

Diocese of Davenport Sample Teacher Interview Questions

There are no right or wrong answers, but the answers can be very revealing...

Know what you seek in a new hire and interview for those qualities...

Pick 20 -25 questions that will identify the person you seek for the position you wish to fill...

It is good to begin with asking the candidate to tell you about themselves.

“Describe yourself, your background and why you are interested in teaching in a Catholic school.”

Or

You have been hired as the newest member of our teaching team. In fewer than five minutes, how would you introduce yourself to a group of parents, students, and teachers from our school? The only thing you want to be sure to do is to indicate how your education, training, and work experiences have trained you for this new role in our Catholic School.

Getting Started

1. What can you bring to our Catholic school that another applicant will not?
2. Tell me a bit about yourself?
3. I've read your application and resume, but what are the most important things I should know about you, your life, and your experiences?
4. Why did you choose teaching as a career?
5. Who influenced you to become an educator, and how did they influence you?
6. If you were not a teacher, what would you be?
7. What methods besides lecture, would you use to present material to your students?
8. What book is at your bedside table presently?
9. What have you read lately that led you to change the way you teach?
10. If your greatest supporter was in the room with us today, what five words would he/or she use to describe you as a person, a teacher, or a colleague?
11. What would your previous employer or college advisor say were your greatest strengths for teaching, and what areas would they suggest were areas that need growth? And do you agree with those assessments?
12. What have you learned from your mistakes?
13. What are the most important or worthwhile qualifications of a good teacher?
14. What is your greatest strength? How would you use that in your teaching?
15. You are going to teach _____ topic this period. And the bell has just rung to begin class. Describe what the next 15 minutes are like. What are you doing? What are the students doing?
16. What do you hope to accomplish in the first week of school?
17. What is your area of growth? How will that affect your effectiveness as a teacher?
18. How would you describe your organizational style?
19. Describe your most significant contribution in your last job or student teaching.
20. Tell me about an interesting article you have read recently in a professional journal.
21. Why do you want to teach in a Catholic school?
22. What is your philosophy of Catholic education?
23. What excites you? Annoys you? Bore you? Motivates you? In general?
24. What are you looking for in a teaching position? What do you expect from leadership as you start a new position?
25. What do you plan to be doing in 5 years? What are your career goals?

First Year Teacher

1. Tell us about your student teaching experience.
2. What were you not prepared for when you began student teaching?
3. Please describe a lesson plan that really worked for you. What made it successful?
4. As you begin teaching, how will you improve your handling of student discipline?
5. How would you describe your level of friendship with students?
6. What opportunities did you have to work with students in school activities?
7. Tell us about your interaction with teachers or staff members other than your supervising teacher.
8. You learned how to write a lesson plan in college. With student teaching behind you, how has that planning changed?
9. Which discipline did you feel most comfortable teaching? Least comfortable?
10. How did you handle grading of student work? Will you use the same or different approach in your own classroom?
11. Tell us about your interactions with parents. What did you learn?
12. Describe a conference you had with a parent regarding a student's behavior or grades. In reflecting on that conversation, what went well? What could you have done to improve on the conference?
13. As you listen to your college colleagues describe their student teaching, how do you feel about your own experience and your capability?
14. Looking back at your total student teaching experience, what would you do differently?

Faith Based/ Religion Questions

1. How important is your faith in your life and how comfortable are you sharing your belief with children and adults?
2. What classes, workshops or study groups have you attended as an adult that enriched your faith life?
3. What specifically interests you about teaching in a Catholic school?
4. Have you had any experience teaching Faith Formation classes?
5. What would it mean to you as a new teacher if I were to tell you the Gospel values must permeate the classroom all day long in our school?
6. How comfortable are you about planning a liturgy?
7. How do you make prayer a part of your life, and how would you integrate prayer into the classroom?
8. Have you participated in faith-based or community service? What did you personally gain from that experience?
9. Why do many schools today have students do community service as part of the school experience?
10. How comfortable are you with teaching the morals and beliefs of the Catholic Church?
11. What are the unique characteristics of a Catholic education?
12. Would it bother you to participate in the mass as a non-Catholic if you have to model participation in the mass for a class of younger students?

Student Centered /Teaching and Learning

1. Describe your classroom management style and how you maintain student discipline.
2. How have the Common Core State Standards guided your lesson preparation?
3. How have state or local standards guided your lesson preparation?
4. What is the difference between a good teacher and a great teacher?
5. What are the rules of your classroom? How are they established?
6. Tell me what I would see when I come into your classroom. How would it look? What would I see students doing?
7. If I were to visit your classroom and take a photo with my iPhone, what would I see in that photo?
8. At the end of the school year, what will your students remember most about being in your class?
9. How would you handle a child who is two grade levels or more above (or below) the rest of the class?
10. How do you individualize your teaching?
11. Share your experience with FAST testing and progress monitoring in the ELA classroom?

12. With so much content to cover with standards, describe your approach to
13. Tell us about a very successful lesson you taught. What made it successful? Long-term planning.
14. Describe for me a lesson that you taught that went very well? Why did the lesson work so well?
15. What techniques do you use to keep students actively involved and motivated during a lesson?
16. How have you used student data to inform planning or assessment?
17. Give an example of differentiation in a classroom where you have worked?
18. Professional learning communities (PLCS) have become more and more common. Describe any experience you have had with a PLC.
19. What kind of students do you like to work with? What type of students could you teach most effectively?
20. How do you help students experience success?
21. How would you use standardized test data to improve classroom instruction?
22. What procedures do you use to evaluate student progress besides tests?
23. How would you identify special needs of students?
24. With so much content to cover with standards, describe your approach to long-term planning.
25. Describe a specific lesson you might teach and how you would incorporate Bloom's taxonomy.
26. What is your minimum expectation when you send a child to the office for disciplinary reasons?
27. A typical classroom in our school includes students with a wide range of abilities. How do you meet the needs of each child, including gifted, at-risk, and special needs learners?
28. Tell us about a time you met with a parent regarding their child's behavior
29. Is a student's failure the fault of the teacher? Why or why not?
30. How do you respond if a student informs you he has been bullied or harassed?
31. What is your experience using detention as a consequence? Do you find detention to be effective?
32. At what point is a detention necessary?
33. When would you find it necessary to send a child to the office? What would your expectations be of the principal in this situation?
34. How can you as a teacher proactively prevent discipline issues in your classroom?
35. What experience have you had with Block-scheduling or advisor-advisee programs?
36. A student has failed three of the first four exams and shows little sign of effort to improve the situation. What action steps will you take?
37. What are your thoughts and experience on inclusion and mainstreaming?
38. How have you served as an advocate for students who are at risk in your school?
39. How have you incorporated critical thinking skills into your instruction?
40. How have you implemented multicultural/gender-free practices in your teaching?

Integrating Technology into the Classroom

1. What type of training have you had in the area of technology?
2. How does technology enhance learning in the classroom?
3. What types of technology have you used in your teaching?
4. If you are using technology, is it making your job easier and you more efficient as a teacher and classroom-manager?
5. If you had your choice, would you like a computer in the classroom for each student or would you rather the students go to a computer lab to work on computer-related assignments?
6. Have you had unsuccessful technology-related projects? Why do you feel these projects failed?

Community and Parents

1. What do you feel is the most effective way to communicate with parents? Describe how you have used this/these techniques.
2. Describe some of the reasons why you would contact parents or your goal in contacting parents.
3. What type of feedback do you provide students and parents? How often?
4. How do you communicate to parents about how a student is performing?
5. Catholic schools encourage parent volunteers. How would you encourage volunteers in your classroom?

6. What would you think is important to present at an Open House?
7. In what ways do you involve parents in the learning process or in your classroom activities?
8. How do you handle an angry parent, or a parent who feels you have not treated their child fairly?
9. Tell me about a difficult circumstance you handled. What action did you take? What were the results?
10. How would you become involved in school/parish/community activities?
11. Why/not are parent-teacher conferences important?
12. What recreation, community activities or organizations are you interested or active in? What have you learned as a result of your involvement?

Teacher Relationships with Colleagues

1. What kind of teachers would you prefer to work with? Why?
2. What is your preferred mode and frequency of working with other teachers at your grade level or department level?
3. Explain what professionalism means to you within the school climate and outside of school?
4. What activities would you like to be in charge of and bring to the school?
5. Who should be responsible for discipline in a school? Why?
6. What needs and/or expectations do you have of the school administration?
7. As you enter a new job in the fall you will most likely be meeting a new staff for the first time. What kinds of things will you do to acclimate yourself and what would you want from others to help you settle in?
8. Are you a team player? If so, please give an example.
9. What are your expectations of your principal?
10. How do you see your personal role on the school's educational team?
11. If you had an idea for improving the school, how would you sell it to colleagues and the principal?

Teacher Literacy

1. What are the elements of a comprehensive and balanced literacy program?
2. How can we best teach the writing (or reading) process to students in grade(s) ___?
3. How do you teach speaking and listening skills?
4. Please give us the titles of two books that you have found to be most successful with [elementary/middle/high] school students. What made them successful?
5. Please give us your recommendation of four books that every student should be required to read prior to leaving our school. Why did you select these books?
6. Tell us about a time you gave assignments to coordinate with a social studies or science unit. Why did you do this, and how did it work?
7. What impact does the computer and word processing software have on students' work?
8. How do you incorporate rigor and relevance in your lessons?
9. How can we improve our students' use of grammar? (secondary)
10. What are your thoughts about the use of diagramming? (secondary)
11. Talk about your experiences teaching speech, drama, or debate. (secondary)
12. What experience have you had using the Iowa Core Curriculum? What are your views about this curriculum? (secondary)

Hypothetical and Situational

1. You disagree with the principal's method of dealing with a student discipline situation. How do you handle this with the students, principal, parents and fellow staff?
2. Visualize an ideal classroom. What does it look like? Who's in it? What resources are you using? What are your goals? What are the students accomplishing?
3. Religion is incorporated into all parts of the Catholic school curriculum and classroom atmosphere. How will you help students learn the importance of living a life based upon the gospel values?
4. Tell how you were able to make a difference in a student's attitude or learning problem that made their experience with you a success.

5. Tell in detail a (or other subject) you developed, the reason why you planned this lesson, the children's reactions, specific learning tools utilized and things you taught through the lesson.
6. You give an assignment. A student ridicules the assignment, saying it doesn't make sense. What would you do?

Elementary School Specific

1. What type of reading program did you use in student teaching?
2. How would you describe the ways that children learn from birth to age 9?
3. If you could design the ideal classroom for the elementary grades what would it look like?
4. We know that children learn by making connections. What implications does this have for curriculum at the elementary level?
5. Which subject area do you believe is your strength, which is your weakest? What steps will you take to improve in this area?

Middle School Specific

1. A lot has been discussed regarding motivation of students at this age. What do you think contributes to the lack of motivation students feel? How do you motivate students?
2. What do you think is an appropriate amount of homework for this age student? How much weight would homework hold in your consideration for grading on report cards?
3. What do you think are the top three qualities needed to be a successful middle school teacher?
4. What is meant by "teaming" at the middle school level? How does it support instruction?
5. What are some characteristics of middle school aged students that need to be considered when planning middle school programs?

Secondary School Specific

1. What do you believe is an acceptable failure rate in courses at the high school? What do you believe causes school failure?
2. How would you get a student to do their work when they absolutely refuse to do anything? (I.e. A senior who says, "I don't care if I flunk, I have enough credits to pass anyway.")
3. Share a difficult discipline challenge and how you handled it.
4. Describe your grading practices. What ingredients go into grades and what percent would you give to each?
5. What are some alternative scheduling configurations being used at the high school level? What are the strengths and weaknesses of each?
6. Which should be the primary concern of high school teachers: the content or the kids? Provide a rationale for your choice.

Wrapping Things Up/Closing Questions

1. Is there anything you want us to know that we haven't asked that might help us as we make our hiring decision?
2. Why should I hire you over all the other applicants who have the same educational background, attitude and experience?
3. Do you have any questions for us?
4. What contribute to the success of our school if you were to join our staff?

Instructional Strategist or special education Teacher

1. Which areas of special education are you certified to teach?
2. Which subjects are you most comfortable teaching? Why?
3. Which subjects would you prefer not to teach? Why?
4. How could general education teachers better meet the needs of all students so there would be fewer students who need special education support? What might your role be in making this happen?

5. How do you work with general education teachers to ensure that they are complying with the provisions of a student's IEP?
6. If one of your colleagues, a general education teacher, refused to follow a student's IEP, what would you do?
7. Describe a serious problem you encountered with a parent of a student assigned to your class, what position you took, and how the situation was resolved.
8. What is your opinion of the IEP process?
9. What do you know about Response to Intervention or Instructional Decision Making? What is your opinion of these approaches?
10. How do you integrate technology into your special education classroom?
11. How do you use paraprofessionals? What qualities do look for in a paraprofessional?
12. How do you monitor the progress of your students? How do you document progress?
13. Describe your experience with co-teaching. What are your opinions about the effectiveness of this approach? (secondary)

Teacher – Science

1. What is the role of inquiry in a science classroom? What does inquiry mean to you?
2. What experience have you had using a kit-based approach? What have you learned from that experience?
3. What is your experience using science logs or journals? What is the reason for using them?
4. How do you use the computer as a part of your instruction?
5. What strategies have you used to help students connect classroom work to the “real world?”
6. What are your minimum expectations in the areas of physical facility and classroom equipment in order for you to teach science properly?
7. Tell us about a time a student refused to follow safety procedures or caused an accident in a classroom or lab. What did you do and what was the outcome?
8. How do you incorporate rigor and relevance in your lessons?
9. Tell us about a time you collaborated with a teacher outside the science department regarding some aspect of instruction. Why did you do this and how did it work? (secondary)
10. What should be the relationship between the work of the math and science departments? How can this best be achieved? (secondary)
11. What experience have you had using the Iowa Core Curriculum? What are your views about this curriculum? (secondary)

Teacher – Math

1. What suggestions do you have for a school whose standardized mathematics test scores are below the proficiency level?
2. If you were invited to address a PTA meeting on mathematics curriculum or testing, what points would you cover?
3. Describe your experience teaching mathematics using a “traditional” approach. Describe your experience teaching mathematics using a “problem solving” approach. Which do you prefer and why?
4. At which grade level should algebra be introduced? Why?
5. What is your approach to the use of calculators for homework and on tests? Why?
6. How do you incorporate rigor and relevance in your lessons?
7. How do you answer the criticism that high school graduates don't know how to make change? (secondary)
8. Tell us about a time you collaborated with a teacher outside the math department regarding some aspect of instruction. Why did you do this and how did it work? (secondary)
9. What should be the relationship between the work of the math and science departments? How can this best be achieved? (secondary)
10. What experience have you had using the Iowa Core Curriculum? What are your views about this curriculum? (secondary)

Pre-school teacher

1. Tell us about your experience with preschool programs and your experience with elementary schools.
2. What constitutes a properly developed preschool program?
3. What elements are necessary for an early childhood program to succeed?
4. Tell us about the classroom environment necessary for early childhood programs.
5. How should a school and town determine the need for preschool programming?
6. How do you ensure the lessons you develop are aligned with standards for preschool programming?
7. Share your knowledge of the QPPS Standards?
8. How do you determine the appropriate curriculum for a preschool program?
9. What interaction do you expect to have with kindergarten teachers in this school?
10. What differences would be evident in your preschool classroom as opposed to a kindergarten classroom?
11. How do you organize your classroom management for young children?
12. Please take us through the daily routine of a preschool classroom.
13. Please describe how you assess the learning needs of the children in your classroom throughout the year.
14. What is the role of parents in your preschool program?
15. Please describe a visit you have made to a child's home. Please assess the total experience both from the parents' perspective and your expectations.
16. Please give us an example of a typical problem a teacher might encounter with a preschool child and tell us how you would approach the parents to notify them of the problem.
17. What makes teaching preschool children unique?

Paraprofessional

1. Tell us about your paraprofessional training.
2. Have you ever worked in an actual classroom setting? Please describe.
3. Have you ever worked with young people in a church group, youth athletics, scouting or similar setting? Please describe.
4. Have you ever worked with special needs students? Please describe.
5. What do you believe is the role of a paraprofessional?
6. Why do you believe you are qualified for this kind of position? What are your special skills?
7. If selected, you may be faced with community members who ask about things happening in school. How will you respond?
8. What is the highest level of (subject) at which you would feel comfortable working?
9. Should there be an emergency, you may find yourself in charge of a group of students. What concerns would you have if this sort of assignment is given to you?
10. On occasion, you may disagree with something a teacher says or does. What will you do?

Coach

1. Describe your athletic experience both as a player and a coach.
2. What differences would you expect to see when coaching in a Catholic school setting as opposed to a public setting?
3. What are your primary roles as a coach? What are you trying to accomplish?
4. Describe your coaching philosophy. Should high (middle) school sports be more about winning or more about providing learning experience?
5. What does the term "student athlete" mean to you?
6. How do you build a team?
7. What is your experience with and/or opinion of "no pass / no play?"
8. Tell us about a time you dealt with students who violated, or were suspected of violating, the Board policy on athletic eligibility. What was the situation, what did you do, and what was the outcome? What beliefs guide you in dealing with these situations?
9. At the beginning of the season, how do you orient and prepare players and parents?
10. How do you motivate players?

11. When you believe a player is not meeting his/her potential due to lack of effort, what do you do?
12. Tell us about your philosophy of tryouts and cutting as a result of the tryout.
13. Tell us about a time a parent disagreed with a decision you made regarding playing time for their child. What did you do and how was the situation resolved?
14. What is your background caring for sports injuries?
15. What advice will you give students who ask about nutritional supplements?
16. Have you ever worked with students who used steroids or other performance enhancing drugs? How did you handle it, or how would you handle such a situation?
17. You will be following a winning coach who is retiring (or coach with a long losing record). How will this affect your approach?
18. One of your athletes informs you that a teacher is treating her unfairly, and her grade in that class may prevent further athletic participation. What would you tell the student? Will you follow up in any other way?
19. What are your challenges you will face as a male coaching a female sport? How will you address these challenges?
20. Tell us about a difficult situation you faced as a coach. How did you handle it and what was the outcome?
21. You will be coaching (sport), where weight is a factor and often raises criticism. Tell us about your expectations with these situations.
22. Coaches sometimes become parent figures and are asked for personal advice. How do you handle this situation?

Unlawful Interview Inquiries

1. Asking the applicants to name their birthplace.
2. Asking for the birthplace of the applicant's parents, spouse, or other close relatives.
3. Asking the applicants to submit proof of age by supplying birth certificate, baptismal record or high school graduation date.
4. Asking if they are naturalized citizens.
5. Asking the applicants how they acquired their ability to read, write, or speak a foreign language.
6. Requesting the applicant to provide names of three relatives other than one's father, husband or wife, or minor-age dependent children.
7. Asking for the applicant for wife's maiden name.
8. Asking for the maiden name of the applicant's mother.
9. Asking for full names of the applicant's brothers/sisters.
10. Asking the applicant for a list of all clubs, societies, and lodges to which s/her belongs.
11. Asking the applicant to include a photograph with the application for employment.
12. Asking the applicant to supply addresses of relatives (cousins, uncles, aunts, nephew, and grandparents) who can be contacted for reference.
13. Asking for marital status, ages of children, and spouse's occupation.
14. Asking if they have any disabilities that would prohibit them from performing the fundamental duties of the job.
15. Asking if they have ever been arrested. (This is different from convictions).
16. Asking how many sick days they used on their last job.