
Behavioral Interview Guide for Principals and Teachers

Calling individuals to fill vacancies or newly created positions is an important process. Hiring the best candidate for a job or ministry position is also of great importance. The work of the Holy Spirit is paramount in the process, however congregations and other hiring agencies have a role as well. The interviewing process is used to gather information on candidates. This document is intended to be a resource document to assist congregations, boards, and hiring agencies in conducting effective interviews.

The “behavior-based” interviewing technique is presented as an effective model. Sample questions are suggested as possible interview questions in 15 categories. Sample questions for calling or hiring a teacher or administrator are included. The sample questions are not meant to be all inclusive. Specific questions on instructional practice, administrative style, etc., are not included in the sample questions. Adapting this style of question to other ministry areas is encouraged.

Behavior-based Interviewing

Introduction

Behavior-based interviewing is best defined as, “a thorough, planned, systematic way to gather and evaluate information about what candidates have done in the past as a way to show how they would handle future situations.”

The key assumption is that interview candidates who have previously demonstrated a particular behavior to address a situation will repeat that behavior in the future when confronted with a similar set of circumstances. The interviewing authority determines which specific behaviors are necessary for success and then seeks out candidates who have shown that they are capable of exhibiting those behaviors.

Methodology

To utilize behavior-based interviewing successfully, it is necessary to include some form of the following steps:

1. Identify those knowledge, skills and abilities, behavior and core competencies key to successful performance based on an analysis of the ministry position. Ask questions that focus on key competencies. Each candidate is asked the same questions. Look for consistency of responses that are comparable between the candidates.
2. Determine which behavioral or situational questions elicit the desired behaviors for each particular position. Examples sought might address values/ethics, work intensity, relationship skills, problem solving, people management, and others associated with success in the ministry position.

3. Develop a tailored, structured format for asking questions. Typically, open-ended, structured questions are developed and incorporated into an interview instrument, and each applicant is asked the same questions.

4. Interviewers need to:

- Take notes
- Record actual responses
- Omit prejudicial or judgmental comments
- Maintain a consistent format for each candidate

Conclusion

Because of its apparent capability of predicting position success, behavioral interviewing in its various forms is becoming increasingly popular. Because each teaching or administrative position is unique, it is necessary to determine what specific behaviors are associated with position success. This is an important process that should not be rushed.

Do's and Don'ts of Interviewing

Do

- Listen attentively for behavioral responses.
- Recast the question when a candidate's answer is not clear.
- Ask follow-up questions if clarification is needed.
- Focus on past behavior rather than future projection – “What have you done when...” rather than “What would you do if...”
- Ask questions from first person singular rather than first person plural (“tell me...” not “tell us...”).
- Use positive reinforcements when appropriate – “That's helpful, you really clarified that.”
- Use pauses to give the candidate a chance to think through responses.
- Pace the interview. Stay on task.
- Be conscious of your attending behavior – be relaxed, establish eye contact, etc.
- Recapitulate when needed – “I did not capture what you were trying to say. Please describe for me again...”
- Offer candidate the opportunity to ask questions.
- Once finished, explain the next steps of follow-up contact.
- Thank the candidate.
- Follow through as promised.

Don't

- Engage in counseling.
- Evaluate when gathering information.
- Make a judgment of behavior while gathering information.
- Give feedback or react to answers.
- Compare and contrast to another candidate.

- Elaborate on philosophies.
- Over-talk. Interviewer should only speak 15% of the time.
- Use ineffective questions.
 - o Closed ended questions
 - o Vague questions
 - o Run-on questions
 - o Telegraphing the right answer
- Jump to premature conclusions.
- Elicit defensiveness.
- Size up the candidate in the first 3 minutes.
- Inquire about hypothetical situations.
- Hire someone because they are available.

Interview Guide – Teacher Position

I. Personal Motivation

1. In what ways have you attempted to make yourself more effective as a Christian teacher?
2. Describe your most important accomplishments. How did you go about reaching your goals?
3. Describe your ideal work or ministry assignment. Tell me about the time you came closest to having this kind of assignment and what you found rewarding about it.

II. Building Body Cohesiveness

1. Describe the steps you take to get a class to work as a cohesive unit. Give me an example of when you did that.
2. How do you help new students who enroll midterm to become an integral part of the classroom?
3. Tell me about a time when you confronted students who were undermining the unity of the entire classroom. How did you bring about reconciliation and healing?

III. Growth Commitment

1. Articulate your philosophy on how your classroom functions as an outreach for the church and how you have implemented that philosophy.

2. How have you kept yourself up-to-date on educational principles and practices?

IV. Visioning Capacity

1. Tell me about an important time you created an opportunity out of an obstacle? How did you create that opportunity?
2. When were you successful in selling a concept to people who initially opposed you? How did you convince them?
3. What is your best example of building a class project or program from the ground floor up? Describe the process you went through in developing a clear vision.

V. Responsiveness to Community

1. How do you keep your finger on the pulse and culture of the local community?
2. How have you shifted classroom priorities to be responsive to needs in the local community?

VI. Creating Ownership of Ministry

1. In what ways have you motivated your students to commit themselves to classroom goals?
2. What steps have you taken to ensure that your classroom ministry would flourish in your absence?
3. Describe someone you mentored who is now mentoring others. How did you develop that person and what kind of results is he or she having?

VII. Gift Utilization

1. What process do you use to match students with opportunities unique to them as individuals?
2. How do you cultivate giftedness in your students?

VIII. Relationship Building

1. To what extent are you the initiator in developing relationships? Tell me about a relationship you built.
2. How do you help students develop positive relationships?

3. What steps do you take to help students and parents feel secure, trusting and open with you?
4. Tell me about a relationship you salvaged after a conflict or falling out with the person.
5. Describe the teacher-student relationship you have attained in your classroom and how it affects classroom discipline.
6. Describe the teacher-parent relationship you have attained and show how it affects classroom discipline.

IX. Flexibility

1. Tell me about a demanding period in your life. How did you manage the multiple demands placed upon you?
2. How do you see that your work gets completed when it is disrupted by emergencies or other unforeseen circumstances?
3. Describe the most recent teaching innovation or perspective that you have adopted.

X. Balancing

1. How do you balance the competing demands of ministry and home?
2. In what way is your home life integrated into ministry?
3. Describe the process you use in making major personal decisions?

XI. Outreach

1. How do you convey a positive Christian witness and yet maintain respect for the un-churched student?
2. Tell me about something you have done to create an outreach-sensitive environment in your classroom?

XII. Resilience

1. What do you do to keep yourself going when the pressure gets thick?
2. Describe your most unproductive period in ministry or on a job. How did you change the situation?

3. Describe a time when your expectations were high but the results were low. How did you react?

XIII. Demonstrating Strong Christian Faith

1. Describe how you exercise such disciplines as Bible study, prayer, and personal devotion.
2. What examples of demonstrating Christian faith in your personal life could you share with others who struggle with faith issues?
3. Describe how you practice Christian stewardship in your life.

XIV. Nurturing Faith

1. How do you nurture faith in your students?
2. How do you help students to integrate their Christian faith into their actions?
3. Describe how you disciplined someone on a one-to-one basis.

XV. Communications Skills

1. Describe your teaching style.
2. Describe how you communicate with students, parents and staff and the effect it generates.

Interview Guide – Administrator Position

I. Personal Motivation

1. In what ways have you attempted to make yourself more effective as a Lutheran school administrator?
2. Describe your most important accomplishments. How did you go about reaching your goals?
3. Describe your ideal work or ministry assignment. Tell me about the time you came closest to having this kind of assignment and what you found rewarding about it.

II. Building Body Cohesiveness

1. How do you help new school families or new staff become an integral part of the congregation?
2. Describe the steps you take to get a staff to work as a cohesive unit. Give me an example of when you did that.
3. Tell me about a time when you confronted parents, teachers or other individuals who were undermining the unity of the school body. How did you bring about reconciliation and healing?

III. Growth Commitment

1. Articulate your philosophy of church and school growth and how you have implemented that philosophy.
2. Tell me about a time when you were unsuccessful in applying school growth principles. What did you learn from the experience, and how did you benefit from your learning in a later effort?
3. How have you kept yourself up-to-date on educational principles and practices?

IV. Visioning Capacity

1. Tell me about an important time you created an opportunity out of an obstacle. How did you create that opportunity?
2. When were you successful in selling a concept to people who initially opposed you? How did you convince them?

3. What is your best example of building a project, program or group from the ground floor up? Describe the process you went through in developing and sharing a clear vision.

V. Responsiveness to Community

1. How do you keep your finger on the pulse and culture of the local community?
2. How have you shifted school priorities to be responsive to needs in the local community?
3. What methods and techniques have you employed to assess the needs of your local community?

VI. Creating Ownership of Ministry

1. In what ways have you motivated your staff to commit themselves to school goals?
2. What steps have you taken to ensure that your ministry would flourish in your absence?
3. Describe someone you mentored who is now functioning in an administrative capacity. How did you develop that person and what kind of results is he or she having?

VII. Gift Utilization

1. What process do you use to match individuals with ministry opportunities?
2. How do you cultivate giftedness in others?

VIII Relationship Building

1. To what extent are you the initiator in developing relationships? Tell me about a relationship you built.
2. How do you help others develop positive relationships?
3. What steps do you take to help students, parents and staff feel secure, trusting and open with you?
4. Tell me about a relationship you salvaged after a conflict or falling out with the person.

5. Describe the teacher-administrator relationship you have attained and describe how it affects school climate.

6. Describe how your administrator relationship skill affects school discipline?

IX. Flexibility

1. Tell me about a demanding period in your life. How did you manage the multiple demands placed upon you?
2. How do you see that your work gets completed when it is disrupted by emergencies or other unforeseen circumstances?
3. Describe the most recent administrative innovation or perspective that you have adopted.

X. Balancing

1. How do you balance the competing demands of ministry and home?
2. In what way is your home life integrated into ministry?
3. Describe the process you use in making major personal decisions.

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1. How do you convey a positive Christian witness while maintaining respect for the un-churched family?
2. How do you create an outreach-sensitive environment in your school?

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1. What do you do to keep yourself going when the pressure gets thick?
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