

Interviewing Tips

from 2011-12 AWSP President Jim Rudsit

The interview is a performance assessment of how much you know about current best practices and how well you perform under pressure. It gives the interviewers insight into how you may perform in parent conferences, problem solving meetings, conflict situations or curriculum night presentations to parents. Your credentials, references and application materials get you into the interview; your performance in the interview will get you hired.

Before the interview, do your homework.

- Research information about the school and the school district. Find out about curricula, technology and assessment standards. Know the demographics of the school.
- Process your application materials neatly and accurately. Your application packet is considered “the best anyone is going to see,” so make it your best. If it does not look professional, neither do you. Your placement file must be complete, with a resume/vita and recent letters of reference. Letters from supervisors have a higher impact than letters from peers.
- Apply for the position with a letter that speaks to the job description, even if the district accepts a handwritten application form.
- When you are called for the interview, ask about the selection process you’ll be going through.
- Practice answering interview questions with a friend or to yourself in front of a mirror. Your university program will have a bank of sample questions for you to practice.
- Interviews almost always start with a question that allows you to present your qualifications and background. Prepare to sell yourself; don’t be overbearing, but do not undersell yourself. This is an opportunity for you to demonstrate your passion for teaching.

During the interview, perform.

- Dress professionally.
- Expect a team of interviewers.
- Breathe, relax and adjust.
- Use active listening strategies.
- Be aware that some interviews include an “in-basket” or written activity.
- Make detailed eye contact—to the questioner during the question and first part of answer, to each interviewer, and then back to the questioner at the end of your answer.
- Know that there is not one simple “right answer” to each question. Interviewers are looking for thoughtful answers that demonstrate multiple perspectives, problem solving skills, organized thought, a focus on student learning, and both technical and conceptual knowledge.
- Be prepared for follow-up questions or, conversely, little or no feedback on your answers. Display confidence and ask for clarification if you are unclear about a question.
- Enunciate clearly, use expression, share student success stories and exude passion when you talk about student learning.
- Focus not just on your instructional skills, but how your teaching impacts student learning.