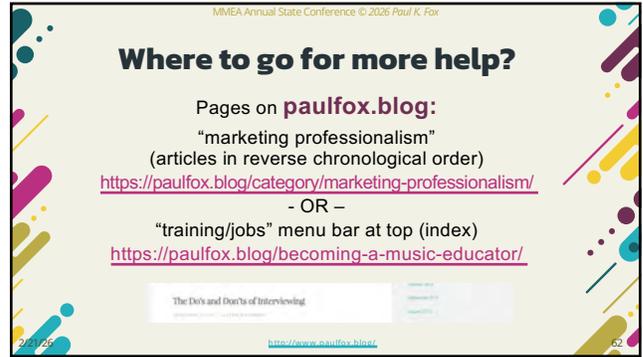


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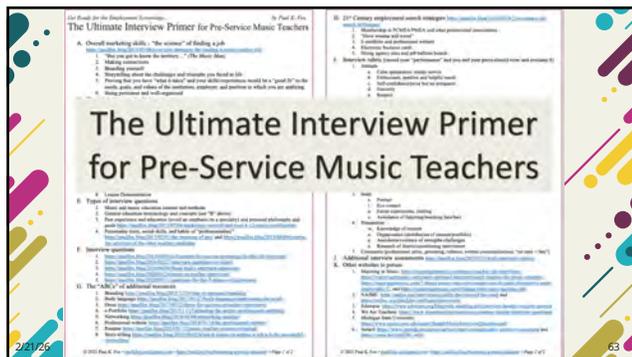
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## The Ultimate Interview Primer for Pre-Service Music Teachers

- A. Overall marketing skills – “the science” of finding a job <https://paulfox.blog/2015/07/08/overview-strategies-for-landing-a-music-teacher-job/>
  1. “But you got to know the territory...” (*The Music Man*)
  2. Making connections
  3. Branding yourself
  4. Storytelling about the challenges and triumphs you faced in life
  5. Proving that you have “what it takes” and your skills/experiences would be a “good fit” to the needs, goals, and values of the institution, employer, and position to which you are applying
  6. Being persistent and well-organized
- B. The “alphabet soup” of educational terminology, jargon, acronyms, etc. <https://paulfox.blog/2015/07/18/the-alphabet-soup-of-educational-acronyms/>
- C. In PA, training and assessment in the criteria of Charlotte Danielson’s “Four Domains” from the *Framework for Teaching*. <https://danielsongroup.org/framework> and <https://paulfox.blog/2015/08/09/criteria-for-selection-of-the-ideal-teacher-candidate/>
- D. Types of music teacher employment screenings <https://resumes-for-teachers.com/blog/interview-tips/the-most-common-types-of-interviews-in-the-education-sector/> and <https://paulfox.blog/2015/09/01/a-blueprint-for-success-preparing-for-the-job-interview/>
  1. Online
  2. Informal
  3. Structured
  4. Unstructured
  5. Sequential
  6. Panel or Group
  7. Audition/Performance (on major and minor instrument, singing, piano accompaniment)
  8. Lesson Demonstration
- E. Types of interview questions
  1. Music and music education content and methods
  2. General education terminology and concepts (see “B” above)
  3. Past experience and education (avoid an emphasis on a specialty) and personal philosophy and goals <https://paulfox.blog/2015/07/04/marketing-yourself-and-your-k-12-music-certification/>
  4. Personality traits, social skills, and habits of “professionalism” <https://paulfox.blog/2015/07/01/the-meaning-of-pro/> and <https://paulfox.blog/2015/08/09/criteria-for-selection-of-the-ideal-teacher-candidate/>
- F. Interview questions
  1. <https://paulfox.blog/2015/09/01/a-blueprint-for-success-preparing-for-the-job-interview/>
  2. <https://paulfox.blog/2016/02/27/interview-questions-revisited/>
  3. <https://paulfox.blog/2016/06/04/those-tricky-interview-questions/>
  4. <https://paulfox.blog/2020/01/26/more-on-teacher-interviews/>
  5. <https://paulfox.blog/2020/05/11/questions-for-the-3-phases-of-interviews/>
- G. The “ABCs” of additional resources
  1. Branding <https://paulfox.blog/2015/12/16/tips-on-personal-branding/>
  2. Body language <https://paulfox.blog/2017/01/27/body-language-interviewing-for-a-job/>
  3. Dress <https://paulfox.blog/2017/07/22/dress-for-success-at-teacher-interviews/>
  4. e-Portfolio <https://paulfox.blog/2015/11/15/planning-the-perfect-professional-portfolio/>
  5. Networking <https://paulfox.blog/2016/04/04/networking-niceties/>
  6. Professional website <https://paulfox.blog/2018/01/14/the-professional-website/>
  7. Resume <https://paulfox.blog/2016/01/12/music-teacher-resumes-revisited/>
  8. Story-telling <https://paulfox.blog/2015/08/02/when-it-comes-to-getting-a-job-s-is-for-successful-storytelling/>

H. 21<sup>st</sup> Century employment search strategies <https://paulfox.blog/2016/08/14/21st-century-job-search-techniques/> and <https://paulfox.blog/2025/02/04/the-get-a-job-toolbox/>

1. Membership in PCMEA/PMEA and other professional associations
2. “Have resume will travel”
3. E-portfolio and professional website
4. Electronic business cards
5. Hiring agency sites and job bulletin boards

I. Interview rubric (record your “performance” and you and your peers should view and evaluate it)

1. Attitude
  - a. Calm appearance, steady nerves
  - b. Enthusiasm, positive and helpful mood
  - c. Self-confidence/poise but no arrogance
  - d. Sincerity
  - e. Respect
  - f. Attributes of a team player (collaboration)
  - g. Attributes of a leader and innovator
2. Speech
  - h. Vocal tone and volume
  - i. Diction and clarity
  - j. Speed
  - k. Pacing
  - l. Expressivity
3. Language
  - m. Use of professional terminology and vocabulary
  - n. Avoidance of “weak” words (“like,” “sort of”)
  - o. Avoidance of verbal clutter (“ahhh” or “umm”)
4. “On Topic”
  - p. Focus, relevance, avoidance of “bird walking”
  - q. Careful listening/response to the interviewer
  - r. Avoidance of unsubstantiated claims
5. Body
  - s. Posture
  - t. Eye contact
  - u. Facial expressions, smiling
  - v. Avoidance of fidgeting/touching face/hair
6. Preparation
  - w. Knowledge of content
  - x. Organization (distribution of resume/portfolio)
  - y. Anecdotes/evidence of strengths/challenges
  - z. Research of district/questioning interviewer
7. Comments (professional attire, grooming, tidiness, written communications, “on time = late”)

J. Additional interview assessments <https://paulfox.blog/2019/05/14/job-interview-rubrics/>

K. Other websites to peruse

1. Majoring in Music: <https://majoringinmusic.com/music-teacher-job-interviews/>, <https://majoringinmusic.com/essays-personal-statements-and-resumes-for-music-students/>, <https://majoringinmusic.com/7-things-music-education-majors-can-do-make-themselves-more-employable-2/>, and <https://majoringinmusic.com/finding-first-music-teaching-job/>
2. NAFME: <https://nafme.org/blog/mock-interviews-unraveling-the-puzzle-of-landing-a-music-teacher-job/> and <https://nafme.org/blog/storytelling-developing-employment-marketing-skills/>
3. Edutopia: <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/rock-teaching-job-interview-heather-wolpert-gawron>
4. We Are Teachers: <https://www.weareteachers.com/most-common-teacher-interview-questions/>
5. Michigan State University: <https://music.msu.edu/resource/preparing-for-your-career/>
6. Indeed: <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/interviewing/teacher-interview-questions> and <https://youtu.be/rcrnHWv-wHc>

# Coaching Advice on **Acing Seven Common Interview Questions**

## *Ready for Hire: Interviewing Strategies to Land a Job*

This handout was shared during past PCMEA/collegiate sessions at PMEA Annual Conferences by Paul K. Fox, PMEA Retired Member Coordinator and Chair of PMEA Council for Teacher Training, Recruitment, and Retention  
[paulkfox.usc@gmail.com](mailto:paulkfox.usc@gmail.com) © 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 Paul K. Fox <https://paulfox.blog/becoming-a-music-educator/>

Interviews involve the “art and science” of public relations, research, marketing your “personal brand,” and selling yourself. In short, the more prepared you are, the better. The questions and commentary below will serve as areas you can study, review, and approach using that familiar process of a good musician—*practice, practice, practice!*

During past sessions at the PMEA spring conferences, members of the “Ready to Hire” mock interview panel distributed handouts sharing their ideas and “tools and techniques” of suggestions for successful job screenings and “landing a job!” This is an excerpt of the blogpost at <https://paulfox.blog/2020/01/26/more-on-teacher-interviews/>. My past articles include:

- “Job Interview Playbook – Directing a Showstopping Performance”  
<https://paulkfoxusc.files.wordpress.com/2019/03/job-interview-playbook-pkfox-040419.pdf>
- “A to Z Job Interview Checklist”  
<https://paulkfoxusc.files.wordpress.com/2019/03/a-to-z-job-interview-checklist-040419.pdf>
- “Marketing Your Professionalism” <https://paulkfoxusc.files.wordpress.com/2019/03/marketing-your-professionalism-pmea-042117.pdf>.

Files from past PMEA workshops may be downloaded and read from <https://paulfox.blog/2019/04/03/interviews/> or this QR Code. ⇨



What other assistance can we offer on this topic? How about some reflection and specific “coaching” in the formation of thoughtful answers to seven commonly asked employment interview questions?

These are tips from “the experts,” human resource staff, interviewers, supervisors, etc. We give each resource “the podium” and “the baton” to offer their perspective in the triumphs, pitfalls, and pratfalls of frequently observed interviewee responses. Follow-up by reading the entire article posted at each link.

Many of these suggestions are geared to “general education” interviews, but you can apply them to whatever specialty or grade level to which you are applying. After all, the person sitting at the other side of the desk is probably an administrator or director of curriculum, not a current/former music teacher or someone who truly *knows* the arts.

Again, be sure to visit each website... All told, there are more than 108 sample questions and responses in these collections below! Need any additional advice? Please peruse articles at <https://paulfox.blog/becoming-a-music-educator/>.

## 1. WHAT IS YOUR TEACHING PHILOSOPHY?

*Teacher interview questions like this ask, “Are you a good fit for our school?” It’s the teaching equivalent of “tell me about yourself.” But — Don’t answer elementary teacher interview questions for an unstructured school with, “I believe in structured learning.” Take the time to learn the school’s philosophy before the interview.*

**Example answer:** *“I believe in teaching to each student’s passion. For instance, in one kindergarten class, my students had trouble with punctuation. I observed that one student, Mary, suddenly got excited about apostrophes. I fueled her passion with a big book on punctuation. Her enthusiasm was contagious, and soon the entire class was asking bright and animated questions. Whenever possible, I try to deliver structured lessons in an unstructured way like this.”*

*That answer uses the S.T.A.R. approach to educator interview questions. It shows a Situation, a Task, an Action, and a Result.*

— “25 Teacher Interview Questions and Answers” by Tom Gerencer at <https://zety.com/blog/teacher-interview-questions>

This is from the Zety “career toolbox” website. They also offer an outstanding app to “build” a resume, CV, and cover letter, all with excellent examples.

## 2. WHY DO YOU WANT TO BE A TEACHER/WORK WITH CHILDREN?

*You have to know who you are as an individual and as an educator, and you have to know what you can bring to the school... This question gets to the heart of that self-awareness and passion. The interviewer wants to know: What drew you to this field, specifically?*

**How to answer it:** *It’s obvious of course, but you don’t want to say, “Summer vacations!” This should be easy to answer simply because there’s probably something you can think of that made you want to get into education. Maybe you love teaching your friends new things, or are a facts wizard bursting with knowledge, or love connecting with children. Focus not just on what you like about teaching but also on what you can... bring to the table.*

**For example, you might say:** *“I really admired my third-grade teacher, Mrs. Kim, when I was younger, and even after I left her class, I still felt myself drawn to her for advice and guidance over the years. It’s that sense of warmth and acceptance she provided me that inspired me to become a teacher. I want to be that person others can lean on as they navigate the often-times tough waters of growing up.”*

— “15 Common Questions Asked in a Teacher Interview (and How to Answer Them With Ease)” by Alyse Kalish at <https://www.themuse.com/advice/interview-questions-for-teachers-answers>

In addition, the site above shares several important pointers from Calvin Brown, Senior Recruiter at AlignStaffing, an education staffing firm, and Dan Swartz, Managing Director at Resolve Talent Consulting, LLC, a firm that specializes in education recruitment. This reaffirms the theme of the blogpost “S Is for Storytelling at Interviews”

<https://paulkfoxusc.wordpress.com/2015/08/02/when-it-comes-to-getting-a-job-s-is-for-successful-storytelling/>

*“If you have a situation or a story with a great outcome, absolutely share [it],” says Brown. “Stories are also great ways to highlight your expertise and skill set if you don’t come with a traditional background in education.” Swartz adds, “Even if you’re not a teacher with experience, you can still highlight how you go about your work by giving past examples and scenarios of engaging others.”*

### 3. HOW WOULD YOU HANDLE A DIFFICULT STUDENT?

Mary Findley, Senior Teacher Success Manager at Skillshare, former Teach for America Core Member and elementary school teacher, suggests this scenario and answer:

*“When students are disengaged, it’s either because the content’s too challenging, it’s too easy, or there could be some outside-of-school factors,” explains Findley. A good answer delves into figuring out the cause, as that’s often the most important step.*

*Then, your response should show that “you’re meeting the student where they’re at and building on their strengths,” she says. It should also emphasize that you’re “collaboratively discussing” solutions with the student rather than ordering them around. If you have an example story to tell, that’s a great way to state your case.*

**You could say:** *“For me, the first step would be to pull them aside and address the issue privately. My biggest questions would be about deciphering what might be the root cause of this student’s bad behavior. Once I know what may be contributing to their difficulty, I really try to work with them to come up with a solution. I used this strategy in my last classroom, where I had a student who couldn’t seem to stay in his seat during lessons. We talked about how his behavior affected the rest of the class and why he kept moving around, and we agreed that when he was feeling really anxious he could raise his hand and I’d let him take a lap around the classroom, but only when it was appropriate. I also decided to make some of my lessons more active and hands-on so that other students could benefit from getting out of their seats every once in a while.”*

— “15 Common Questions Asked in a Teacher Interview (and How to Answer Them with Ease)” by Alyse Kalish <https://www.themuse.com/advice/interview-questions-for-teachers-answers>

### 4. HOW DO YOU INCORPORATE SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING IN YOUR LESSONS?

*Many states and districts have added requirements for social-emotional learning into their standards. Explain how you will not only tend to the academic needs of your students but tie in lessons that satisfy the core SEL competencies. Describe how you will help students build their self- and social-awareness skills, how you will support them in building relationships, and how you will give them the skills to make responsible decisions.*

— “18 Interview Questions Every Teacher Must Be Able to Answer” by Brandie Freeman <https://www.weareteachers.com/most-common-teacher-interview-questions/>

### 5. HOW WILL YOU MEET THE NEEDS OF STUDENTS IN YOUR CLASS WHO ARE ADVANCED OR SAY THEY’RE BORED? and 6. HOW WILL YOU ENGAGE RELUCTANT LEARNERS?

*School leaders don’t want to hear canned responses about how you can differentiate; they want you to give some concrete answers and support your ideas. Perhaps you help get kids prepared for scholastic competitions once they’ve mastered the standard... Maybe you offer more advanced poetry schemes for your English classes or alternate problem-solving methods for your math students. Whatever it is, make sure that you express the importance that all students are engaged, even the ones that are already sure to pass the state standardized test.*

*Teaching in an age when we must compete with Fortnite, Snapchat, and other forms of instant entertainment makes this question valid and necessary. How will you keep students’ heads off their desks, their pencils in their hands, and their phones in their pockets? Share specific incentive policies, engaging lessons you’ve used, or ways you’ve built relationships to keep students on task. An anecdote of how a past student (remember to protect privacy) that you taught was turned on to your subject because of your influence would also help your credibility here.*

— “18 Interview Questions Every Teacher Must Be Able to Answer” by Brandie Freeman <https://www.weareteachers.com/most-common-teacher-interview-questions/>

## 7. WHAT ARE YOUR GREATEST WEAKNESSES?

Likely considered as one of the “trick” or “unfair” questions by many, you should still be ready for it. One of the keys to sounding sincere is to personalize your response, and provide specific examples of the “problem,” step-by-step self-improvement goals, and evidence of positive growth and progress.

*At some point during the interview process, you may be asked to describe your personal strengths and weaknesses. Many job candidates are unsure about how to approach this question. However, by establishing the appropriate context, you can give hiring managers an honest, thoughtful answer that highlights both your self-awareness and professionalism.*

*Preparing ahead of time for this question is a valuable use of your time before the interview. Even if you aren't asked about your strengths and weaknesses specifically, scripting out your response to this common question will give you a candid yet compelling description of what you bring to the table and how you wish to grow in the future.*

*Because we all have weaknesses but rarely want to admit to them, it's best to begin with a truthful answer and build your script from there. Select an answer that a hiring manager would not consider to be essential qualities or skills for the position as well as qualities that you are actively improving.*

**Some examples of weaknesses include:**

- *Disorganized*
- *Self-Critical/Sensitive*
- *Perfectionism (Note: this can be a strength in many roles, so be sure you have an example of how perfectionism can be a problem to demonstrate that you've thought deeply about this trait)*
- *Shy/Not adept at public speaking*
- *Competitive (Note: Similar to perfectionism, this can be a strength)*
- *Limited experience in a non-essential skill (especially if obvious on your resume)*
- *Not skilled at delegating tasks*
- *Take on too much responsibility*
- *Not detail-oriented/Too detail-oriented*
- *Not comfortable taking risks*
- *Too focused/Lack of focus*

**Example weakness: Perfectionism**

*“I tend to be a perfectionist and can linger on the details of a project which can threaten deadlines. Early on in my career, when I worked for ABC Inc., that very thing happened. I was laboring over the details and in turn, caused my manager to be stressed when I almost missed the deadline on my deliverables. I learned the hard way back then, but I did learn. Today I'm always aware of how what I'm doing affects my team and management. I've learned how to find the balance between perfect and very good and being timely.”*

**Example weakness: Difficulty with an area of expertise**

*“Math wasn't my strongest subject in school. To be honest, as a student, I didn't understand how it would be applicable in my adult life. Within a few years of being in the working world, though, I realized that I wanted to take my career in a more analytical direction. At first, I wasn't sure where to begin, but I found some free online courses that refreshed the important basics for me. In my most recent job, this new foundation has enabled me to do my own goal setting and tracking. Actually, getting over the math anxiety I had when I was younger has been incredibly empowering.”*

— “50 Teacher Interview Questions and Answers to Help You Prepare” from *Indeed.com*  
<https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/interviewing/teacher-interview-questions>

# Mock Interview Another Candidate Assessment Sample

*For Slippery Rock University and Grove City College Music Education Majors and all PCMEA members*

<b>TEACHING ABILITY: Demonstrates an appropriate knowledge of content and pedagogy</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Conveys ideas and information clearly?</li> <li>2. Provides reasonable examples of effective lesson-planning, instructional strategies, and/or student assessment?</li> <li>3. Makes content meaningful to students in the district?</li> <li>4. Sets concrete, ambitious goals for student achievement?</li> <li>5. Addresses the multiple and varied needs of students in the classroom?</li> <li>6. Focuses on achieving results with students?</li> <li>7. Indicates confidence that all students should be held to high standards?</li> <li>8. Maintains high expectations for students when confronted with setbacks; continues to focus on the students' academic success?</li> <li>9. Reflects on successes and failures?</li> </ol>
<b>CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT: Demonstrates ability to deal effectively with negative behavior</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10. Assumes accountability for classroom environment and culture?</li> <li>11. Conveys reasonable understanding of potential challenges involved in teaching in a high need school?</li> <li>12. Demonstrates ability to deal effectively with negative student behavior?</li> <li>13. Persists in offering viable or realistic strategies to deal with classroom management challenges?</li> <li>14. Remains productive and focused when faced with challenges?</li> <li>15. Conveys willingness to try multiple strategies or something new when things change or when confronted with challenges?</li> <li>16. Displays willingness to adapt classroom management style to meet the particular needs or culture of a school?</li> </ol>
<b>SCHOOL FIT: Displays skills and needs for development that would be a good fit for the school.</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>17. Interacts with interviewer in appropriate and professional manner?</li> <li>18. Respects the opinion of others?</li> <li>19. Recognizes that families impact student performance?</li> <li>20. Creates strategies of positive relations with administrators, faculty, parents, and students?</li> <li>21. Expresses personal and professional expectations and/or preferences that are in line with the school culture?</li> <li>22. Demonstrates interests and skills that match the school's culture and needs?</li> <li>23. Interacts appropriately with supervisors, colleagues, parents, and students?</li> </ol>
<b>IMPRESSIONS: Displays professionalism in appearance, attitude, body language, and communications.</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>24. Provides a resume, portfolio, and/or business card with access to his/her website, that are neat, professional, and free of errors?</li> <li>25. Arrives early (10-15 minutes), exhibits he/she is well-prepared, and notifies office personnel of their presence?</li> <li>26. Greets interviewer(s) in a positive and professional manner, builds rapport, and demonstrates an open-minded, poised, engaging, enthusiastic, patient, and helpful attitude throughout the interview?</li> <li>27. Refrains from using cell phone or other distractions during interview except if asked to share digital portfolio?</li> <li>28. Wears professional attire (fits well, clean and ironed), shoes are polished, and nails are clean/well-trimmed?</li> <li>29. For women, skirts are at the appropriate length (knee-high or just above the knee) and blouses fit well, and necklines are not low-cut or overly revealing?</li> <li>30. For men, moustaches and beards are neatly trimmed?</li> <li>31. Avoids wearing excessive jewelry, cologne or perfume, and piercings/tattoos are hidden/not distracting?</li> <li>32. Shows evidence of researching school and is clear on the details of the position?</li> <li>33. Demonstrates awareness of the job by relating examples of his/her skills and experience for the position?</li> <li>34. Maintains good eye contact and proper posture throughout the interview?</li> <li>35. Responds to questions in a clear, concise, and well-paced manner using grammatically correct terms?</li> <li>36. Responds with answers that are thoughtful, well-constructed, confident, and genuine?</li> <li>37. Refrains from interrupting the interviewer while he/she is speaking?</li> <li>38. Refrains from use of "verbal clutter" (too many long run-on sentences), "bird walking" (changing the subject or irrelevant/unclear responses), any form of fidgeting (tapping foot or fingers, wiggling in chair, etc.), touching hair, nose, mouth, etc.), or saying "um" or "ah" or "Like?"</li> <li>39. Conveys interest in position and appreciation for offering the interview?</li> <li>40. Follow-ups with a thank-you to the interviewer or job screening committee?</li> </ol>
<b>RATINGS:      E = Exemplary      FA = Fully Acceptable      NFA = Not Fully Acceptable</b>

- A. Tell us something about yourself... your strengths, weaknesses, and goals for the future.
- B. Who had the greatest influence on you becoming a music teacher and why?
- C. What are the most important qualities of an outstanding music educator?
- D. Describe a successful lesson plan you have developed.
- E. What classroom/rehearsal management techniques do you use and how would you handle misbehavior?
- F. How will you accommodate students with special needs or varied interests in your music program?
- G. How would you recruit/encourage students and "grow" interest and participation in the music program?
- H. Describe your approach to introducing a musical concept: singing matching pitches, keeping a steady beat, improvisation, tuning an instrument, vocal breath support/singing posture, theme and variation, etc.

Comments: *Looking for these “good” things*

- a. Motivation and sincerity: “a good fit,” true desire for the job, and “doing what it takes”
- b. Empathy, sensitivity, rapport with interviewer
- c. Goals: well-thought vision/mission/philosophy, and “professional development for life”
- d. Child-centered focus
- e. Depth of understanding, knowledge of pedagogy, use of educational terminology
- f. Modeling of the four C’s: be calm, concise, congenial, and caring throughout the interview
- g. Storytelling of successes – specific anecdotes
- h. Flexibility, versatility, adaptability, “landing on your feet,” good problem solving



*Hopefully not seeing too many of these “not-so-good things”*

- i. Lack of organization, preparedness, documentation (if this was a real interview, did you bring your resume, portfolio, business card with access to your professional website?)
- j. Showing of nerves, talking too fast, fidgeting, “ahh” – “uh” – “Like...”
- k. “Bird walking,” verbal clutter, lack of clarity in answers
- l. Unsubstantiated, unsupported, slanted or “opinionated” statements
- m. Going overboard (offering too much information)

### How to “ace” your job interview

- **Attitude:** appearances of calm, positive and helpful mood, grace, enthusiasm, self-confidence/poise but no arrogance, sincerity, respect, modeling attributes of a team player (skills of collaboration) but also a leader and innovator
- **Speech:** qualities of tone, diction, volume, clarity, speed, expressivity, and pacing (appropriate wait-time and spacing between questions/answers)
- **Language:** use of professional terminology, varied and educated vocabulary, avoidance of weak words that suggest a lack of conviction (“I feel like” or “sort of” or “kind of”), avoidance of verbal clutter and repetitive exclamations (“ahhh” or “umm” or “like”)
- **Body language:** posture, eye contact, 15% angle to interviewer, smiling, strong handshake, positive demeanor, avoidance of fidgeting or “ticks” that reflect nervousness like clenching hands, looking down, touching face or hair, tapping pencil/papers
- **“On topic:”** focus, relevance, careful listening and thoughtful responses to interviewers’ questions, avoidance of unsubstantiated or unsupported statements, rambling, or “bird walking”
- **Preparation:** model of a knowledgeable and skillful candidate, organization (distribution of resume/portfolio), personal examples/stories of strengths and experiences, research of the program and asking of questions to the interviewer

### Raising the bar further: effective teachers...

#### Score HIGH on

- Cooperation
- Student engagement
- Monitoring learning
- Optimism
- Pacing
- Promoting self-sufficiency
- Spontaneity
- Structuring

#### Score LOW on

- Abruptness
- Belittling
- Counting hours (“clock punching”)
- Defiance
- Illogical statements
- Mood swings
- Oneness (treating group as “one”)
- Recognition-seeking

Source: “The California BTES – Overview of the Ethnographic Study” by David Berliner and William Tikunoff

# The Job Interview Playbook – Directing a Showstopping Performance!

by Paul K. Fox – NAFME & PMEA conferences – reprinted from *PMEA News* Summer 2016

## Employment Tips for PCMEA Members and Prospective Music Teachers

*All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players;  
They have their exits and their entrances,  
And one man in his time plays many parts... – William Shakespeare*

How do you get to Carnegie Hall? Practice, practice, practice! How do you market yourself, take interviews, and succeed in landing a job? **Practice, practice, practice!**

This article reviews rationale and methods to intentionally prepare, rehearse, “stage,” and “act out” your answers to potential employment screening questions.

Depending on the structure of the interview, the hiring procedures of the institution, and the type of session (whether it is a general screening prior to any job opening, or the first round, second round, demonstration lesson, final round with the superintendent, etc. in order to fill a specific position), you will be exposed to many different kinds of questions.

For **samples of more than 70 interview questions**, please go to <https://paulkfoxusc.wordpress.com/2016/02/27/interview-questions-revisited/>. As they say, it is time to “woodshed” your upcoming performances!

The first step is to think up as many examples as possible of past incidents that exhibit your **mastery of the core standards of teaching**, critical thinking and problem solving, professionalism, music and academic accomplishments, and all positive interactions with children, in both musical and non-musical settings. Assemble and catalog these successful “scenes” (even write them down) to prep your responses for the interview.

At job fairs and mock interviews for music education majors, soon-to-be candidates are advised to practice their **storytelling skills** and recall relevant **personal anecdotes** in order to satisfy the interviewers’ questioning, promote an image of competency and self-confidence, “show that you have what it takes” and would be a “good fit” for their school district, and ultimately “ace” the examination.

One example given to the “recruits” is probably best for a sales position. If an interviewer asks something like, “What was your first job?” – your response should not be a quick rejoinder of several words like “a paper route.” To enhance your **“personal brand”** and illustrate your character, proficiency, and work history, you should take the opportunity to tell a story about that first “gig.” Describe what you did as the neighborhood paperboy, perhaps revealing a little insight into the kind of entrepreneur you are, adoption of “customer-first” philosophy and habits, a savvy business sense, focused motivation, and a strong work ethic. Narrate an anecdote rather than list facts. Plan (and dress rehearse) something like this script:

“My route was small, so I surveyed my existing customers, asked about their needs, desires, and their definition of a ‘perfect paper delivery,’ and how I could help them. I tagged and followed-up on their unique requests, like ‘hiding the pile of papers that end up accumulating during vacation periods’ (avoiding any advertising to the world that homeowner is out-of-town), and ‘when NOT to place the paper in the screen door early in the morning so as to avoid waking up the dogs and the whole household.’ I also solicited business from non-subscribers, asking them how I could be of assistance. Pretty soon, word got around, and my enhanced customer-care translated into almost doubling the number of the people on my route.”

Set-up one or more video recording sessions of **“mock interviews.”** Put yourself in the shoes of the both the interviewer and the interviewee... randomize and select questions from all categories for multiple interview-settings, and formulate your responses. View and assess your performances. What are your strengths and

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weaknesses, and what improvements could be recommended? Besides the content and clarity of your answers, monitor and evaluate your body language, eye contact, and posture, vocal tone and projection, and those intangibles like “charm,” “attitude,” and “first impressions.” If you do this in a group (roommates, collegiate music education chapter, methods class, etc.), request feedback from your “critics.”

Finally, here are **five more considerations for successful interviews**:

1. **Answer the questions as truthfully as possible.** Be true to yourself. Never try to predict or recite what you think the interview panel wants to hear. Also, keep in mind, “anything you say may be held against you...” such as declaring a willingness to participate in a host of extracurricular activities, sports, student council, and other clubs. If you claim you want to become the marching band director, musical choreographer, swim coach, Sadie Hawkins dance organizer, and yearbook sponsor, the administrators (who are always seeking to fill these positions) will expect you to sign up for all of these extra-duties in your first year!
2. Some questions may be designed to see **how you respond to stress.** Although no longer considered a valid measurement of intellectual capacity or emotional stability, “stress interviews” are still conducted by some institutions. You’ll know immediately if for some reason you are thrown into one of these seemingly “hostile environments.” No matter what you say or how you respond to a question, the interviewer(s) will exhibit a negative attitude, look disinterested, inattentive, unimpressed, or disappointed, or even act angry, belligerent, or argumentative. Talk about “playing to a dead crowd!” Actually, their sole purpose is to evaluate your behavior during artificially-induced tension or conflict. Your only strategy? Play the game! Stay calm, cool, and collected.
3. **It is not a crime** for not knowing the meaning of a single educational term, solution to a problem, or failing to answer a question. If you are just starting out in your career, recently completed coursework in music education, don’t be surprised if a question or two is beyond your study or experience. Just admit it! You could say something like, “I haven’t had the pleasure of teaching long enough to totally comprehend what I would do in that situation.” Or perhaps, “I am not too familiar with that term/method/philosophy, but I am willing to research it, ask my building principal or supervisor for his/her advice,” etc.
4. **Don't get carried away**, offer too much information, or share irrelevant personal information or random opinions. Listen carefully to the question. Be precise and stay “on topic.” Refine your response to a specific story to back up your perspective, understanding, and/or success in dealing with the issue. And, as the dictionary defines the term “run on,” don’t “blab, blubber, blurt, cackle, chat, gossip, gush, jabber, mumble, mutter, prattle, rant, rave, run off at the mouth, trivialize, or yak!”
5. **Search and consume every job resource** you can get your hands on. Peruse articles about marketing your professionalism, branding yourself, creating e-portfolios, taking interviews, etc. Archives of numerous blogs, handouts, and online sources are available from the top menu link “Becoming a Music Educator” from this WordPress site – <https://paulkfoxusc.wordpress.com/becoming-a-music-educator/>.

“The world is a stage” and now you need to “act your part” when participating in employment interviews. Carefully prepare to show-off the best elements of your training, skill sets, and personality traits. In the field of music and music education, we preach “perfect practice makes perfect,” so apply your performance know-how to interview storytelling and get ready for the questions! **The stage is now yours!** “Break a leg!”

*The word “theater” comes from the Greeks. It means “the seeing place.” It is the place people come to see the truth about life and the social situation. – Stella Adler*



## Sample interview questions by core teaching standard (USC criteria or most popular)

- P1. Who had the greatest influence on you to become a music teacher and why? *(Most Popular)*  
P2. What are the most important qualities of an outstanding educator? *(Most Popular)*  
P3. What is your personal philosophy of student discipline? *(Most Popular)*  
P4. How would you assess the learning in your classroom/rehearsal? *(Most Popular)*  
P5. What purpose does music education serve in the public schools? *(Most Popular)*  
P6. What is the importance of professional development and how will you apply it to your career? *(Most Popular)*  
P7. What are your personal goals? Where do you see yourself in ten years? *(Most Popular)*  
P8. How do you recruit students to "grow" a music program? *(Most Popular)*
- A1. Concerning music education, what is your philosophy and mission? *(A – Educational Philosophy)*  
A2. What is your view of the teacher's role in the classroom? *(A – Educational Philosophy)*  
A3. What is most important to you (and why): music content, outcome, or process? *(A – Educational Philosophy)*
- B1. Describe a successful lesson plan you have developed. *(B – Knowledge/Education)*  
B2. What units would you plan for \_\_<sup>th</sup> grade general music? *(B – Knowledge/Education)*  
B3. List a few selections you might program on a choral (or band or string) concert. *(B – Knowledge/Education)*  
B4. What steps would you take to teach someone how to improvise? *(B – Knowledge/Education)*  
B5. How do you get a child to match pitch? *(B – Knowledge/Education)*
- C1. What rules and expectations would you establish in your classroom? *(C – Classroom Management)*  
C2. How will you control behavior in large ensembles? *(C – Classroom Management)*  
C3. How would you deal with a difficult student who has gotten off-task? *(C – Classroom Management)*
- D1. How will you incorporate the use of technology in your classroom? *(D – Technology)*  
D2. How have you utilized technology to assist in instructional preparation? *(D – Technology)*  
D3. Summarize a list of software programs and other technology you have mastered. *(D – Technology)*
- E1. Describe your strengths in oral communications and public relations. *(E – Oral Expression)*  
E2. How would you disseminate information to the students in support of your daily lesson targets? *(E – Oral Expression)*  
E3. Provide sample announcements you could make at an a) open house or b) public performance? *(E – Oral Expression)*
- F1. Discuss your strengths in writing and/or written communications. *(F – Written Expression)*  
F2. What role does the Common Core have in general music (or music ensembles)? *(F – Written Expression)*  
F3. Describe your last or favorite college essay or article on music or curriculum. *(F – Written Expression)*
- G1. Describe your leadership style. *(G – Leadership)*  
G2. What actions would you take to get a group of peers refocused on the task at hand? *(G – Leadership)*  
G3. Illustrate your role in a group project or collaborative assignment. *(G – Leadership or H – Teamwork)*
- H1. How would you involve students in the decision-making or planning of your classes/ensembles? *(H – Teamwork)*  
H2. How would you involve parents in your music program? *(H – Teamwork)*
- I1. How would your musical peers describe you? *(I – Judgment)*  
I2. How do you typically model professionalism and judgment dealing with conflict? *(I – Judgment)*
- J1. How do you differentiate and teach to diverse levels of achievement in your music classes? *(J – Problem Solving)*  
J2. Describe a difficult decision you had to make and how you arrived at your decision. *(J – Problem Solving)*  
J3. How will you accommodate students who want to participate in both music and sports? *(J – Problem Solving)*
- K1. How do you insure that long-term plans and music objectives are met? *(K – Planning and Organization)*  
K2. Illustrate a typical musical (or marching band or ensemble) production schedule. *(K – Planning and Organization)*
- L1. How would you structure a general music (or ensemble rehearsal) classroom of the future? *(L – Innovation)*  
L2. Share an anecdote about a new or innovative teaching technique you have used in music. *(L – Innovation)*
- M1. Describe a project you initiated (or would initiate) in your teaching or extra-curricular activity. *(M – Initiative)*  
M2. What motivates you to try new things? *(M – Initiative)*  
M3. How much time outside the school day should a music teacher be expected to work? *(M – Initiative)*
- N1. How would you define professional commitment in terms of music education? *(N – Dependability)*  
N2. What after-school activities do you plan to become involved? *(N – Dependability)*
- O1. How do you cope with stress? *(O – Adaptability)*  
O2. How do you manage shifting priorities or changing deadlines? *(O – Adaptability)*
- P1. Why did you choose to become a music teacher? *(P – Self-Insight/Development)*  
P2. In your own music-making or teaching, of which are you most proud (and why)? *(P – Self-Insight/Development)*  
P3. If you could write a book, what would the title be? *(P – Self-Insight/Development)*
- Q1. What hobbies or special skills do you have which may influence your future activities? *(Q – Energy/Enthusiasm)*  
Q2. In what extra-curricular activities did you participate at the HS and college level? *(Q – Energy/Enthusiasm)*

Quality	Traits	Good?	Bad?
<b>Attitude</b>	a. Calm appearance, steady nerves b. Enthusiasm, positive and helpful mood c. Self-confidence/poise but no arrogance d. Sincerity e. Respect f. Attributes of a team player (collaboration) g. Attributes of a leader and innovator		
<b>Speech</b>	h. Vocal tone and volume i. Diction and clarity j. Speed k. Expressivity l. Pacing		
<b>Language</b>	m. Use of professional terminology and vocabulary n. Avoidance of "weak" words ("like," "sort of") o. Avoidance of verbal clutter ("ahhh" or "umm")		
<b>"On Topic"</b>	p. Focus, relevance, avoidance of "bird walking" q. Careful listening/response to the interviewer r. Avoidance of unsubstantiated claims		
<b>Body</b>	s. Posture t. Eye contact u. Facial expressions, smiling v. Avoidance of fidgeting/touching face/hair		
<b>Preparation</b>	w. Knowledge of content x. Organization (distribution of resume/portfolio) y. Anecdotes/evidence of strengths/challenges z. Research of district and questioning interviewer		
<b>Comments</b>			

**Upper St. Clair School District  
Professional Applicant Rating Form**

Overall Rating (Circle One)	
1 Unsatisfactory	3 Good
2 Satisfactory	4 Superior

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Interview Date and Time: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Certification(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_

	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Good	Superior	Remarks:
<b>Instructional:</b>					
A. Educational/Philosophy					
B. Knowledge/Education					
C. Classroom Management					
D. Technology					
E. Oral Expression					
F. Written Communication					
<b>Professional:</b>					
G. Leadership					
H. Teamwork					
I. Judgment					
J. Problem Solving/Decision Making					
K. Planning and Organizing					
L. Innovation					
<b>Personal:</b>					
M. Initiative					
N. Dependability					
O. Adaptability					
P. Self-insight and Development					
Q. Energy and Enthusiasm					
R. Appearance					

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature of Rater: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_