

# Student CEC Spotlight :: Preparing for the Interview

*CEC Today, Vol. 3 No. 10, June 1997*

*Author: by Jennifer Shupert*

Anyone who hopes to teach must go through an interview. Prospective employers gain valuable information about candidates by interviewing them. Though interviews can be nerve-wracking, candidates can learn to show their strong points. By demonstrating knowledge of their disciplines and expressing positive attitudes, candidates can prove that they are serious about teaching. The following pointers will assist you in becoming the candidate that all schools want!

## **Preparing for the Interview**

**Research the school** Future employers expect a candidate to know something about the prospective school district. Plan to gather information about each of the districts you are considering. Entering an interview with background knowledge regarding the community and school will demonstrate serious interest in being employed by the district.

**Mock interviews** Practice what you are going to say before you say it. Find a friend, parent, professor, or mirror and practice answering potential questions. You can also tape record or videotape yourself in order to check out your strengths and weaknesses. The more you practice, the more confident you will become with your overall teaching philosophy.

Possible questions you might be asked - Here are some samples of questions you should be prepared to answer:

0. What is your teaching philosophy?
0. Why do you want to work in our district/school?
0. How and when do you discipline a student?
0. How will you involve parents in your classroom?

0. Describe a successful teaching experience.

Be prepared to ask questions as well - Here are a few suggestions:

0. Tell me about the students who attend this school.

0. Do you encourage teachers to earn advanced degrees?

0. Does your school use teacher aides or parent volunteers?

0. Do you have teachers serving in areas where they do not have full certification?

**Highlight your strong points** Before going into an interview, make a list of your strong points as an educator. Ask family and friends to help you list your positive attributes. Be prepared to describe some of these as you answer interview questions. Employers want to know what you have to offer them, not what they have to offer you. Capitalize on your strengths and present yourself as a candidate they cannot refuse.

**During the Interview** Watch your body language. A prospective employer can form an opinion about you from your body language. A limp handshake or poor eye contact can automatically give your interviewer a negative perception about you. On the other hand, candidates who use positive body language such as pleasant facial expressions and appropriate posture create a positive impact on a prospective employer.

**Exhibit poise and confidence** Even if you aren't completely sure of an answer, convey confidence in all you say during the interview. Dressing in a professional manner will help you feel more poised. So will being on time. Be enthusiastic and sincere, and leave your interviewer with a positive impression.

**Bring a portfolio** As you sell your skills, knowledge, and enthusiasm, provide employers with some information about things you have done and the experiences you've had. Include a sample lesson plan, pictures and samples of work your students have done, a sample IEP, and any other information that is unique to you.

### **After the Interview**

**Write a thank-you letter** Following up the interview with a thank-you

letter will set you apart from other candidates. Take the time to handwrite a note, thus ensuring your interviewer will remember you. **Follow up** Two to 3 weeks after the interview, call the district to see if the position has been filled. If it has not, ask about your status as a candidate and check to see if your interviewer would like any more information. Be certain to speak with the person who conducted the interview.

Everyone feels apprehensive about being interviewed. By using the advice given in this article, you can be well on your way to finding that teaching job you've always wanted. Best wishes!