

## MAIN THEMES SOUGHT BY INTERVIEWERS

*Conduct self-assessment in each of the following areas & jot down ideas that establish your qualifications.*

- You are a child-centered teacher & recognize your chief goal as the promotion of individual achievement & growth in students.
- You have clear mastery of content knowledge in the area/s you intend to teach.
- You have the instructional skills required to convey a body of knowledge to all students of all backgrounds.
- You possess sufficient classroom management skills to organize curriculum, control student behavior & manage resources.
- You possess personal & professional characteristics that will enhance the teaching staff.

## BASICS FOR SUCCESSFULLY ANSWERING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- #1 Listen to the question & answer what is asked as precisely as possible.
- #2 Be concise & make powerful points.
- #3 Provide specific examples or points to support your ideas.
- #4 Reflect & frame your thinking before answering complicated questions.

## SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER AS YOU PREPARE

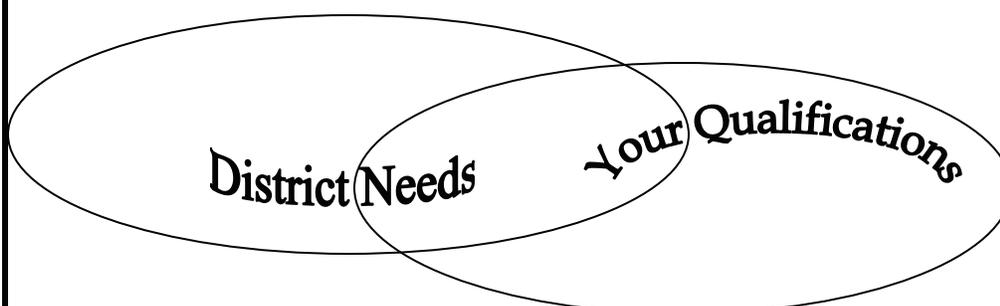
### RESEARCH:

- Have specific plans to use a variety of assessment practices & a sound rationale for their employment.
- Identify information the district has on their assessment practice—what matches your style?
- What is the school's program for mainstream students?
- Is there a homework policy in place?
- Does the school use whole language, phonics or a blended approach?
- Review the school's suggested reading lists by grade.

### DO:

- Conduct a student survey (two open ended questions about what they enjoyed most/what you did to help them succeed). Use select responses in interviews & as examples.
- Do your homework on the district— student demographics, test scores, new programs/initiatives.
- Prepare to discuss your classroom management plan. Strategies for setting groundwork & by grade level.
- Create a professional portfolio displaying your very best work, classroom artifacts & student work representing a range of performance to show individual student improvement. See Career Services handout on Teacher Portfolios for more information.
- Check the Alumni Network in the Career Resource Center—Building 124 , Room 117 to see if there are recent alums working in your prospective district. If so, contact them to conduct further research.
- Choose a professional suit or coordinating skirt/slacks & jacket to wear for your interview. Hair, nails, shoes, facial hair, piercings, make-up & perfume/cologne should all be conservative. All shoes should be close toed.

**The key to a successful interview is the match between your skills & the school's needs**



**CAREER  
SERVICES**

DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

805.756.2501

Cal Poly Bldg 124

[www.careerservices.calpoly.edu](http://www.careerservices.calpoly.edu)

## COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS/TOPICS

- Describe a difficult classroom challenge that confronted you & what you did to address the problem.
- Outline how you assess student performance & how you address the differences in student backgrounds & abilities.
- Tell us what qualities you believe are essential to being a good teacher. Of those, which is your strongest?
- If we spoke with your students, what would they tell us about the educational experience they had with you?
- What do you do to inspire your students to actively learn in your classroom?
- How will you alter instruction to meet the needs of special needs students?
- What is the role of homework in your teaching & how do you organize it to support the learning process?
- Describe what relationship you would establish with parents.
- How do you approach parent conferences?
- How would you use the results of standardized tests? What are the benefits/limitations of standardized tests?
- Tell us about the most significant professional article or book you have read in the last year. What was its impact on your teaching?
- Describe ways you would include technology in your class to make the teaching/learning process more effective?
- Tell us about personal qualities you have that make you a good team player?
- What extracurricular activities would you be willing & able to advise or coach?
- What kinds of support would you need from the administrative/teaching staff to help you adjust to the new position?
- What is your approach to classroom management? Tell us how you would apply these principles in a first grade classroom.
- Why should we hire you as opposed to one of the other candidates?
- Is there anything you would like to say that we haven't already discussed? Do you have any questions for us?

## QUESTIONS FOR ELEMENTARY TEACHERS

- There is much controversy regarding the whole language vs. phonics approach to teaching reading. Which do you support & why?
- If you are teaching 2nd grade, how would you prepare your room for the first day?
- How do you handle 'pull-outs' so students are not left behind in class-work?
- If given the freedom to choose, how would you approach the teaching of spelling?
- What literature do you recommend to 3rd & 4th grade students? Why?
- Describe how you would teach a lesson on adjectives to a 3rd grade class/writing to a 2nd grade students.
- Describe a difficult class management situation you have encountered & what you did to resolve the problem.
- What experience have you had with learning centers? Describe 1 or 2 you might recommend for a 2nd grade class.
- How would you teach fractions to a class of 4th grade students?
- How will you help students see the real world connections that relate to the concepts & skills you are teaching?

## QUESTIONS FOR HIGHSCHOOL TEACHERS

- Seniors who have already been accepted to college often believe it is no longer necessary to put forth their best efforts. What steps would you take to prevent this letdown?
- Describe your grading practices & how you determine a student's marking period grade.
- How would you modify your teaching if you were told the school intended to adopt "block scheduling" the following year?
- Suppose a consistently off-task & disrespectful student explodes verbally at you, telling you to "get off his/her case". What do you do?
- What if one of your female students tells you that boys in the class (from the back of the room, but isn't sure which boys) are writing filthy things on her desk & making suggestive comments—what will you do?

## QUESTIONS FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS

- What do you consider the mission of a middle school?
- If you had to choose one over the other, which do you feel is more important – teaching academics or teaching values & character?
- What qualities should new teachers have to effectively work on a teaching team?
- What are critical issues a good team of teachers must consider during their common planning period?
- What do you know about advisory programs & their importance to the success of a middle school mission?
- How familiar are you with interdisciplinary units & how would you plan to include these learning experiences in your class?
- Research has suggested that the climate of a classroom significantly affects student learning. What do you do to have your room tell every student this is a place where learning takes place?
- What role would parents have in the education of their student in your class & what would you do to produce & nourish this relationship?
- Research indicates that many disaffected students were “turned off” to education during the middle school years. What will you do to prevent this from happening?
- How much homework should middle school students receive & what are your practices in this area?
- What role do teachers play in minimizing bullying among students?
- How do you adapt your grading practices to make adjustment for students with special needs

## QUESTIONS FOR LANGUAGE ARTS/ENGLISH TEACHERS

- What do you know about our state standards for Language Arts & how would you ensure your students reach them?
- What strategies do you use to identify & deal with students reading significantly below grade level?
- What will you do to enhance the ability of students to speak formally & informally?
- What is your approach to the teaching of writing?
- If you were asked to choose a book for a 10th grade class, which would you select & why? How would you design instruction for studying this?
- Is prep for the SAT a concern of Language Arts teachers? If so, what steps would you take to prepare students for the test?
- If we allow you to attend any workshop you like in your field, what & why would you choose to attend?
- What does the term “active listening” mean to you & how would you teach this skill to students?

## QUESTIONS FOR MATH TEACHERS

- What do you know about or state’s requirements in Math & how would you ensure your students meet these?
- What strategies do you use to monitor student learning & how do you adjust your teaching based on those findings?
- What will you do to raise students’ comfort level with Math & lead them to become more confident learners?
- Do you think some students are “naturally” good in Math while others are just not? How does your point of view influence our instruction?
- What will you do to change the perception that “Math is boring” & make your class an interesting/exciting place to learn?
- Explain how you use & teach students about calculators & other Mathematical tools to increase their ability to think & solve problems?
- What will you do to help students prepare for the SAT or ACT?
- What interdisciplinary connections do you see for Mathematics & other content areas?

**QUESTIONS FOR SCIENCE TEACHERS**

- In relationship to constructivist learning, how often do you include laboratory activities & what role do these experiences have in your teaching?
- In our school we have a greenhouse. Describe how you would use this facility with your class.
- How can you adapt your class so special needs students can enjoy a sound science class?
- When you assign students a science project, what are its design elements & how do you determine successful student performance?
- How is your instructional approach for an AP course different from your approach to a college preparatory course?
- Student often ask why they have to learn this “stuff” or why is what they are studying important. How do you answer those questions?
- How do you keep laboratory science safety a priority for students?
- How do you determine a student understood science concepts you taught & did not merely memorize content for the test?
- What will students do in your class to enhance science “literacy”?

**QUESTIONS FOR SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS**

- Describe the opening activities & lessons you might use if you were beginning a 6th grade unit on the Civil War?
- One of the better-known statements regarding history is, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” What would you do in your class to illustrate this & help students internalize its meaning?
- If you were to teach a 9th grade Social Studies class, how would you fashion a unit of study to ensure students have a fundamental understanding of democratic citizenship & the operation of our government?
- Recently, the Columbine incident & a rash of other events have involved school violence. What role, if any, do you as the Social Studies teacher, have in using these in your curriculum?

**QUESTIONS FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS**

- If you are co-teaching a class, what information would you want to share with other teachers & what kinds of information should remain confidential?
- If you were told you were to be a co-teacher next year, what steps would you take to prepare for this assignment.
- How will your assessment program for included students be structured & what steps will you to do to promote student success?
- Special Education student often see themselves as second class students. What can you, as the teacher, do to minimize such self-esteem problems?
- If you are the teacher for a support class with 8 students, what steps will you take to assist those students in the completion of work for their regular education classes? How will you work with the regular education teacher on each student’s behalf.
- If you were to teach the concept of decimals to student in replacement math, what teacher actions & activities would you plan for that lesson? What steps would you take to assist students who are not successful in meeting the lesson’s learning objectives?
- How often should you communicate with parents about the progress of their child & what kinds of information would you want to provide?