



## Newsletter Coordinator



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## Interviewing

*Leadership, NAD Principals' Handbook (excerpt)*

When interviewing prospective employees, there are several areas that cannot be discussed at the time of the interview or any time prior to employment. (Refer to the chart on page 63 of the Handbook.)

There are additional areas that the principal and those conducting the interview might want to consider. These would include:

- Instructional techniques
- Professional background information
- Teacher relationships with colleagues
- Teacher relationships with parents
- Teacher relationships with students

The local conference office of education (LCOE) may have a protocol for interviewing prospective employees.

## Where is Yenta When You Need Her?

*Robert Skoretz, Principal, Loma Linda Academy High School*

Have you ever found yourself sitting in your office around April singing, “Matchmaker, matchmaker, make me a match?” Interviewing a teacher for a position at your school presents a unique opportunity to discover a great professional match between your school community and the newly hired educator! With all due respect to the legendary Yenta from *Fiddler on the Roof*, I will humbly offer three suggestions that I have found to be very helpful finding the right teacher for the right position.

First, when planning an interview, I make every effort to visit the teacher at her school. This allows me to put the interview in the context of how the teacher interacts in her comfort zone. With permission from the teacher and her principal, I can do classroom observation, chat with students, and talk personally with her principal for a reference check. As the principal of my school, I know my school culture. As I get a sense of the interviewee’s school culture, I feel that she and I can talk more effectively during the interview about what it would look like for her to teach in my school. Whenever I have been unable to make this visit, I have felt much less confident in making a hiring decision.

Second, during my time with the teacher, I look for the “spark” that signals a passion for teaching, a deep love for students, and a genuine desire to teach in my school. Teaching is hard work. Most interviews take place around the start of the fourth quarter of school. When I see a teacher who demonstrates a passion for teaching late in the school year, I know I have found someone I want on my staff. In a very similar way, I look for a teacher who shows kindness and care for his students. Classroom discipline is

necessary, moving effectively through the curriculum is important, but a love for teaching and a love for students is indispensable for Seventh-day Adventist education. Finally, I believe the best transitions between schools happen when a teacher loves each school he teaches at, and when seeing a new opportunity to teach at a new school, assertively expresses his interest in the position. When these three elements come together, I feel much more confident about the match.

Third, I listen carefully for things that are said beyond what I have asked in the interview. I am very careful to avoid invasive questions about a teacher’s spirituality and religious practice. Rather, I ask open ended questions about how a teacher works with spirituality in the curriculum and in his adjunct duties. These are appropriate questions to ask a Seventh-day Adventist teacher since they are included in the job description. What I listen for in the interview and other conversations I have with the teacher are the deeper signs of a friendship with Jesus, an excitement to share God’s love with students through curriculum and extracurricular activities, and a love for the mission of Seventh-day Adventist education.

Interviews should be carefully planned and a checklist used to make sure that nothing important is neglected and that basic competencies are established. Our goal, however, is to go beyond the minimum to find a teacher who will flourish in the new classroom and create a Christ centered, dynamic, and fun learning environment for students! May these few suggestions help in your next search for a new teacher. ☩

# Interviewing Perspective Employees

Charles McKinstry, Director of Planned Giving

Attorney-at-law and former Superintendent of Schools, Southeastern California Conference

While the interview may not be the most useful tool in hiring, it is widely used. But the effectiveness of an interview in selecting the best candidate varies widely. The effectiveness of the interview is directly proportional to the crafting of the questions and the skill of the listener.

Creating an effective interview process is neither simple nor obvious. Here are some tips from my experience.

**Screening.** The principal or superintendent should screen down the list of applicants to the top two or three.

**Developing the Interview Questions.** If a committee is interviewing, it is important to develop and structure the interview in advance with them. This should probably be done at an earlier time. The principal or superintendent should take the lead in this but allow participation by the members. Begin by identifying and ranking the most important qualities for this position. Draft the questions to measure those qualities. Avoid questions that imply the correct answer. Try to craft questions that will detect the quality or ability without being obvious. I frequently use two or three hypotheticals that are designed to detect the existence of a specific trait or skill. For some traits a simply direct question can be effective. For example asking the candidate, “How well organized are you on a scale of 1 to 10?” often elicits a candid and accurate answer. You can then follow up with “What techniques do you use to organize?”

**Scheduling the Interview.** It is best to do all the interviews on the same day. You do not want the interview hurried. I often use about ten main questions with some subsidiary questions or follow up questions stimulated by the answer. I plan the interview to run about one hour. I schedule them at ninety-minute intervals to allow time for discussion following the interview and personal breaks for the members.

**Preparing the Interviewers.** Prior to the interview, provide the members with a copy of the application from the candidate. Also provide the members with a written copy of the interview

questions for each candidate so they can take notes.

Brief your members in advance on what to listen for in each answer. This is particularly important in questions that are designed to be high discriminators. That means the question is effective in uncovering a desired trait, but many candidates would not respond in a way evidencing the desired trait. High discriminator questions are the hardest to craft. For example, the committee may decide that they want the new fourth grade teacher to be kind to students. How will you craft a question to determine this? A possible question is “How important do you think it is for students to think their teacher is kind?” Listen for a strongly positive response. Follow up with a question such as “What do you do so that students view you as kind.” Listen for specific examples that are based on what the teacher deliberately does.

**Legal Precautions.** There are two main legal issues in interviewing. The first is not asking questions that involve legally protected categories. This generally includes questions about an arrest record, marital status, parental status, child care arrangements, national origin, age, physical or mental disability. Individual states may have additional restrictions.

The second area of legal concern is doing “due diligence” in screening prospective employees for sexual misconduct with minors. In the interview process, the candidate should be asked whether he or she has ever been accused of sexual misconduct with a minor. If the answer is “yes,” the candidate should be asked to explain. If a reasonable explanation is given, the administrator, at minimum, must do additional specific research to get background information about the incident with a former supervisor. It is better to ask this question in a one-on-one setting rather than in front of a group. Employers are charged with legal responsibility of screening their prospective employees for past problems of sexual misconduct with minors. 🌐

Interview chart. Refer to page 63 of the *Principals’ Handbook* for the complete listing.

CATEGORY	TYPICALLY ILLEGAL QUESTIONS	LEGAL VERSION OF QUESTION
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How old are you?</li> <li>When did you graduate from university?</li> <li>What is your birthdate?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are you over the age of 18?</li> </ul>
Marital/ Family Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is your marital status?</li> <li>Whom do you live with?</li> <li>Do you plan to have a family? When?</li> <li>How many children do you have?</li> <li>What are your child care arrangements?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Would you be willing to relocate if necessary?</li> <li>Travel is an important part of the job. Would you be willing and able to travel as needed by the job? <i>(This question is OK as long as ALL applicants for the job are asked it.)</i></li> <li>This job requires overtime occasionally. Would you be able and willing to work overtime as necessary? <i>(Again, this question is OK as long as ALL applicants for the job are asked it.)</i></li> </ul>
Arrest Record	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have you ever been arrested?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have you ever been convicted of...? <i>(The crime should be reasonably related to the performance of the job in question.)</i></li> </ul>