

Best Practices for Virtual Interviews

This guide details best practices for conducting effective phone and video interviews.

General Best Practices

Before interviews:

- **Set and communicate clear expectations for virtual interviews.** Let candidates know what they can expect and how they can prepare. While candidates may be familiar with virtual formats, it's important to not assume prior knowledge and provide every candidate with consistent information. Provide logistical details like if the selector will call them, if a call line will be used, how to join a video conference, and how they can request tech support if needed.
- **Consider sending a set of generic questions to candidates to support their preparation.** See the questions below for examples. This is also a great opportunity to model how you want teachers to set clear expectations with students.
 - Why do you want to teach [subject area/grade level] at this point in your life?
 - What strengths do you bring to this school community?
 - How will you build relationships with your students and families?
 - How will you address students with varying abilities within your classroom?
 - What do you know about our school? About our community?
- **Plan interview questions in advance.** Determine the key candidate competencies and experiences on which you'll gather information during the interview as well as any follow-up you'll need to do based on the candidate's application and/or prior interviews. We recommend following a [structured interview process that assess candidates across a consistent set of competencies] (Competency-Based Interview Questions and Activities), but the interview questions may be differentiated for candidates, depending on their prior experience and the specific role for which they're applying. Outline a skeleton interview schedule to ensure there is sufficient time for all questions, including follow-up questions to probe deeper and for candidates to ask questions.
- **Norm selectors to minimize bias.** Selector norming and training minimizes bias, creates consistency across selectors, and ensures that selection yields actionable, reliable data. Make sure selectors have a common understanding of selection materials, rubrics, and rating systems. This could look like scoring and debriefing the first round of candidate interviews together, drafting sample exemplary candidate responses, and identifying specific ways candidates will demonstrate your selection competencies.
- **Rehearse the interview plan with all selectors.** Inviting other stakeholders to join as selectors—like teachers, other leaders, students, and/or families—is a strong interview practice but does require coordination in advance. Make sure all selectors know what questions they will ask and when, the protocol for asking follow-up questions, and when and how to join the interview. Ensure there is a shared place to take notes and silently communicate as needed during the interview (e.g., Google doc, Microsoft Teams, Slack).

- **Be flexible.** As much as possible, provide candidates with convenient, flexible options to schedule interviews and remember that candidates in different time zones may need additional options (e.g., morning, day, and evening options). Be understanding if plans must shift on short notice.

During interviews:

- **Limit distractions.** Silence or turn off phone and computer notifications and minimize background noise. At the same time, let candidates—and interviewers—know that it is okay if unplanned interruptions happen. Candidates without access to ideal interview environments shouldn't feel discouraged from interviewing.
- **Introduce the interview.** Begin the interview by introducing yourself and each participating staff member. Even if a staff member may join simply to take notes or assist with tech, introduce that person and their role. Explain the interview format and length. If you'll be typing notes as a candidate responds, explain that up front. You want them to be aware that they may hear the clicking of a keyboard, and that there may be a slight delay in your response as you finish capturing what they had to say.
- **Slow down.** Be sure to speak slowly and clearly so that you don't have to repeat yourself. If your video conference platform supports it, consider using captions or copy/pasting your questions into the chat. And remember that with virtual interviews, there can often be a delay. Assure your candidate that they can ask you to repeat your questions, and that you may run into delays or even overlap in communication. That's ok! You can take this as another opportunity to see how you and the candidate might work together.
- **Schedule time to immediately debrief.** Following each interview, hold time for the selection team to discuss the candidate and align on ratings and next steps. This ensures next steps are captured and selectors can focus their attention on the candidate they are currently interviewing.

Special Considerations for Video Interviews

Before interviews:

- **Provide specific anti-bias training for video interviews to selectors.** To build consistency, norm staff on a few sample videos and conduct the initial round of interviews in teams. Additional sample guidelines:
 - Look out for potential bias triggers in video interviews like non-standard English, a candidate's surroundings (background, lighting), their dress, or background noise. Keep in mind that positive bias—like recognizing the school a candidate references—can also interfere with your objectivity.
 - Remember that everybody has biases, some explicit, others unconscious. As screeners, it is crucial to ensure those biases do not influence selection decisions, either positively or negatively.
 - During video interviews, stay conscious of triggers, take low-inference notes, be objective, and flag if you are not sure you can be completely objective.
- **Create a personal experience.** Take care to provide candidates with an interview experience that gives them an opportunity to get to know your school, community, and staff. Consider sending video introductions of selectors in advance (this also frees up additional time in the actual interview). Share school "artifacts" (like pictures, a sample teacher schedule, student

work, community snapshot, a lesson plan, or teacher/student/family testimonial) either during or in advance of the interview.

- **Send clear instructions.** Let your candidates know how to dial in, how to screen share if necessary, how to mute their microphone, use the chat feature, etc. Additionally, share interview expectations like professional dress, how to prepare, and recommended interview conditions (e.g., reliable wireless signal, minimal background noise, sufficient lighting). However, do let candidates know that they will not be penalized for not having access to an ideal interview environment; this should not discourage candidates from interviewing! Consider creating a short overview document that shares how to join your video platform to include with candidate interview invitations.
- **Tidy up.** Be aware of what the candidate might see and remember that this may be their first visual impression of your organization. Selectors' video appearance should maintain a reasonably professional look.

During interviews:

- **Be early.** Log in 5-10 minutes before the scheduled start time to ensure the technology is working properly. Also, schedule interviews with the necessary buffer time to remain early (and prepared) for each consecutive call.
- **Give grace.** Not every candidate will have experience video interviewing, so be understanding if they're having trouble signing in, if a tech issue arises, or if they seem nervous. It can be uncomfortable acclimating to seeing or hearing yourself on video! Be sure to put candidates at ease if unplanned interruptions occur.
- **Be mindful of your body language.** Unlike with a phone screen, candidates can see you. Sit up straight, look into the camera whenever possible, and use visual cues like head nods to acknowledge candidate statements.
- **Stay flexible.** If technical difficulties persist, know that it is acceptable to end the video interview and call the candidate via phone. If it's necessary to your process to have something that feels more face-to-face, you can reschedule that portion for a later date.
- **Use platform views strategically.** If your platform allows, use the gallery view during discussions so that you can see everyone and best replicate a group conversation. During presentations (for instance, when a candidate is presenting slides from a lesson plan), use the split screen view to see both the presenter and their material.