Reference Check Guidance

Reference Check Protocol

Congratulations on progressing a candidate to the final stage in your selection process, the reference check stage!

**Number of References:** In order to confirm a candidate’s experiences, double-check for potential red flags, and identify strengths and weaknesses to help you best support your likely new hire, you should speak with **two references** for every teacher and counselor finalist, and a **third reference for administrator** finalists.

**Type of References:** These references must consist of the candidate’s 1) current direct manager and 2) prior direct manager.

- If the candidate does not have any full-time work experience, a part-time work or internship manager or extracurricular activity advisory can suffice.
- The third reference for administrator candidates should be from a **direct report**. If they have not had any direct reports, the third reference should come from someone whom they have coached.

**Mode of Communication:** We recommend calling all references, as people are generally more forthcoming, transparent, and nuanced on the phone. If after two tries you are unable to reach references by phone, you can send the email template at the end of this document instead.

**A note on online searches:** We do not recommend conducting online searches using your candidates’ names. This can surface questions hiring teams legally cannot ask about, may introduce bias, and it is possible your search returns individuals with the same name. Before processing a hire, we recommend conducting a background check in alignment with your organization’s background check policy and any city, local, and state laws.

Phone call Reference Check Questions

- **Context:** Hello, I am calling from XXX School. I am contacting you regarding a reference for [candidate name], who has interviewed with us for a [position title]. [Feel free to provide context on the school, and the specific role.] We are excited about [candidate name], and as the last step in our process are eager to learn more about their experience.
  - Questions for all references
    - Can you briefly describe the nature of your relationship with the candidate?
    - Do you think this candidate would be a good fit for the role, based on how I have described it and any information they’ve shared with you about it?
    - [Only for teachers] Can you describe their instructional and classroom management abilities?
    - [Only for counselors] Can you describe their ability to work with and support students?
    - What are the candidate’s greatest strengths?
    - If the candidate were to continue working for you, what would be your professional development goals for them? Do you have suggestions for us for coaching them?
    - Do you have any concerns about the candidate, and their fit for the position?
    - If you could go back in time and had the option of hiring them again, would you still do it? Why or why not?
    - [Final question] Is there anything else that I should take into consideration as we decide whether to extend an offer to them?
  - Additional questions for direct reports of administrators
    - How would you describe this candidate’s instructional leadership abilities?
    - How would you describe this candidate’s management style?
    - What did you like best about working for this candidate?
    - What is one way the candidate could have been a more effective manager?
Hello XXX,

I am reaching out from XXX School about a reference for [candidate name], who has interviewed with us for a teaching position. We are excited about [candidate name], and as the last step in our process are eager to learn more about their experience working with you. I tried to reach you by phone, but figured that it might be easier to get in touch with you by email.

Can you please share your thoughts on the questions below with me in the next two days, by EOD [date]? You can also feel free to reach me at [phone number].

Thank you so much for your help!

- Can you briefly describe the nature of your relationship with the candidate?
- Can you describe the candidate’s instructional and classroom management abilities?
- What are the candidate’s greatest strengths?
- If the candidate were to continue working for you, what would be your professional development goals for them?
  - Do you have suggestions for us for coaching and development to best set them up for success?
- Do you have any concerns about the candidate, and their fit for the position?
- If you could go back in time and had the option of hiring them again, would you still do it? Why or why not?
- Is there anything else that I should take into consideration as I consider whether to extend an offer to the candidate?