

SELECTING A PRINCIPAL RESOURCE BOOKLET

ESTABLISHING PRINCIPAL CANDIDATE CRITERIA

ONE SAMPLE OF CRITERIA

A good principal for our school:

- Believes all children can learn at high levels.
- Is committed to closing achievement gaps and ensuring proficiency for all students.
- Has an educational philosophy consistent with our school mission and Kentucky's education system.
- Believes in and understands developmentally appropriate instruction and continuous progress for all students.
- Understands the connection of school culture to student achievement.
- Believes in and will support adjusting instructional practices to meet various student learning styles.
- Believes in and will carry out discipline techniques that provide a safe, positive learning environment and also promote student empowerment, self-control, and self-discipline.
- Understands school-based decision-making and will support the SBDM process.
- Welcomes input and will be a model of good communication among all the stakeholders of the school community: parents, students, teachers, administrators, and the community at large.
- Manages time effectively and efficiently, while keeping students and learning as the top priority.
- Handles all people with respect and dignity.

Source: Taken from various Kentucky school councils

ANOTHER SAMPLE OF CRITERIA

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by:

- Facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.
- Advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to learning.
- Ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.
- Collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests.
- Acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.
- Understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

Source: Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium: Standards for School Leaders (ISLLC), 1996.

A THIRD SAMPLE OF CRITERIA

Educational Leadership

- Setting instructional direction
- Teamwork
- Sensitivity

Resolving Complex Problems

- Judgment
- Results orientation
- Organizational ability

Communication

- Oral communication
- Written communication

Developing Self and Others

- Development of others
- Understanding own strengths and weaknesses

Source: *Selecting and Developing the 21st Century Principal*, National Association of Secondary School Principals

PROCESS FOR GATHERING INFORMATION

METHOD	NOTES
APPLICATIONS AND RESUMES	<p><u>What we can learn from applications/resumes:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Writing ability • Potential problems to investigate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ gaps in employment ○ positions held for a short time <p><u>Selecting applicants to interview:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When the council is ready to discuss which applicants to interview, you may want to start by ranking each applicant on a scale of 1-5 on how well the applicant meets the criteria. Don't make the rankings into a mathematical formula, but use them as a way for each member to explain the strengths and weaknesses she or he saw. • Determining which candidates the council will interview is the goal of the discussion. Using consensus decision-making to come to an agreement on which applicants to interview will build strong support for the final decision.
IN-PERSON INTERVIEWS	<p><u>What we can learn from in-person interviews:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to connect with strangers • Presence/self-confidence • Credibility • Interpersonal communication skills • Ability to think under pressure • How candidate thinks about issues • Other: <p><u>Characteristics of good interview questions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The questions are worded as clearly and simply as they can be, given the subject about which you want to know. • All the criteria should be covered by the interview questions. • Questions do not "telegraph" the answer(s) you want. • The questions should include both forward-looking scenarios and those based on past experience. • The questions are open-ended and require more than a yes or no answer. • A good first question is: "Tell us why you are interested in this position?" • A good last question is: "What questions do you have for us?" • Questions are agreed upon in advance and are asked of ALL applicants in the same order and by the same person (when possible). • If you intend to ask "specialized" questions of any applicants, they too are agreed upon in advance and are asked by the Chair. "Specialized" questions generally involve something specific to that applicant such as why they left a position after only a short period of time or about unusual experiences listed in their resumes. • If you intend to ask follow-up questions, hold them until the planned questions have been asked and limit them to questions to clarify previous answers. • Interview questions must be approved in open session.

METHOD	NOTES
<p>IN-PERSON INTERVIEWS (continued)</p>	<p><u>Interviewing guidelines:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation. Reserve a private space at the school where all can be seated in reasonable comfort. Let the applicants know where to go when they arrive, and make sure someone will be on hand to greet them. Council members should arrive at least 15 minutes before the interview to review who will handle introductions, who will ask which questions, how to handle follow-up questions, and what (if any) questions should specifically be directed to an applicant. You should also announce the interview period as a special meeting of the council, convene as you usually do, and then go into closed session to hold the actual interview • Building tour. Applicants who are not from the school should get a tour of the building when they come to interview. The tour can be offered before or after the interview. A non-council member, for instance a student, teacher, active parent volunteer, or school secretary, should conduct the building tour. • Follow-up. Immediately after the interview, the council should remain in closed session to discuss the interview. This is an important time to consider the criteria you are seeking and discuss how the applicant measured up on each one.
<p>REFERENCES</p>	<p>References offer valuable insight into candidates' past work experiences, because you hear about strengths and weaknesses from a variety of perspectives. Your council will need to decide if you will call only references listed on the application or contact others who worked with the candidates. There are some pros and cons to each approach and you will want to have a council discussion before making a decision.</p>
<p>WRITTEN INTERVIEWS</p>	<p>A written interview gives the council the opportunity to see how well the applicant communicates in writing, plus another opportunity to learn about his or her philosophy. This interview should be completed before the in-person interview. The written interview questions can be mailed to the applicants or can be done on location just before the in-person interview.</p>
<p>PORTFOLIOS</p>	<p>Many if not most applicants will have and/or bring a portfolio with them. You will need to make a decision ahead of time about how the council wants to handle portfolios. There are several options about how to do this so the council should have a discussion ahead of time and decide how to handle this issue.</p>
<p>OPEN FORUMS</p>	<p>Some schools have scheduled open forums with principal candidates in order to allow interested stakeholders to meet the candidates and listen to their views. Usually the candidates present an opening statement and then a facilitator reads pre-screened questions from a pool of questions submitted by stakeholders. Having open forums gives the council an opportunity to see the candidates for principal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Speaking in front of a group. <input type="checkbox"/> Answering questions on the spot. <input type="checkbox"/> Addressing issues of concern to stakeholders. <p>Some words of caution: The open forum should be well-organized, and stakeholders who attend should receive information about their role prior to meeting the candidates. Stakeholders who attend should not address questions to individual candidates, and trained council members should prescreen questions from individual stakeholders in order to make sure they don't cover topics such as marital status, children, race/ethnicity, religion, etc. Also, stakeholders should know that they are free to give their council representatives input on the candidates after the forum, but the forum is not an opportunity for the stakeholders to vote on whom they want as principal. No one outside the council has all the information needed to make an informed decision.</p> <p>KDE doesn't recommend that you hold such meetings due to the above potential problems.</p>
<p>PERFORMANCE EVENTS</p>	<p>Ask each candidate to complete a performance event constructed to address a specific issue. A reasonable time frame is 30-60 minutes. To be sure the task is reasonable, check it out with an experienced administrator. Tell each applicant ahead of time that following the interview you will have a performance event for the applicant to complete. Be sure to arrange for access to a computer and any other tools needed, and be sure to specify to whom the applicant should give the results.</p>

SAMPLE REFERENCE CHECK QUESTIONS

Name of applicant: _____ Date: _____

Name of reference: _____ Interviewer: _____

Position: _____

Phone: _____

How (in what relationship/capacity) do you know the applicant? (How long?)

What did/do you see as the applicant's strengths and weaknesses in that position?

Compared to others you know in similar positions, would you describe the applicant as average, below average, or above average?

What is one area in which you would like to see the applicant have a chance to grow?

Please comment on the applicant's experience and/or qualifications in these areas related to being a principal. Examples would be very helpful.

Educational leadership

Resolving complex problems

Communication

Developing others' abilities

Awareness of own strengths and weaknesses

Would you hire this person as a principal? Why or why not?

Is there anything else we should know?

SAMPLE PERFORMANCE EVENTS FOR PRINCIPAL APPLICANTS

Here are some ideas to get you started:



Here is a copy of the action components from our current School Improvement Plan. After looking them over, identify three important challenges you think our school will face in implementing this Plan. For each challenge, share some ways you could help us succeed. (Please note that we are especially interested in your thoughts about the specifics of **OUR** Plan, rather than about how to implement plans in general.)



Two African-American parents make an appointment to discuss concerns about the school. They feel that teachers do not expect as much of minority students, and that this is a prime reason that African-American students are not doing as well as white students in your school. You know that in fact the African-American students' CATS scores are lower. You do not know, however, what the causes are. They tell you they hope that you, as the new principal, will turn the situation around. List steps you would take to address this issue.



School culture is a vital part of a successful school. What three elements of school culture do you think are most important and how would you promote and strengthen those elements in our school?



There is a lot of research stating the importance of instructional leadership. What does instructional leadership mean to you? Share an experience that demonstrates your instructional leadership ability. How would you help develop teacher, parent, and student leaders who are also focused on student achievement?



Give examples of how you have used student testing data and analysis of student work to improve instruction. How would you help our staff use data to improve instruction on a regular basis?

Interview Questions

General Guidelines

1. The questions are clear and as simply worded as you can make them.
2. They should avoid questions that “telegraph” the answer(s) you want.
3. They do not ask about any of the inappropriate areas (race, ethnicity, gender, marriage and family status, religion, political affiliation, disability, or age).
4. The questions should include both forward looking scenarios and past experience questions.
5. They are open-ended questions that require more than a yes or no answer.
6. All of your criteria should be covered by the interview questions.
7. A good first questions is: “Tell us why you are interested in this position.”
8. A good last question is: “What questions do you have for us?”
9. Questions are agreed upon in advance and are asked of ALL applicants in the same order and by the same person (when possible).
10. If you intend to ask “specialized” questions of any applicants, they too are agreed upon in advance and are asked by the Chairperson.
11. If you intend to ask follow-up questions, all members agree to hold them until the planned questions have been asked and limit them to questions to clarify answers already given.
12. Interview questions must be approved in open session.

Kentucky’s Goals

1. How would you explain the phrase “All kids can learn at high levels.”
2. What is the most important thing for a school to do to reach proficiency by 2014?
3. Describe your experience in closing achievement gaps.

Mission and Vision

4. As an administrator, what do you see as your primary mission?
5. Upon what basis do you believe school priorities should be established?
6. What would be your first priority in this position?
7. What are the most important characteristics of an effective school?
8. What are the three most important goals you would want to reach in our school? Why?

Conflict Resolution

9. Give two or three examples of strategies you have for dealing with conflict resolution.
10. How do you resolve conflict between staff members? Between students and staff?
11. How would you go about trying to resolve a dispute between opposing factions within a school?
12. If your views on curriculum differed from those of the rest of the council, how would you resolve those differences?
13. How do you resolve parental complaints when you know the teacher is in error?
14. Tell us how you would handle the following situation: An irate parent barges into your office and yells at you about the new school council extra-curricular policy.

Leadership

15. What do you see as the major role of the principal?
16. What do you consider to be your major strengths as an administrator?
17. What do you see as the first step in initiating successful change?
18. Why are you interested in becoming the principal of this school?
19. How would you encourage a teacher who is discouraged? A student? A parent?
20. How will you motivate teachers so they will want to try new ideas?
21. What evidence can you give us from your personal experience that you support the goal of proficiency for all students by 2014?
22. What role do you see for the principal in school-based decision making?
23. What skills as a chairperson/facilitator do you bring to the school council?
24. How will you maintain staff morale when “the pressure is on” in a high stakes accountability environment?

Teamwork

25. Give your definition of collaboration.
26. How would you develop the team concept with your staff? With the community?
27. How will you work with the school counselor (or assistant principal) to improve student and staff relationships?
28. What specific steps would you take to build rapport with staff?
29. What is the principal's role in assisting teachers in team planning and teaching?

Professional Development

30. Share a model professional development experience that you have had and explain why it is a "model."
31. If you want to bring about change in a school, how would you use professional development to help the change process?
32. What professional qualities would you particularly encourage in your staff?
33. How have you encouraged professional development in staffs you have worked with in the past?
34. How would you help an inexperienced teacher become more effective in the classroom?

Judgment

35. Upon what criteria would you base your assessment of a teacher?
36. On what basis do you judge your success as a principal?
37. How do you ensure that you make fair decisions?

Curriculum and Instruction

38. What do you consider to be examples of appropriate instructional practices?
39. What instructional strategies would you want new teachers to be sure to employ? How would you ensure this?
40. Describe an effective classroom.
41. How have you demonstrated your belief that all students can learn at high levels?
42. Explain your philosophy on educating students.
43. Give one example of how you have carried out your education philosophy in your role as principal. (If applicable)
44. What evidence would you expect to see if a teacher is utilizing developmentally appropriate instruction?
45. What teaching techniques have you found to be most effective in helping **all** students learn at high levels?

Discipline

46. What is your philosophy of discipline?
47. What connection do you see between the school safety plan and the school's discipline policy?
48. How would you explain the connection between safe and orderly schools and student achievement?
49. What discipline plan or procedures have you used effectively in previous positions?
50. What student outcomes do you expect from a school's discipline plan?
51. Share your method of dealing with a student who is continually disruptive in class?
52. Tell us how you would handle the following situation: A student is sent to your office because she has forgotten her homework for the fifth day in a row.

SBDM

53. Describe your personal decision making process.
54. How do you see your role in working with the SBDM council?
55. What provisions will you make to ensure total staff and parent involvement with the SBDM council?
56. What method of communications do you feel is most effective in keeping the total staff/community informed of council decisions?
57. What do you see as the main focus of any SBDM council?
58. How do you help keep the council focused on doing what is best for improving student achievement?

Culture

59. Explain why you think a positive school culture is important.
60. As the principal, how could you create a culture of academic excellence in a school? How have you done that in previous jobs?
61. In what ways would you encourage students who are not working up to their potentials?
62. What role do you see the Family/Youth Resource Center playing for students in this school?
63. How do you, as a principal, promote good race relationships?
64. Describe how you would go about establishing positive relations with the school community?
65. How would you involve parents more in students' education?

ACCEPTABLE – UNACCEPTABLE QUESTION MATERIAL

SUBJECT	ACCEPTABLE	UNACCEPTABLE
NAME	Have you ever used another name? Or, "Is any additional information relative to change of name, use of an assumed name, or nickname necessary to enable a check on your work and education record? If yes, please explain."	Maiden Name
RESIDENCE	Place of residence	"Do you own or rent your home?"
AGE	A statement that hiring is subject to certification that applicant meets legal age requirements. "If hired, can you show proof of age?"	
BIRTHPLACE CITIZENSHIP	"Can you, after employment, submit verification of work or a legal right to work in the United States?" Or, a statement that such proof may be required after employment.	"Birthplace of applicant's parents, spouse, or other relatives. "Are you a US citizen?" Or, citizenship of applicant, applicant's parents, spouse, or other relative.
NATIONAL ORIGIN	Languages applicant reads, speaks, or writes.	Questions as to nationality, lineage, ancestry, national origin, descent, or parentage of applicant, applicant's parents, or spouse. "What is your mother tongue?" Or, "Language commonly used by applicant." How applicant acquired ability to read, write, or speak a foreign language.
SEX MARTIAL STATUS FAMILY	Name and address of parent or guardian if applicant is a minor. A statement of company policy regarding work assignment of employees who are related.	Questions which indicate applicant's sex. Questions which indicate applicant's marital status. Number and/or ages of children or dependents. Provisions for child care. Questions regarding pregnancy, child bearing, or birth control. Name or address of relative, spouse, children or adult applicant. "With whom do you reside?" Or, "Do you live with your parents?"
RACE COLOR		Questions as to applicant's race or color. Questions regarding applicant's complexion or color of skin, eyes, hair.
PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION PHOTOGRAPH	A statement that may be required after employment.	Questions as to applicant's height and weight. Requiring applicant to affix a photograph to application. Requesting applicant, at his or her option, to submit a photograph. Requiring a photograph after interview but before employment.

SUBJECT	ACCEPTABLE	UNACCEPTABLE
PHYSICAL CONDITION HANDICAP	A statement by employer that offers may be made contingent on applicant's passing a job-related physical examination. "Do you have any physical condition or handicap which may limit your ability to perform the job applied for?" If yes, what can be done to accommodate your limitation?	Questions regarding applicant's general medical condition, state of health. Questions regarding receipt of Worker's Compensation. Do you have any physical disabilities or handicaps?
RELIGION	A statement by employer of regular days, hours, or shifts to be worked.	Questions regarding applicant's religion. Religion days observed, or "Does your religion prevent you from working weekends or holidays?"
ARREST CRIMINAL RECORD	Have you ever been convicted of a felony, or (specified time period) a misdemeanor which resulted in imprisonment?" (Such a question must be accompanied by a statement that a conviction will not necessarily disqualify applicant from the job applied for.)	Arrest records, or "Have you ever been arrested?"
BONDING	A statement that bonding is a condition of hire.	Questions regarding refusal or cancellation of bonding.
MILITARY SERVICE	Questions regarding relevant skills acquired during applicant's US military service.	General questions regarding military service, such as dates and types of discharge. Questions regarding service in a foreign military.
ECONOMIC STATUS		Questions regarding applicant's current or past assets, liabilities, or credit rating including bankruptcy or garnishment. Questions regarding transportation.
ORGANIZATIONS ACTIVITIES	Please list job-related organizations, clubs, professional societies, or other associations to which you belong. You may omit those which indicate your race, religious creed, color, national origin, ancestry, sex, or age."	"List all organizations, clubs, societies, and lodges to which you belong."
REFERENCES	"By whom were you referred for a position here?"	Questions which elicit information specifying the applicant's race, color, name, creed, national origin, ancestry, physical handicap, medical condition, marital status, age, or sex.
NOTIFICATION IN CASE OF EMERGENCY	Name and address of <u>person</u> to be notified in case of accident or emergency.	Name and address of <u>relative</u> to be notified in case of accident or emergency.

Notes: