Hiring Virtually: Demo Lessons

The “lesson role-play” is often the most critical portion of the interview day and hiring process. Those hiring virtually can still get the level of nuanced data needed to make a hiring decision from this activity. This document outlines ways to offset the challenge of conducting demo lessons virtually and additional ideas for enriching the virtual hiring process.

Virtual Lessons

Before selecting an activity, consider which skills you would like to assess for the hires you are making. Do you want to gauge a candidate’s ability to deliver virtual instruction? Do you want to simulate in-person classes? The first three options focus on virtual instruction while the following bullets provide suggestions for simulating in-person instruction.

▪ **Teach a webinar-style demo lesson.** Provide clear guidance to the candidate around length, content, format, how to record, etc.

▪ **Have teachers join virtual learning spaces to lead lessons.** If you have virtual learning taking place where teachers are already connecting with students daily, have applicants join those spaces to lead mini- or full-length virtual lessons. Make sure you communicate with students and their families before the lesson so they know what to expect from the time.

▪ **Have students Skype into a lesson.** Use Skype or another virtual platform to have students come into a lesson. This is particularly helpful if you have “virtual hiring days” as opposed to ongoing hiring.

▪ **Have a teacher record a lesson and solicit feedback from students.** Share the lesson with students (as well as hiring committee members) using an online platform (e.g., YouTube, Vimeo, etc.) and ask them to share their feedback. You can even record student and hiring committee feedback for the teacher to review. In the interview, ask the teacher to respond to the feedback and role-play an example of what s/he might do differently.

▪ **Use an existing teaching video from this school year.** If candidates have previously taught, ask if they can share a video of them teaching their former students.

▪ **Share a sample lesson from your current curriculum.** Have the candidate internalize and lead a portion of that lesson.

▪ **Have selectors role-play as students.** Make sure staff are trained/normed and have time to practice before the interview. Set clear expectations for both selectors and candidates.

▪ **Need more support?** Here’s another resource to support your efforts to hire virtually.

Understanding the Community & Replicating an In-Person Experience

▪ **Meet with stakeholders.** Have a ready list of key stakeholders (parents, other teachers, students, school leaders, and community members) that candidates can talk with to learn more about the community as part of the interview process or before making their decision.

▪ **Provide virtual tours.** Share videos or pictures from your campus to help candidates get a better sense of what they might experience. If candidates are new to the community, share links from Chamber of Commerce or other community groups to help them better understand the town or city that they would eventually move to.

▪ **Think about the materials** that you can send in advance (videos, parts of the website, schedules, etc.).

▪ **Maximize candidates’ speaking time** to hear from them as much as possible.

Additional Ideas
Host a virtual interview fair: Have pre-screened candidates hold a window of time on a set day. About a week in advance, distribute their applications to school leaders/hiring managers and invite them to sign up for interview slots with candidates they’re interested in. You may want to use a shared spreadsheet to manage the interview schedule. Give school leaders/hiring managers a deadline to sign up for interviews, and, following the deadline, share interview schedules with candidates. Be sure to include dates and times of interviews along with the names, titles, and schools of their interviewers.

Ask candidates to demonstrate their data analysis/problem solving skills: In advance of the interview, provide candidates with sample data and instructions to analyze the data and respond to a set of questions. For instance, if provided with student assessment data on state standards, candidates could use that to develop a set of recommendations or curricular materials to ensure all students reach mastery. Have candidates submit their completed exercises before the interview and come prepared to debrief and discuss their findings and process.

Use a role-play: Present candidates with a hypothetical situation they’re likely to encounter and role-play the scenario. Provide feedback after a round and have candidates repeat the role-play to assess their ability to take and implement feedback.

Ask for a sample lesson plan: Have candidates submit a sample lesson plan and ask them to articulate how they would engage all students in the classroom, where and how they will need to check for understanding, and how they will measure student success. To avoid bias toward experienced teachers who have more materials to draw from, be sure to focus the interview on how the candidate would implement the lesson plan and ensure all students are successful.