

Principal interview questions and answers

This **Principal** interview profile brings together a snapshot of what to look for in candidates with a balanced sample of suitable interview questions.

10 good principal interview questions

1. How much do you know about this school's improvement plan? What do you think you can contribute to that plan?
2. Describe your vision of an effective elementary school in as much detail as possible.
3. How would you describe your leadership style?
4. How would you rate yourself as a disciplinarian?
5. Recall a time a situation needed to be handled with great sensitivity and tact. What was the issue? What was the outcome?
6. How do you empower teachers to be leaders?
7. List some traits of highly effective teachers. How does this inform the way you hire them?
8. Recall a time you made an unpopular decision. What was the reaction? How did you handle it?
9. Some teachers are complaining about a lack of administrative support. How would you address it?
10. How do teacher evaluations correspond to student achievement?

Here are 10 essential interview questions and sample answers to help identify the best candidates for this role.

1. How much do you know about this school's improvement plan? What do you think you can contribute to that plan?

This question assesses a candidate's research and understanding of the school's current goals and their vision for contributing to its growth.

Sample answer:

"I've studied the school's improvement plan extensively. I believe my experience in curriculum development and teacher training can significantly contribute to achieving the set objectives."

2. Describe your vision of an effective elementary school in as much detail as possible.

This question seeks to understand the candidate's perspective on what makes an elementary school successful.

Sample answer:

"An effective elementary school fosters a nurturing environment, emphasizes foundational learning, promotes creativity, and ensures every student feels valued and supported."

3. How would you describe your leadership style?

Understanding a candidate's leadership approach is essential to determine if they'll fit the school's culture.

Sample answer:

"I believe in a collaborative leadership style, where I work closely with teachers, staff, and parents to achieve our collective goals."

4. How would you rate yourself as a disciplinarian?

This question gauges how a candidate handles discipline and maintains order in the school.

Sample answer:

"I'd rate myself as firm but fair. I believe in setting clear expectations and ensuring students understand the consequences of their actions."

5. Recall a time a situation needed to be handled with great sensitivity and tact. What was the issue? What was the outcome?

This question evaluates a candidate's ability to handle delicate situations.

Sample answer:

"Once, a teacher was struggling with personal issues affecting their performance. I approached the situation with empathy, offering support and resources. The teacher appreciated the understanding and eventually regained their usual performance level."

6. How do you empower teachers to be leaders?

Empowering teachers is crucial for a school's success. This question assesses how a candidate fosters leadership among staff.

Sample answer:

"I believe in providing continuous professional development opportunities and entrusting teachers with responsibilities that align with their strengths."

7. List some traits of highly effective teachers. How does this inform the way you hire them?

This question delves into a candidate's understanding of what makes a teacher effective and how it influences their hiring decisions.

Sample answer:

"Effective teachers are passionate, adaptable, and have strong classroom management skills. When hiring, I look for these traits through their past experiences and situational questions during the interview."

8. Recall a time you made an unpopular decision. What was the reaction? How did you handle it?

Leaders often make tough decisions. This question assesses a candidate's decision-making and conflict resolution skills.

Sample answer:

"I once had to change the school's schedule to better accommodate academic needs. While it was met with resistance initially, I held meetings to explain the rationale, and over time, most understood and adapted to the change."

9. Some teachers are complaining about a lack of administrative support. How would you address it?

This question evaluates how a candidate addresses concerns from the staff.

Sample answer:

"I would first hold a meeting to understand their specific concerns. Based on the feedback, I'd work on actionable steps to enhance administrative support and ensure teachers feel valued."

10. How do teacher evaluations correspond to student achievement?

Understanding the link between teacher performance and student success is crucial. This question assesses this understanding.

Sample answer:

"Teacher evaluations provide insights into instructional effectiveness. A positive correlation between evaluations and student achievement indicates that the teaching methods are working, while discrepancies can highlight areas for improvement."

What does a good principal candidate look like?

A strong principal candidate possesses a clear vision for the school, demonstrates leadership skills, understands the educational landscape, and can effectively communicate with all stakeholders.

Principal Interview Questions

Hiring a Principal typically involves a small army of people. The hiring committee decides the essential requirements based on existing needs and with state and district goals in mind. The same committee oversees the hiring process. Candidates for the position of Principal at a school interview with the committee first, then return for one-on-one interviews or an interview with the core administrative team.

Use these interview questions to start purposeful, open-ended conversations with your candidates at the initial committee interview. The questions will help you evaluate your candidates' practical experience as educators and their overall ability to lead teaching and learning at your school.

There is no role at a school with more pressure and more visibility than the Principal. These interviews are critical for evaluating soft skills as rigorously as the hard skills. Yes, you'll be looking at their prior effectiveness in improving student outcomes. But can they hire, train, and develop teachers? How do they communicate with parents? Can they shape the school's culture in a positive way, creating a safe, challenging, and disciplined space for learning? What are some indicators of success for principals at this school? Evaluate your candidates against your metrics for success.

Let's summarize some of the questions and add a few more divided into specific types.

Operational and Situational questions

- How much do you know about this school's improvement plan? What do you think you can contribute to that plan?
- Describe your vision of an effective (elementary/middle/high) school in as much detail as

possible.

- How would you describe your leadership style?
- How would you rate yourself as a disciplinarian?
- Recall a time a situation needed to be handled with great sensitivity and tact. What was the issue? What was the outcome?
- How do you empower teachers to be leaders?
- List some traits of highly effective teachers. How does this inform the way you hire them?
- Recall a time you made an unpopular decision. What was the reaction? How did you handle it?
- Some teachers are complaining about a lack of administrative support. How would you address it?
- How do teacher evaluations correspond to student achievement?
- How do you help teachers improve their instruction methods?
- What classroom management strategies have been most effective for you?
- How would you advise new teachers during their first year on the job?
- Describe a time you had to give negative feedback to a veteran teacher. How did it go?
- How would you bridge the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students?
- How do you know when a parent organization is effective?
- When dealing with difficult students, at what point do you involve parents? How would you communicate with them?
- Describe a time you discovered a student actively endangering other students. How did you handle it?
- What would you do if a group of students launched a complaint against a teacher?
- What would you do if extracurricular activities were in danger of being phased out due to budget cuts?
- What new services or activities did you establish at your previous school?
- How would you increase the school's involvement with the community?
- What are the strengths of this school? What are our weaknesses?