SAMPLE Interview Protocol— Principal

Overview of the Resource

This resource was developed to support district staff in recruiting and hiring principals. The sample interview process and protocol guidance builds-on the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Core Propositions and Standard Indicators and describes the essential responsibilities for principals. Specifically, the resource attracts principals who:

* Build a shared vision of student success and well-being.
* Champion and support instruction and assessment that maximize student learning and achievement.
* Manage and develop staff members’ professional skills and practices to drive student learning and achievement.
* Cultivate a caring and inclusive school community dedicated to student learning, academic success, and the personal well-being of every student.
* Coordinate resources, time, structures, and roles effectively to build the instructional capacity of teachers and other staff.
* Engage families and the outside community to promote and support student success.
* Administer and manage operations efficiently and effectively.

Purpose

District and school leaders can use this interview process and protocol guidance in the hiring process toselect principals who reflect district expectations. This resource is divided into two parts:

* Part 1: Operationalizing the Interview Process
* Part 2: Sample Interview Protocol

Part 1 offers a recommended set of steps for establishing a comprehensive approach for principal recruitment. Information for this section comes from the Learning Point Associates *Quality School Leadership Identification Guidebook* (February 2010) and includes steps that help a district hiring team prepare for, conduct, and finalize the principal interview process. The second part of the guidance provides a sample interview protocol for district hiring teams to screen principal candidates in pursuit of a best fit. The protocol questions are aligned with the Core Propositions and Standard Indicators that also anchor the evaluation program; they can be used to manage employee performance and develop professional growth and career paths. The [Leader Evaluation and Professional Growth Rubric Companion Guide](http://maine.gov/doe/excellence/resources/LEPG-Companion-Guide-1.0-20150717.pdf) accompanies this resource by providing key elements associated with each of the standards.

Part 1: Operationalizing the Interview Process

Introduction

This section of the interview process and protocol guidance offers a process for district and school teams interested in recruiting and hiring principal candidates. The process identifies five steps that can help to ensure efficient recruitment, interviewing, selection, and hiring of the highest quality candidates. Figure 1 offers a general timeline for the recruitment and hiring process. The five steps include:

* Form the Hiring Committee and Set Priorities
* Recruit Candidates
* Develop Screening Materials and Prepare for Screening
* Screen Candidates
* Rank the Finalists and Make a Recommendation for Hiring

Figure 1. Sample Timeline for Teacher Hiring

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| January | February | March | April | May | June | July | August |
| Forming committee | Recruiting and screening  Setting priorities |  | Phone screen | Finalists  On-site visit | Enacting succession plan |  |  |

Step 1: Form the Hiring Committee and Set Priorities

The first step is to create an interview team that includes representation from the central office, school and teacher leaders, and additional staff (e.g. school counselors) for the hiring school. The hiring process will go more smoothly if the committee first reaches an agreement about the qualities of the ideal principal candidate needed for the school. To do this, the hiring teams can review the job description, examine school or district data, establish the priorities of principal candidates, and be aware of pertinent research and policy on desirable attributes of principals.

The hiring committee conversation on priorities will be influenced by the district’s authority for hiring (see Table 1). For districts with high centralized hiring authority, individual schools will have little determination in the priorities. For those with less centralized authority, the hiring committee will set the priorities based on individual schools.

Table 1. Authority for Hiring

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Highly Centralized | Somewhat Centralized | Not Centralized |
| Degree of Centralization and Responsible Party | Central office administrators: | A local hiring committee comprised of central office staff, school staff, and community members: | A local hiring committee of school staff and community members: |
| Setting Priorities | * Set all priorities and hiring criteria | * Sets hiring priorities to reflect a mix of district and local concerns. Although the district has core priorities or criteria, there is some variation among schools. | * Sets priorities; therefore, teacher hiring criteria may vary from school to school. |
| Recruiting Candidates | * Manage the recruitment activities. | * Coordinates candidate recruitment. Both district and local resources are used. | * Manages recruitment activities, with little help from the district administration. |
| **Screening Candidates** | | | |
| Application Screening | * Screen applications and determine semifinalists. | * Screens applications and determines semifinalists. | * Screens applications and determines semifinalists. |
| Telephone Screening | * Screen semifinalists by telephone and determine finalists. | * Screens semifinalists by telephone and determines finalists. | * Screens semifinalists by telephone and determines finalists. |
| On-Site Screening | * Screen finalists on-site and identify the best candidate(s) for hire. | * Screens finalists on-site and identifies the best candidate(s) for hire. | * Screens finalists on-site and identifies the best candidate(s) for hire. |

Step 2: Recruit Candidates

Once the hiring committee has established its priorities, it will need to recruit candidates for the open positions. Districts can use a mix of formal and informal methods to recruit candidates, including sharing job openings at a university or college, in a local newspaper, and on the school or district website. Hiring committees also can work closely with preparation institutions on long-term planning for anticipated vacancies, attend job fairs in other states, and invest in Grow Your Own programs. Most school districts will likely have a recruitment strategy already; however, Maine Schools for Excellence also has developed recruitment advertisements and job descriptions that can be customized by the hiring committees.

Step 3: Develop Screening Materials and Prepare for Screening

The purpose of the on-site interviews is for the school or district stakeholders to gather in-depth evidence about each candidate’s potential fit with the position. Such interviews provide opportunities for interviewers to observe a candidate’s spontaneous responses to carefully selected and posed questions. In addition, the on-site interviews allow each candidate to learn more about the school, district, and community.

On-site interviews tend to be either semistructured or structured. A *semistructured* interview protocol includes a list of agreed-upon questions asked of each candidate, but each interviewer has opportunities to ask follow-up and clarifying questions. In contrast, a structured interview protocol provides a list of questions, but panelists have few opportunities for follow-up questions.

The Sample Interview Protocol is an example of an on-site interview protocol that incorporates expectations defined in the Leader Evaluation and Professional Growth Program. To align the sample protocol to their priorities, hiring committees can review the interview questions chosen in light of these priorities and, for each interview question, choose the appropriate ranking as follows:

Performance tasks gauge the ability of each finalist to observe instructional practice, assess the quality of instruction, and provide teachers with timely, meaningful feedback about instructional quality.

* 2=essential
* 1=useful
* 0=not useful

The hiring team determines which questions must be asked, which are optional, and which should be omitted. The hiring team also can determine which approaches are best to ask the questions. These can include initial phone screening, on-site interviews, or performance tasks.

Step 4: Screen Candidates

As with all aspects of the hiring process, it is important that the committee reach a consensus about interview questions prior to meeting with candidates and to consistently use the same interview questions with each candidate so that all have equal opportunity when answering questions. If different questions are asked of different candidates, this could be considered biased. This does not mean, however, that committee members cannot ask follow-up or clarifying questions to get more information from candidates. When screening candidates, there are several actions the hiring committee can consider, including:

* Welcoming the candidate. Setting a positive and professional tone from the start.
* Dressing appropriately.
* Staying actively engaged throughout the interview. Being courteous and respectful.
* Never arguing with a candidate.
* Creating a comfortable atmosphere that encourages free-flowing conversation.
* Adhering to the interview protocol and respecting the schedule so that all interviewers are able to be involved as planned.
* Planning for monitoring the time and communicating among interviewers if adjustments are necessary.
* Being aware that follow-up questions are acceptable, provided they do not disrupt the interview schedule.
* Keeping all follow-up questions job related.

Step 5: Rank the Finalists and Make a Hiring Recommendation

However you choose to facilitate the meeting, you will want to end the meeting by scoring each candidate against the interview rubrics and creating a rank-ordered list of scores. After reviewing candidate responses to interview questions and discussing the meaning of their responses, each committee member should independently score each finalist by using the rubric in the interview protocol. After the rubric scores of all committee members have been turned in, you should analyze the individual scores and look for both agreement and disagreement among the scores. The hiring team also can facilitate an evidence-based discussion of candidate strengths and weaknesses observed. The goal of this meeting is to bring the committee to a consensus decision or at least a decision that the majority of committee members can agree on and support. Once the conversation is complete, the hiring committee will determine the final recommendation for the candidate.

Part 2: Interview Protocol

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Candidate Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_  Interview Team: | **Effectiveness Level** | | | |
| **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** |
| **Ineffective** | **Developing** | **Effective** | **Distinguished** |
| 1. **Vision, Mission, and Advocacy** | | | | |
| * 1. Shared Vision and Mission. Advance the district vision for student learning and adult instructional practice through development of an aligned school mission. |  | | | |
| Describe strategies that you have used in the past to collaborate with your school community for the purpose of developing a shared mission that is aligned with the district vision. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Tell us about approaches you have taken to ensure alignment between the school mission and, for example, school systems, strategies, structures, programs, practices, and procedures. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Describe systems that you have used in the past to monitor progress toward the school mission. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **Evidence:** | | | | |
| * 1. Stakeholder Communication and Engagement. Communicate internally and externally with stakeholders and the community to advance the organization's vision and mission. |  | | | |
| Describe strategies you have used in the past to create a collaborative school community where school staff and the community interact regularly and share ownership for the success of the school. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Share with us examples of how you have communicated internally and externally with stakeholders and the community to advance the district’s vision and school mission. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Tell us what systems you have put in place to monitor the effectiveness of communications that you have put in place in the interest of your school’s mission. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **Evidence:** | | | | |
| * 1. Community Support. Leverage community resources to implement and revitalize the school’s mission. |  | | | |
| Tell us how you have advocated within your school and beyond for the support and resources needed to implement and revitalize the school’s mission. For example, resources can include powerful individuals at the local level who can be champions for the school. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Share with us examples of how you have leveraged community resources to support and enrich the school. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Describe how you have communicated and reinforced the importance of community collaboration with faculty and staff. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **Evidence:** | | | | |
| 1. **Knowledge of Subjects and How to Teach Those Subjects** | | | | |
| * 1. Organizational Capacity. Build organizational capacity by developing leadership competency in others. |  | | | |
| * Explain strategies you have used to build and sustain organizational capacity by developing leadership competency in others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| * Describe how you have supported the ongoing success of staff members in leadership roles. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| * Tell us how you have monitored staff in leadership roles to ensure that expectations are clear and intended goals are being met. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| * Describe the steps you would take to ensure that all new hires to the school are the right fit with your mission, values, and standards. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **Evidence:** | | | | |
| * 1. Strategic Management Systems. Design, develop, and implement strategic management systems, monitoring systems for effectiveness and efficiency through a continuous improvement process. |  | | | |
| Describe your experience creating and monitoring school budgets. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Describe the quantitative and qualitative data that you have found most useful in making and evaluating budgetary decisions regarding operations, staffing, and other resources for supporting teaching and learning. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Describe the processes you have used in the past, if any, to ensure a wide representation of perspectives and data before making decisions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **Evidence:** | | | | |
| 1. **Supports for Learning** | | | | |
| * 1. Support for Students. Develop a system to support all students socially, emotionally, and intellectually. |  | | | |
| Describe how you have used data to monitor the social, emotional, and intellectual needs of students. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Describe the strategies you have used to ensure that staff has the resources and skills needed to support a wide range of needs within the classroom. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Describe the formal collaborative structures you have used to identify and assist students at risk of academic failure or social and emotional crisis. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **Evidence:** | | | | |
| 1. **Teaching and Learning** | | | | |
| * 1. Instructional Focus. Ensure that teaching and learning are the primary focus of the organization. |  | | | |
| Share strategies you have used in the past to ensure that ‘teaching and learning’ are the primary focus of the organization. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Share strategies you have used so that all students can learn and accomplish challenging learning goals. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Describe the structures you have created to ensure that personnel are being used efficiently to maximize the instructional time of teachers. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Describe the structures you have created that allow you to be visible in the classrooms. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Tell us about strategies you have used to protect and maximize time for professional development and collaborative conversations related to teaching and learning. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Describe strategies you have used to improve student attendance. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **Evidence:** | | | | |
| * 1. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment. Direct the implementation of a rigorous and relevant system of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. |  | | | |
| Describe specific ways you have worked with staff to ensure alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment with the college- and career-ready standards. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Describe ways you have worked with staff to select, develop, and/or analyze formative and summative assessments to ensure that instruction meets the needs of students. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Tell us about strategies you have used to examine student achievement and student growth data and other performance measures, including classroom observations, to monitor and adjust curricular resources, instructional strategies, teacher professional development, and student supports. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **Evidence:** | | | | |
| * 1. Supporting Instructional Practice. Support improvement of teacher practice through evidence-based, actionable feedback and access to quality professional development. |  | | | |
| Describe your philosophy and approach to conducting classroom observations. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| What does evidence-based, actionable feedback mean to you and how have you used it to support teacher effectiveness? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Tell us how you have used classroom observations, student growth data, and other measures to inform conversations about the impact of particular teaching practices on student learning. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **Evidence:** | | | | |
| 1. **Culture** | | | | |
| * 1. Relationship Building. Build authentic, productive relationships with and among students, staff, parents/caregivers, and the community in the interest of student learning. |  | | | |
| Describe the strategies you have used to build authentic, productive relationships with and among students, staff, parents and caregivers, and the community in the interest of student learning. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Describe the strategies you have used to monitor and improve relationships within the school community. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Describe how you have expressed personal and public appreciation for the ways that individuals within the school community—such as staff, students, and community members—are contributing to the success of the school. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **Evidence:** | | | | |
| * 1. Respect for Diverse Cultures. Honor the culture of students, adults, and the larger community, demonstrating respect for diversity and ensuring equity. |  | | | |
| What does it look like and sound like in a school that respects and honors the diversity of a school community? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| What strategies have you used to promote, and ensure where applicable, diverse representation on school, staff, and student committees, clubs, and activities? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Describe the ways you have modeled appreciation and respect for the cultures of the school and community to create an environment that supports high achievement for all students. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Describe a situation in which respect was nonexistent and you had to intervene. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **Evidence:** | | | | |
| * 1. Safe Environment. Create and maintain a physically, emotionally, and intellectually safe environment that promotes effective adult practice and student learning. |  | | | |
| Describe strategies you have used to create and maintain a physically, emotionally, and intellectually safe environment that promotes effective adult practice and student learning. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Describe the systems and structures you have put in place to monitor and promote a positive school culture. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Describe how you reward teachers who create positive and rigorous classroom cultures. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **Evidence:** | | | | |
| 1. **Ensuring Professionalism** | | | | |
| * 1. Rational and Transparent Decision Making. Provide a firm rationale for decision making, considering the needs of the school community. |  |  |  |  |
| Tell us about examples of decisions that you have made on your own and how you communicated these types of decisions to staff and stakeholders. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Describe examples of decisions that required more input and involvement to be successful, and how you went about implementing this collective decision-making process in a way that promoted engagement and ownership from all stakeholders, including students. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **Evidence:** | | | | |
| * 1. Professional Conduct. Model and establish a culture in which a high degree of professionalism is practiced by all stakeholders. |  | | | |
| Share what others would say about the culture of professionalism at your current school. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Describe your behaviors and the structures that contribute positively to this culture, and which are detracting from it. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Describe the ways you have made your staff feel empowered and supported to take the initiative to challenge one another when unprofessional conduct is exhibited. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **Evidence:** | | | | |
| 1. **Reflection and Growth** | | | | |
| * 1. Self-Reflection and Continuous Improvement. Reflect on personal and professional strengths and areas for development, and adjust practice for continuous improvement. |  | | | |
| Give us an example of how you have taken steps to improve your practice as a result of self-reflection. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Describe your process for staying abreast of current research. Give us an example of how you have incorporated new findings and strategies into your practice. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Describe your current professional development plan for areas to work on. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **Evidence:** | | | | |
| Overall rating is based on the preponderance of evidence collected during the application and interview process. | | | | |

Appendix A. Potential Additional Interview Questions

1. Please tell us about yourself and why you are a strong candidate for this position.
2. Also, what has been your most outstanding contribution to your present school district and why?
3. Who is your management role model and what strategies would you borrow from him or her? What makes that person an effective manager?
4. Please respond to the following scenario. A parent calls and is upset about the consequence a teacher gave their child. The parent feels the consequence is too severe and the more you listen to the parent, the more you wonder the same. How do you respond and what do you do?
5. What have you been working on so far with regard to alignment with the Common Core State Standards and proficiency-based education? How’s it going? What’s hard about it? What’s exciting? How would you be able to support teachers in this work?
6. If you are to be responsible for keeping an eye on student achievement in your grades, what data would be most important for you to look at and when? What do you envision doing with this information and how will teachers be involved?
7. When observing a teacher in a classroom, what are the first things you look for when you’re providing feedback? Why? How do these observations help to push instruction forward?
8. Given all of the initiatives that districts are managing (e.g., new Common Core standards, state testing, proficiency-based diplomas, teacher evaluation, and so on), which initiatives do you feel you are most prepared and least prepared to carry out as a building principal and why?
9. As a new principal in a school, how would you go about building relationships of trust and collaboration with staff, parents, and students?
10. Think about the hardest piece of critical feedback you have received. What was it? Why was it hard to hear? How did you respond and what did you do to fix it?
11. Describe a time when you had to persuade a peer, supervisor, or person you managed to accept an idea or proposal that you know the person would not like. What was the nature of the resistance and what did you do to overcome it? How did you approach the conversation?
12. Describe what you consider to be effective teaching and learning. What does this look like? How do you know when you see it?
13. A principal is responsible for many moving parts at once. Describe your personal organizational style and explain how you would effectively juggle all aspects of the job. What parts of the job will you prioritize? Which will be the hardest to maintain and manage?
14. Explain how you approach student discipline. Please be specific about your philosophy and actions.
15. We have regular staff meetings once a month. How would you decide what the agenda should look like to push student achievement and instruction forward? What is a successful meeting in your opinion? How do you follow up afterwards?
16. You are in an end-of-year conference with a teacher, providing his or her summative evaluation feedback and rating. Although you have ample evidence for the rating, he or she disagrees with you. What do you say and do? How do you approach the conversation? Describe how you would carry out the rest of this meeting.
17. Describe a time when you had to give difficult feedback to a peer, supervisor, or supervisee. Was the conversation successful? Why or why not?
18. If we were to interview three of the toughest families you have had to deal with this year, what would they say about you?
19. There are many different hats that a principal wears. Which one will fit you most comfortably? Which one will be the hardest to wear? Why?
20. A teacher is regularly late to school or meetings and comes unprepared. What do you do?
21. A teacher comes to you with a complaint about another member of the staff talking in a derogatory fashion about a child. What do you do?
22. What will you need to know to do this job? Where will your biggest learning curve be? How will you prepare?
23. What questions do you have for us?