

Chapter 5: Interviews

Interviews. I hate interviews. I've sat on both sides of the table and, quite frankly, I didn't like either side. I happen to be one of those people who get nervous before an interview, and I really need to psyche myself up before I go.

Your interview will most likely be the most important part of the total process of seeking an international teaching position. Many years ago I suggested to several administrators that it wouldn't be long until face-to-face interviews were a thing of the past. Most administrators still



hold to the necessity of having the face-to-face interview. They think that it gives them some insight into how a teacher will function in the classroom. I've met a number of teachers who were great in interviews and slugs in the classroom. That being said, you are going to have to go through the process. Here are some things to think about.

First. Dress for the part. You may be going to a school that allows its teachers to wear shorts and sandals, but it's always best to have on your finest before arriving for an interview. Short of showing up in an evening gown or a tuxedo, you can't overdress for an interview.

Second. Be prepared. Like any good scout, you want to be prepared for any eventuality. Study the country and the school before your interview. I know of a teacher who showed up for an interview for a school in Pakistan and during the course of the interview, asked the recruiter exactly where Pakistan was located. Needless to say, he didn't get the job. Know something about the curriculum. If the school is an IB school and you haven't had IB training, read up on it before the interview and express your enthusiasm and willingness to be trained in the IB approach.

Third. Bring your professional portfolio. If you have examples of student work, bring them with you. Your interviewer may not want to see them during the interview, but he/she will definitely look at them later. The examples that you give will be a preview of what can be expected of you.

Fourth. Know your strengths and highlight them. Are you a team player? Give a few examples of where you've pitched in on projects that were above and beyond the call of duty. Do your letters of recommendation mention how well you relate to students? Remind yourself of the reasons for wanting the job and what you said in your letter of application.

Fifth. Be prepared for the tough questions like what you would do with an incredibly obnoxious parent or a student who just will not cooperate. Make sure that you can succinctly explain why you want this particular position. What is your greatest weakness as a teacher? Think of one even if you think that you have none. Take your time with your answers. A well thought out answer is better than a quick response.

Sixth. Professional development is a big thing for administrators. It should be for you as well if you want to have a successful career as an international teacher. Be prepared to discuss any professional development workshops that you've led or attended. Let the recruiter know what areas you would like to work on in the future.

Seventh. Smile and try to relax. Interviewers enjoy an interview where there is some give and take. Have your questions ready for your interviewer. Remember that you are interviewing the school as well as being interviewed by the school. You don't want to take a contract and then arrive and find out that you just hate the place.

Eighth. Be prepared with a response if you are offered a job on the spot. Make sure you know about salaries, benefits, and housing. If you get offered a job that you aren't sure about, ask for a day to think about it.

Good luck with your interview and welcome to the world of the international teacher.