

SECURING YOUR FUTURE

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In Edition 9 of 'Securing your future', we considered applying for jobs and writing applications ([you can find this article here](#)).

Presenting for interviews

Interviews can make even the most confident of teachers feel a little nervous! Here are some tips for preparing for interviews:

1. Understand the context of the school

Having a comprehensive understanding of the school in which you're hoping to work is extremely advantageous in an interview. While all schools are looking for examples of excellent teaching, they're also looking for teachers who are the best fit for their context. Therefore, it's very important to do your research! Read everything on the school's website, including their Annual Implementation Plan, School Strategic Plan or Annual Reports. These documents will tell you the school's priorities and their areas of work. Additionally, speak to any teachers, students or parents (where possible) to get a really good understanding of the fundamentals of this particular school. If you're able to frame your responses in a way that show you understand their purposes and that you align with those purposes, then this can set you apart from other applicants.

2. Consider values

As well as examples of your experience, potential employers are also looking at the values that you bring to the role. Consider the Department of Education's (2017) [values](#) (responsiveness, integrity, impartiality, accountability, respect, leadership, human rights) and how you will respond to these in your application. Consider your own values as a teacher – why and how do you do the things that you do? What are your motivations, beliefs and understandings about teaching and learning? How will you present these in your response?

This is also an important opportunity to check your own values against those of the school. For example, if the school has a value of 'Diversity', consider what examples of your practice or experience illustrate that you also value diversity? When you speak about this aspect in your interview, you will then be able to demonstrate to the panel members how this aligns with their values.

3. Use evidence

We are an evidence-based profession. When you answer questions, give clear and specific evidence related to the question. If a panel member asks you about your ability to demonstrate your ability to plan, implement and evaluate a unit of work, then be sure that your response both:

- answers broadly or philosophically (what it is you have done in relation to this question across the whole of your practice and your beliefs about the importance of this work)

and

- very specifically (name a unit of work and describe how you have planned, implemented and evaluated it – what data or evidence did you use to do this?).

Data literacy is a skill many schools are prioritising and showing your awareness of this is an advantage. You might also like to think in advance about the evidence or research that forms your teaching behaviours so you can reference these. Consider things such as the [Practice Principles](#) and [Vision for Learning](#) (which underpin the High Impact Teaching Strategies) or any other researchers or educators whose work influences your own.

4. Interview practice

Find a teacher who has sat on an interview panel recently and ask them for the kinds of questions that might be asked and then think about your response to those questions. Practice what you would say if you were asked about the way you contribute to school life outside of the classroom, how you have developed curriculum, how you have managed a difficult situation with a student or staff member, how you have used data to inform your practice etc. If you can, ask someone to conduct a mock interview with you, and give you feedback.

5. Personal presentation

Remember, you never get a second chance at a first impression! Dress professionally and make sure you are on time. Speak clearly and make eye contact with all the members of the panel. Smile when you're greeting them (this helps relax you also) and show your genuine enthusiasm and passion for the areas about which you're speaking.

Take your time. Often the best thing an interviewee can do is to pause and consider your response before answering. If you are not sure about what a question means, ask for clarification, or even to repeat the question. This will also give you more thinking time.

At the end, you may be asked if you have any questions or whether you'd like to say anything further. Avoid asking questions for which the answer can be readily found elsewhere e.g. salaries. Have a think in advance about questions which show your positive approach, such as "what opportunities are there to contribute to the life of the school outside of the classroom?"

References

Department of Education and Training 2017, Understanding DET's values, viewed 6 August 2019, <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/PublicSectorValues-SchoolGuide.pdf>