

Assistant Principal Interview Guide

Step-by-step guide for assistant principal (vice principal, deputy principal) job applicants
From **Glen Hughins**, Interviewer at Specialized Education Recruitment Agency Meridian

Job of an assistant principal is one of the most challenging jobs in education. It is very popular amongst job seekers, especially amongst those who hold degree from Education Administration. Survey conducted in the United States, back in November 2018, showed that in average, **more than twenty people applied for every single vice principal job opening.**

People would love to have this position for a good reason. Assistant principals have huge impact on both school and students. Good VP can take an average educational institution to new heights, and strongly contribute to overall satisfaction of both teachers and students. On the other hand, **a wrong choice of an AP can prove costly, and may severely damage a reputation of an educational institution.**

Therefore local **Departments of Education, Internal HR committees, principals or specialized education recruitment agencies**, (*bodies that typically lead the interview for the position*), approach the recruitment systematically, using a complex interview template that consists in behavioural, situational, and technical questions, and may even include personality testing. I personally interviewed more than five hundred applicants for assistant principal position. Therefore I understand:

- Why the most qualified applicants do not get a job in 95% of job interviews.
- That most people focus on completely wrong things while preparing for their interview.
- That practically everyone can get this job, if they know what to do and HOW to do it in an interview.
- What questions they typically ask in the interviews, what else happens in the meeting, and what you should do in order to maximize your chances of getting the job.

It is **difficult to succeed in an interview and get a job of an assistant principal**. It does not matter how qualified you are. However, if you are willing to commit your time, this eBook should help you to maximize your chances to succeed, since after reading it you'll be **doing the right things at the right time**, from the very beginning of your job search, to the moment of signing a job contract with your new employer.

You can ask me right now:

Doesn't the recruitment differ from school to school, from city to city, from country to country?

There are some differences, for sure. However, when you are interviewed for assistant principal position, you can hardly expect to deal with interview questions for nurses, or competency tests for nuclear scientists.

The principles of hiring are pretty similar, every time an educational institution recruits for the position of an assistant principal. Once you understand these principles and questions, and learn how to adapt them to the conditions of your particular interview, you will be able to succeed in any interview, regardless of country or level of education.

It does not matter if you are interviewed by a Department of Education, Internal HR committee, school principal or a staffing agency. You will learn how to win the hearts of your interviewers.

Enjoy your reading!



Glen Hughins,

Interviewer at Meridian Recruitment; Specialized Career Coach

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I. Before The Job Interview

Chance favors the prepared mind.

Success in an interview does not depend only on your answers to interview questions. Your **non-verbal communication** matters, your **demeanour** counts. **What you wear and what you bring** with you is also important.

We will have a look at it, as well as at the typical **personality test we use** in our agency, in the first part of *Assistant Principal Interview Guide*.

Your Resume

It does not matter if you are already invited for an interview, or if you just try to get the invitation. You should understand some things regarding crucial parts on your resume and improve them, **in order to make a best possible impression before, and during your interview** for assistant principal position.

Picture on your resume

According to statistics collected in our agency, candidates with picture on their resume are invited for an interview three times more often than candidates who have no picture on their resume.

One can say it is a coincidence, but I doubt it, since people are **visual beings**. One good picture can tell more about your personality and motivation than a lengthy resume...

You should definitely choose a good picture and place it on your resume, ideally in a top right corner. Dressed in business attire, with smile on your face, showing positive emotions and enthusiasm would be a great choice of a picture.

Introduction and Resume Objective

Jeremy Miles, a reputable career coach from Canada, wrote that **employer decides in first eight seconds of reading your resume if they invite you for an interview**. They may, as well as not, read your resume through to the end, but the decision has already been taken in their head, in the first eight seconds. Therefore **the picture and the first few lines on your resume mark the most important parts, and you need to pay special attention to them**.

Ideally, your objective or introduction (first sentences on your resume) **should be short, to the point, and somehow unique**. Inspire yourself with the following examples and write a good objective, to catch the eye in the first eight seconds:

- *I am seeking a challenging position of an assistant principal, to use my proven social and leadership skills to help the school to continually progress.*
- *Education administration professional with good organizational skills and critical thinking who can devise creative solutions to issues in the school environment, is seeking a new challenge.*
- *I am looking for vice principal position to use full potential of my skills, creativity, motivation and twelve years of experience, to make a positive difference in an educational institution.*

Note: As you could notice, clever job applicants **did not talk only about their own goals**, but mentioned **something positive for the school as well**, e.g. *best possible results, solving issues, making a difference, taking the institution to the next level*. This is an employer-oriented approach, and it can win you many interview invitations.

Other Sections on Assistant Principal Resume

Other sections, such as your education and experience, are straightforward. However, you should not forget that anyone can read your resume. It can be a professional in education, as well as someone with no idea about the job of AP. Therefore I suggest you to use simple language. Keep it clear, and simple. Choose good picture, start with a great objective, and follow with a decent list of experience (if you have any). Even for this position, your resume should not be more than two pages long (one page is best).

You should **not underestimate the importance of your resume**, even if you were already invited for an interview. Many people can see your resume again and again, in the process of decision making, once the interviews ended. Improve your resume right now and bring few improved copies to the interview with you.

Issue of Correspondence

Your resume has its own “non-verbal communication”. I remember a job applicant who claimed to be a detail oriented teacher. But he did not include exact dates of his employment on resume. He included only years (from 2004 to 2006).

Another guy wrote that he had excellent computer skills. But at the same time, his resume was terribly formatted and apparently he did not even know how to align the picture to the side of the document in MS Word.

In both cases, **things written on a resume did not correspond with the layout and format of the document.** Said in other words, “verbal and non-verbal communication” of their documents did not correspond. As you can guess, the trustworthiness of these applicants was immediately doubted, and they were not invited for an interview.

Please, have a look at your resume and think about the issue of correspondence. It is always better to **write less, and make some positive surprises in an interview**, than to present yourself like a flawless applicant, but disappoint the interviewers on a big day.

Diplomas, Certifications and Recommendations

Diploma has never made a good assistant principal. It is the same with every single role in society. However, for recruiters and principals, diplomas and certifications matter.

You should definitely make **several copies of your diploma and bring it to the interview with you.**

Even if they did not ask about it, or did not take the documents, or did not look at it at all, it would still help you.

The fact that you brought it with you **shows how important the job offer is for you**. It shows that you really care, and therefore you brought every little thing with you. Most applicants bring only their resume. Try to be better, try to do more. All interviewers appreciate the “*do more*” attitude.

The same thing applies to **personal recommendations**. **If you can get a written recommendation from your former principal (or boss), bring it to the interview with you**. The interviewers will make their own background checks anyway, so why not to help them? A recommendation from someone they respect (*for example principal from another institution*) will help your chances.

Personality Tests

Recruiters use different forms of tests for different interviews in education sector. For a job of assistant principal, however, **personality test is typically the only one they use**. Interviewers may rarely use IQ test, but **for this job, emotional intelligence is more important** than IQ.

Without any doubt, one needs to have the right personality, as it goes about a **complex role in stressful and challenging environment**. That is the reason why they often use personality tests, at least when Department of Education or HR agency conducts an interview with the applicants. Now I will show you how to deal with the tests.

Once you **understand the logic behind the test**, it will become your favorite part of job interview.

Form of a test

Typical personality test consists of **fifty (or thirty) statements you should give your opinion to**. You should tick that you either *strongly agree with a statement, agree with it, disagree with it or strongly disagree with it*.

Let me pick five statements that we used in personality tests for assistant principals in our agency.

- *It is easy for you to feel what others are feeling.*

- *When your friends need help, they call you first.*
- *It is hard to really care about work when the job is boring.*
- *You are proud of the work you do.*
- *There are some people you really can't stand.*

To each statement, applicants should choose if they *strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed* with the statement.

To make a right choice, you should always ask yourself the following question: **What would an ideal AP tick?**

Would an ideal assistant principal agree, or disagree with the statement? That should be on your mind while doing the test.

Let's look at it one by one.

1. It is easy for you to feel what others are feeling.

A good assistant principal has **empathy**. They should understand how the students feel about various things; the same applies to teachers and parents. So, from a point of view of the interviewer, the answer "*strongly agree*" is right.

2. When your friends need help, they call you first.

You should use the same logic. A good applicant for a job of assistant principal **does not hesitate to help the others**, and they are able to solve problems. Therefore, the right answer is "*strongly agree*".

3. It is hard to really care about work when the job is boring.

The job of an assistant principal is sometimes boring, like every other job in education. It is not a routine job, but there are periods of routine work. However, **ideal employee should really care about work, even if the job is boring**. So, next to this statement, you should tick "*strongly disagree*", because an ideal assistant principal would make the same choice.

4. You are proud of the work you do.

Ideal employee (or even a good one) **should be proud of their work**. When one is proud, they are **happy in job, and motivated** to work hard. Schools want to employ people who are happy and motivated. Logically, the right answer is "*strongly agree*".

5. *There are some people you really can't stand.*

Assistant principals **meet all kinds of people**. One needs to deal with angry staff members, clever, but also not-so-clever students, happy but also upset parents. As a good candidate for this job, **you should be able to stand everyone**. The right answer to this statement is “*strongly disagree*”. You should strongly disagree with the statement, because there are not any people you can't stand.

As you can see, it is easy to complete the test. All you have to do is to ask yourself the following question:

- ***What would a good (or a perfect) assistant principal answer?***

And then you should choose the same answer...

*Note: I always chose **strongly** agree or **strongly** disagree. To only agree, or only disagree, with something shows hesitation. You should not hesitate. You should have clear vision, firm opinions and ability to make decisions. That is why you should choose “strongly agree” or “strongly disagree” in the vast majority of cases. However, if you are not 100% sure about some answers, you can choose the “mild option”, ticking that you just agree or just disagree with a statement.*

Here are five other statements from the test. Would you agree, or disagree with them?

1. *You have confidence in yourself.*
2. *You like to be in the middle of a big crowd.*
3. *There's no use having close friends; they always let you down.*
4. *You always try not to hurt people's feelings.*
5. *You'd rather not compete very much.*

(Right answers: 1. SA, 2. SA, 3. SD, 4. SA, 5. SA)

Do not be afraid of a personality test. All you have to do is **to think about the questions from a point of view of a great assistant principal**. You should have enough time for this way of thinking. In general, ideal assistant principal is positive about themselves and the others, they like to talk to all kinds of people, are motivated and upbeat, and play for a team. They like to be active, and they try to do new things all time.

Note: This technique can be applied on every other “normal” form of personality testing. However, if you have to deal with strange form of a test, e.g. test consisting of questions such as “which of this circles is angry” or “which of these colors is the most blue”, there is not much you can do to prepare for it in advance.

The good news is that schools and recruitment agencies are ceasing to use these weird forms of personality testing. After all, the benefits of them have always been questionable. If there is a test in your interview, it will be most likely the one with agree-disagree options I just described. And now you should be able to complete it with ease....

Do Not Forget to Do Your Homework

People sitting in the hiring committee will know a lot about the school. They will know a lot about the entire district, and the problems educational institutions face locally.

But you know what? They expect a good candidate for the position of an assistant principal to know as much as they do—or even more!

You should do your homework. Try to research particularly about the following:

- The vision and goals of the educational institution where you will work.
- Former assistant principal and their career, why they left the place.
- Major achievements of the institution (recognition of teachers, students, prizes and awards the school received in the recent years).
- Things that make the institution unique, reasons why students should choose it instead of other, competing institutions.
- Problems and challenges the school faces (there will always be some problems).
- History of the school.

- Expectations of local community, and the collaboration of the school with other public institutions.

Luckily we live in 21st century, and you won't have to consult dozens of people to find the answers. *FaceBook groups, online reviews, local news articles, social networks such as LinkedIn*—all these tools, and obviously *Google* and *the website of the school*, will help you a lot with your research.

Make notes, print them, and read them before the start of your interview.

Good research will help you in many ways.

It will help you **to find good answers to particular interview questions** (questions that relate to the school), to **calm down before your interview** (since it is always easier if we feel somehow familiar with the place and the people we will meet), and to **come up with a good question**, once there's an opportunity to ask a good question.

When you know a lot about the school, or even about the people in the committee, you will always find something interesting to point out, or discuss with them.

Ignorant candidates who rely only on their qualifications and interviewing skills, and do not even look at the website of the educational institution before their interview, are rarely hired, for any job at school.

Do not make the same mistake. Spend enough time researching about the school. **Make the unfamiliar familiar**. It will help you immensely in your interview.

Your value - What can you do for the school?

Job applicants love to talk about themselves. How great they are, what they know, what they have studied, where they have worked, and so on... However, **this tells little about the value they can (and want to) bring to the institution, if they get hired as assistant principals**.

While doing a pre-interview research, you can uncover weak spots, areas for improvement, and challenges people face at the particular school. This should help you to come up with an idea of action you would take, if they gave you a chance to work there, on a position of AP.

You should ask yourself the following questions:

- *What can be done to improve the overall satisfaction of students at this school? What actions would I take to make that happen?*
- *What can be done to improve the overall satisfaction/quality of teachers at this school? What steps would I take to improve it?*
- *Is there anything I can do to improve the reputation of the institution? What actions would I suggest, in order to achieve this goal?*

After answering these questions you should be able to **prepare a plan**, or, said in better words, some **ball-park ideas for improvement**. You can discuss them in an interview later.

This attitude would take you to the **entirely new level in the eyes of the interviewers**. Suddenly, you are not the one who talks about themselves only, but the one who **talks about (and cares about) their own institution, and their goals**. If you do this single thing right, it will help you to stand out from the crowd of other job seekers, in a positive way.

One way or another, you should definitely do a research prior to the interview. Learn as much as you can about them, and **think about their problems, challenges and opportunities**. If you want, you can even prepare a short PowerPoint presentation in which you'll explain what you'd do in the job.

II. In an interview

Everyone is in the committee for a good reason.

You will typically interview in front of a panel consisting in representatives of various stakeholders at the school district.

Someone will be there for the **district** (typically a superintendent assistant), someone for the **teachers** (one of the veteran teachers from the school), one or two **assistant principals/principals**, or even **administrators** from other schools in the district, and typically also a **parent**, someone representing the interests of students (and especially their parents) will sit in the room.

Other people may be present, and everyone will introduce themselves at the start of the interview. The bigger the school and district, the more people will sit in the committee. It can be two but also seven people.

It may seem logical to think that your goal is to please the superintendant or their assistant—simply the highest ranked person in the room. Or the principal, the one leading the school where you apply for the job.

But this is **not how it works**.

Everyone in the committee can say NO to your application, and unless all approve your application, you won't be hired.

What is more, **formal hierarchy and real leadership are two different things**.

Like in every other committee in the world (or team), there will be an informal leader. This person will speak first and last once the interviews are over and the committee discusses your application.

It can be the superintendent, but also one of the administrators, teachers, or even the parent. You simply cannot tell in advance.

Therefore it is crucial to **show the value you can bring to all stakeholders**—the teachers, the students, the school, the parents, the local community, and the district.

What typically happens is that each person in a committee will ask you some questions (they won't just passively sit and listen).

Before answering, **think briefly about their position, and whose interest they represent. Show them that you have their well-being on your mind**, that you see the complexity of a role of an assistant principal.

It is a panel interview, but you should approach each question **as if it was asked in an interview with one person only**. And answer to their best interest.

Interviewers are only people.

They will follow a template in the interview, they will plan the questions in advance. But they won't ask you **questions with yes-no answers**, and the answers of the candidates will vary a lot.

In most cases it won't be **possible to compare the answers**, saying, for example, that answer of candidate A was better than answer of candidate B, and that the answer of candidate C was the worst one from the three.

The answers will be different. **And all may be good (or bad)!**

How will they choose the winner then?

Their decision will be from 90% emotional, and just from 10% rational. Sorry to say that, but it's true. How they **feel about your answers, and about YOU**, matter the most.

Do they feel that you are **genuinely interested in them** (in each member of the committee and the group of people they represent)?

Do they feel good about you? *Can they imagine sharing the same building with you? Can they imagine going for a lunch with you? Can they imagine discussing sensitive issues with you? Do they trust you?*

We are people. We **all have the same desires when it comes to other human beings**. We want to feel respected; we want others to recognize our dreams, strengths and achievements.

We want to cooperate with people who think on “the same wavelength”, people we feel good around, people who listen to us.

It is absolutely important to keep this on your mind when you interview for this job.

- Keep an eye contact with the people in the committee.
- Ask questions.
- Listen to their answers, and elaborate on them with to-the-point questions, questions that show them that you really care.
- Show enthusiasm; bring some positive energy to the room.
- Show them that it is pleasure to be around you, that you have a lot to offer to the people who share the workplace with you—and not only to the students.

And most importantly, have the right mindset when it comes to your opinion about the people in the committee.

I have experienced people doing this one wrong countless times.

They didn't like me. Or they didn't like someone else in the interviewing panel. Many times it happened. They considered me a guy who wanted to catch them off-guard, who wanted to put them under pressure, who wanted to uncover their weaknesses and mistakes, who wanted to break them.

They thought I was eager to find a reason to send them home, to say NO to their application.

But was it really true? *Is the interviewer a bad guy?*

We want to hire people. That's why we organize interviews at first place. It's not easy to get five busy people to the same room on the same day to lead interviews.

Believe it or not, **we are as interested in you doing well as you are.** Perhaps even more. **We need a good new assistant principal for the school.** That's why we organize the entire circus...

But we have emotions. And we are only people, and we struggle to get over our emotions.

When we feel that someone doesn't like us, it is not easy to consider their job application with a cool head.

We want you to do well, to pass the interviews. We may sometimes be hard on you—we have to play our roles after all, and put you under pressure in an interview, with some tough questions. But that’s just the part of the game—**it is nothing personal**.

You should always consider each interviewer your friend. **Think nicely about them**. *Are they too old, or too young to lead an interview? Do they look like they don’t know what they are doing?*

Get these thoughts out of your head immediately. If you do not get them out of your mind, you can forget about succeeding.

Think nicely about your interviewers, and focus on what you do in an interview, not what they are doing, and whether they are qualified to consider your job application.

This way of thinking, this mindset, will **reflect in your non-verbal communication**. **They will feel good with you**. They will know that you like them.

Job candidates who fail to connect with the interviewers will be **screened out** first. The reasons won’t always be clarified. People in the committee will simply agree that they “*didn’t feel right*” about the candidate.

Ensure that it won’t happen to you. Come in with the right mindset!

Ask right questions, at a right time

The typical interview for a job of a vice principal is very organized. It can’t be the other way around, since there are always more people in the hiring committee.

Unless each of them knows their role, and what questions they are supposed to ask, and when they are supposed to ask them, **the whole experience will become confusing for everyone**. It will become one big mess.

Therefore they will follow a template, asking one question after another. You need to wait for your chance to ask them something. When this chance comes, however, a good question can **win you a lot of points**.

Here is what I suggest: Take a sheet of paper with you. **During the first fifteen minutes** do not interrupt the course of an interview with your questions. Any questions.

But **mark down** anything you'd like to ask anyone in the committee.

Doing that, you will not only remember the questions for future reference. It also shows them that you are an organized and diligent person, and **take the interview seriously**.

After the first fifteen-twenty minutes they already got a basic grasp of your personality and skills. They are ready to hear your questions, and won't consider them an interruption anymore.

But you should **avoid some questions**. Do not inquire about something you could find easily while doing your homework, while researching about the school.

The right questions spring from the discussion in the room. For example they ask you "*How would you increase the school's involvement with the community?*"

And you start speaking about an idea of organizing a business fare, or an open house, or about publishing monthly column in local newspaper, or you start with going to non-school events, and using social media to create a unique content about the school activities that will attract people from local community.

At the same time, from your research you know that the school organized an open house a few years ago, but they do not do it anymore.

In this situation, the right question will follow right after your great answer.

I knew that you have organized an open house before. May I ask why you do not continue with the event?

Another good time to ask is at the end of an interview. Their last question will often be: *After everything that has been said, do you have any questions?*

When you **follow my advice and make notes, you will typically have something to inquire** about.

But try to avoid any question that may lead into an argument, or put them in an uncomfortable position.

Questions such as "*Why has this school had three different principals in past seven years?*" or "*Why haven't you made any changes to your curriculum in the past five years?*" will put them in an uncomfortable position...

People in the committee are aware of their mistakes, and things they could have done better. Maybe that's the reason why they are looking for a new assistant principal.

There is no need to remind them their mistakes.

An opposite scenario, a good one, is mentioning **something great they achieved.** For example:

Your school is attracting more applicants each year. That's very impressive considering the competition in this district. How do you manage to build such a good name for your institution?

Such a question would make them feel good. **They would enjoy answering it.** And that's exactly where you want to have them at the end of your interview.

Everyone prefers talking to listening. **Give them a chance to talk, to show off.** A right question at a right time is another way of making them feel good about you and your job application.

How to answer behavioral questions in an interview

Answers to behavioral questions can sometimes **decide a winner in an interview.** Interviewers ask about your behavior in various work-related situations from the past, trying to forecast what you would do in similar situations in the future. Let's have a look at one behavioral question:

"What problems did you face when supervising a school event? How did you handle them?"

Many times, I heard applicants reply to this question in a following way:

- *I do not have such an experience.*
- *This is my first application for a job in school.*
- *I can not recall such situation at the moment.*

All these answers were bad. Candidates could hardly get any points for their answers, since **they did not answer the question at all.**

We will analyze and answer specific behavioral questions for AP interview in the following chapter. However, there is one rule you should remember right now: **Never say that you can not answer a question.**

If you really haven't experienced certain situation, I suggest you to use the following formulation:

- *I have not been in such a situation before. However, if it happened, I would do the following: ...*

This should be your third option. Before opting for it, you should think about real situations from the past, or think up some. You should prepare at least some answers to all behavioral questions from this eBook. To summarize it, anytime answering behavioral question, you should do the following:

1. **Talk about situations that really happened** to you, and explain your behavior in them.
2. If there wasn't any real situation, but you thought up one, use it for your answer.
3. If there was not any situation from the past, and you did not prepare your answer upfront, use the following formulation: *"I have not been in such a situation before. However, if it happened, I would do the following: ..."*

Do not overdo it with memorizing the answers

There's nothing wrong with preparing for the questions you will face in your assistant principal job interview. At the end of the day, that's one of the reasons why you bought this eBook.

But **you should not try to memorize the answers word to word**, despite the fact that many interview coaches would tell you to do so.

The truth is that **you can never tell with 100% certainty which questions you will face in your interview**. You may get seven questions from this book, and seven other questions. If someone claims to know (and wants to sell you) the exact list of questions you will get in any interview (in any institution, private or public), **that person is telling lies to you.**

Unless they will lead the interview with you, they can't know. But I suppose you do not have such a contact at your disposal...

Questions do change every day. What is more, they will also change on the go, with the things you will say in an interview.

Bearing it all in mind, **trying to memorize word to word answers to dozens of possible questions is a fools' game.** And it will only add to your stress, because trying to memorize things is always stressful.

Focus on **attitudes**, and **principles** contained in each answer, not on the exact word-to-word answers.

In the next section I will show you multiple great answers to forty questions, all commonly used in interviews for assistant principal job.

Go through them, find the sample answer that **resonates with you**, for each question, and read it a few times. But do not try to memorize it word to word.

It's enough reading the answers, getting the attitudes reflected in them into your subconscious mind.

Once this happens, **you will come up with great answers in your interview.** You will know what to say, even when they ask you a question which you don't expect at all.

You will know it, because you will subconsciously understand the right attitudes to present with each answer.

And that should be your goal—to be ready for every question, and to come up with a genuine answer each time.

40 Most Common Assistant Principal Interview Questions

Based on my experience with interviewing candidates for assistant principal positions, I chose and analyzed forty most common interview questions.

We will have a look at **some personal, behavioral and technical questions.**

There is a short hint for every question, explaining **why the interviewers ask the question, and what you should focus on when answering.** Several **sample answers** follow the hints. Feel free to use the answers as an inspiration for your own interview answers.

The following questions are analyzed in this book:

1. **What is your motivation to do the job of assistant principal?**
2. **Why do you think you can be a good assistant principal?**
3. **What are your strengths and weaknesses?**
4. **Why should we hire you and not someone else?**
5. **What are your goals in five years time?**
6. **Please describe the role you feel parents should play in the operation of the school.**
7. **How did you deal with upset parent whose child complained about you?**
8. **How did you deal with lazy student?**
9. **What experiences have you had in working with low income and “at risk” students? How do you plan to work with them?**
10. **How did you cope with stress at school?**
11. **Did you supervise any school event in the past? What problems did you face when supervising the event? How did you handle them?**
12. **How did you motivate the students to do their homework, or to prepare for an important exam?**
13. **Why do you think you are a good person to work with young people?**
14. **What actions would you take to monitor staff members’ performance at our school?**

15. What classroom management strategies have been most effective for you? Do you think that assistant principal should help teachers to improve their classroom management?
16. What do you consider most important when we speak about maintaining high staff morale?
17. What do you consider the main challenges school principals and their assistants face right now?
18. How would you win the hearts of the students at our school?
19. If there was a conflict between a student and a teacher, on which side would you stand?
20. How would you lead an interview for a position of a teacher, with a candidate without experience? What questions would you ask them?
21. What do you think are the main duties of an assistant principal in our institution?
22. How do you build a positive school culture or climate? Give examples of how you would do that here.
23. Would you allow students to give their opinion before you make an important decision that impacts their daily school routine?
24. If you were reported about a sexual or child abuse case under your supervision, what would you do?
25. You probably know something about our school now. What would you improve about it, if you got a chance?
26. Can you give us an example of how you have successfully managed a difficult situation at school?
27. Please describe a situation in which you were a manager, a leader and a boss.
28. Tell us what you learned from your most influential administrators. Try to identify at least one positive and one negative characteristic.
29. As an assistant school principal, how visible do you need to be and where would we find you?
30. How would you encourage your teachers to take on leadership roles?
31. If you were working with a probationary teacher who was experiencing many challenges with effective classroom management, what would you do?
32. Describe your experience in working with special education programs.
33. How would you lead an IEP meeting?

34. Assume you are offered and accept the position of Assistant Principal, and now it is the night before the opening of school. What is keeping you awake?
35. Please give an example of an experience when you documented a teacher who was not performing up to expectations. Describe the steps that you followed in such a case.
36. How will you measure your success after the first year in this job?
37. Have you ever thought of becoming a school principal?
38. What are your salary expectations?
39. Is there anything else we did not cover that you would like us to know about you as we consider you as a candidate for the position of an assistant principal?
40. After everything that has been said, do you have any questions?

1. What is your motivation to do this job?

Hint: Motivation of candidates is one of **the most important decision factors for every school**. They want to find out if your motives are right, and not utterly selfish.

Good salary, or personal challenge, would **not be the best possible answer**.

Role of an AP is not only a job—it is a **mission**.

Therefore you should **focus on things that are important for the interviewers**, such as good reputation of their school, achievements of students, prosperity of local community. Opportunity to change something in local community should be the main motive of your job application (at least in the eyes of the interviewing committee).

Sample answers

I always wanted to work with young people, and help in their academic and personal development. I believe the future of our society depends on young generation. As an assistant

principal I can lead them to the right direction in life, and in some way, I can even influence the future of the entire community in this city. This motivates me greatly to become an assistant principal.

I want to try to make a positive difference in life of students. I want to help build relationships of trust at school, and I want to show them that we at school do our best to help them succeed in life. Hopefully I can assist in improving the relationships of students, teachers, and school administrators, and help this school to become even a better place for everyone. That's my motivation.

2. Why do you think you can be a good assistant principal?

Hint: Interviewers are able (or at least they should be) to assess your strengths and weaknesses, and tell if you can be a good assistant principal.

However, they may still ask you this question, simply to see whether you can assess your own skills, in order to tell whether you'd be able to assess the skills, strengths and weaknesses of other people, meaning teachers, students, etc.

It's an important skill for every AP.

I suggest you to be honest and humble when answering the question, and focus on the following things:

- Abilities and experience required, or desired for this job.
- Motivation to work as an assistant principal, your enthusiasm for the role.
- Something that makes you unique as an applicant.

Sample answers

I worked as an elementary teacher for ten years. I have always had a personal relationship with my students, leading them, motivating them, and helping them in difficult times. I consulted parents and was constantly achieving good overall results in my classes. However, I believe that I should do more than just teach, since I'd have more options to change things as

an assistant principal. I believe that my mindset and perspective make me a good candidate for this job.

I fulfill all requirements from your job description. What's more, this is the role I always wanted to have. To have bigger responsibility, to organize events for children, to help the problematic pupils to get back on track—that's something I always wanted to do, and can imagine doing well. I believe I can help to make this institution a better place for everyone, as I already have in my mind some ideas for improvement. This should make me a good candidate for the assistant principal position.

3. What are your strengths and weaknesses?

Hint: This is one of the **most typical interview questions**. Sometimes I have the feeling that interviewers use it, just because everybody does (or did) use it.

In a good answer you should talk about strengths that are related to the job of assistant principal, and about weaknesses that are not related (or at least not much) to the role. You can even pick a weakness that may be considered strength by employers, for example being over-friendly to students.

Anyway, you should not claim to have no weaknesses. **We are human beings. We have weaknesses.** Pick one that is not important for the job, and follow with your efforts to improve on the weakness. That is what the interviewers want to hear from you in an interview.

Sample answers

I have a tendency to be over-friendly to students, and some may understand my behavior in a wrong way. I know about this weakness, and I try to be careful in the job, to avoid any misunderstanding of my actions. From my strengths I can mention good communication skills, and an ability to understand the needs and desires of all kinds of people you meet in school.

My computer skills are not as good as they should be. However, I attend evening courses and practice a lot at home, in order to improve on my skills. From the strengths, people say that I am responsible. It has never happened to me that I did not finish my work in time, or that I forgot to do something in my job.

4. Why should we hire you?

Hint: Most job applicants answer that they have the best qualification, experience, or predispositions. That is a bad answer....

First of all, all interviewed applicants have sufficient experience and qualification for the job.

They would not be invited for an interview if they didn't meet the criteria...

And secondly, you do not know the other applicants. How could you tell that you have better qualification, or predispositions? It is impossible to say, for you, or for anyone else.

Other group of job seekers uses one of the following answers:

- **Because I am the best candidate for the job.** *This is too general.*
- **Because I want/need this job badly.** *Interviewers are not concerned about your wants and personal problems. They do not care about what you want.*
- **I fulfill all requirements for the job.** *All applicants fulfill the requirements; we already talked about this one.*
- **I have no idea.** *You rather find a good reason. Otherwise we will not hire you.*

As you can see, there are **many bad answers to this question**. But what is the right way?

The right way is to talk about something **unique, the value** you can bring to the educational institution, you and only you, something that differentiates you from the other applicants for the job.

While it is tough to give sample answers suitable for you (each of us is different, and can bring different form of value to the team), I will list a couple of good answers from other applicants.

Sample answers

My job is my mission. I believe that assistant principals can significantly influence the future of their students. I approach my job very responsibly because of that. I try my best to be a great role model for all students and teachers, with my behavior and attitude. From my personal experience, not many people on leading positions can get as close to students and teachers as I can. That's why you should hire me.

I have an ability to see the good and bad in people. I am able to quickly understand how to combine the strengths of different people to achieve the best possible team result. What's more, I work very professionally, and I never let my emotions to affect my decisions. I believe it is rare, and perhaps I am a good choice for you.

5. What are your goals in five years time?

Hint: Interviewers ask this question to find out two things. First, they want to know for how long they can count with you.

Sometimes they need an assistant principal for a short time, and sometimes they prefer to hire someone who'd stay long. They may even be looking for a replacement of soon-to-retire principal, or have other goals. The pre-interview research should help you to understand their ideas, and you should adjust your answer accordingly.

Second intention is to see if you think only about your own career, **or if your goals are somehow related to the prosperity of their educational institution.** You should try and reflect this relation in your answer.

Sample answers

My goal is to be a successful assistant principal in five years. I want to be proud of the achievements of school, to which I actively contributed on a daily basis with my job. If I arrive at his point in five years time, I will be very happy in life.

My goal is to become a principal in five, or in ten years time. I believe that if I do a good job as an assistant principal, if the members of the board, as well as the students and teachers, are satisfied with my work, I'll get a chance to achieve my goal in five years time. But firstly I need to start as an assistant principal and prove my abilities.

6. Please describe the role you feel parents should play in the operation of the school.

Hint: A representative of parents will sit in a hiring committee (at least most of the time they will be present), and this is one of a few questions (sometimes the only question) they will ask you.

I say this to **underline an importance of your answer**.

The parent in a committee is typically a very active person, who **likes to be involved in the operation of a school** (that's why they are in the committee, that's why they accepted the role).

Bearing this in mind, you should always **emphasize that you believe in an important role parents play in school (and also in education of their children)**, and you plan to have them involved.

You can also list particular ways of involving them, such as having a parent board, or even the board of trustees, or regular one-on-one discussions with some parents.

If you go that far, however, remember to **stress that you look for balance**, and won't ever decide a case against one of the teachers according to the parent's opinion only, **without hearing out the teacher, and the students involved in the conflict**.

Sample answers

I believe that parents play an important role in the life of every school. Children often confide to them and express opinions which they are afraid to express in the classroom, or in a private discussion with the principal. I know you have a parent board in school, and I definitely plan

to attend their meetings, and hear them out. My doors will be always open for a parent who wants to share feedback on my work, work of one of the teachers, or the school as a whole.

Parents have a different perspective on teaching and leading the school, and they may definitely provide an interesting insight on our work, one we cannot see from our position. Therefore I plan to consult the representative of parents on important decisions, and I also hope they will provide constructive feedback on my work. I will encourage them to speak openly with me about all issues, and hope to have good cooperation with them. At the same time, however, they are not inside, and sometimes their perspective may be incorrect. Their children can lie to them, or they may not understand the situation correctly. For this reason I believe it is important to hear out everyone, including parents, teachers, children, and also other staff members, before making the final decision in a case of a conflict.

7. How did you deal with upset parent whose child complained about you?

Hint: One can hardly talk to some parents about their children—they just have their point of view, and regardless of what we say, they won't believe us.... For your interview answer, however, you should choose a situation that had a happy ending, meaning a situation **when you reconciled the conflict**.

Describe what you did in detail, in order to show the interviewers that you know what to do when parents complain.

Sample answers

This happened to me a few times, although I try to understand each student, considering their family background, intelligence and position in the class, and take action accordingly. Nevertheless, some pupils complained to their parents and they came to school to talk to me. Every time that happened I calmly listened to their opinion and just afterwards I described them a situation from my point of view. I always apologized that their child was upset. After that I tried to explain why the action I had taken was the best possible action, in a process of

educating and forming their child. Most times they understood, and the problem was solved. But it also happened that I made a mistake, and in such a case I did not hesitate to admit it.

One time a mom came, super angry, since I kept her daughter after school and she missed dancing classes, and cried at home later. At first I apologized for making her child upset. Then I described her position in the class, and said many good things about her. I explained that making her daughter to miss something she liked because of bad behavior was the right way to teach her to stick to the rules, and to respect authorities at school. I tried to stay positive, keeping the atmosphere friendly and open. Finally the mother agreed, and she eventually apologized for being angry with me.

8. How did you deal with lazy students?

Hint: People are lazy, both young and old. A good assistant principal should devise a timetable that includes activities that would motivate the students, entertain them, or engage them in some other way.

Answering the questions, you should definitely not say that it is the responsibility of teachers to motivate the students. You should be more empathic and skilled than the teachers are. You should be the one who guides them on their way.

Sample answers

I organized regular class-wide discussions with interesting people from local community. The aim of the discussions was to introduce role models to children, to people who studied well, and became successful and recognized in their lives. From my experience it is a good way to motivate the students to study.

It is not easy to motivate the students nowadays. I tried to make the lessons as interactive as possible in my last job of a teacher. I used videos, examples, intellectual games and pictures in the lessons. Children liked this way of learning, and it helped me to improve the overall concentration and motivation in the classes. I also discussed individual problems of

motivation with other teachers, and worked on each case of extreme laziness with school psychologist.

9. What experiences have you had in working with low income and “at risk” students? How do you plan to work with them?

Hint: At risk students belong to each school, and the problems they experience represent a **major challenge for staff members.**

You should remain **realistic** in your answer. Avoid saying that under your co-leadership there won't be any at risk students, or that nobody will drop out.

That's just not how it works in reality, and many factors that contribute to problems the students experience are out of your control.

Nevertheless, you should come up with **some ideas on helping them to succeed academically** and transit to adulthood, though everyone in the hiring committee knows that a success rate of these methods will always be low.

In this case, it is **the effort and attitude that counts**, not the actual result.

Sample answers

I understand that many children in this district experience family instability, poverty, and other factors that contribute to the problems they experience in school. In most cases it is not their mistake, and we should try our best to help them, to improve their chances of finishing the school, and have a meaningful life as adults.

It is important to identify these students in early grades, and I plan to consult teachers and school psychologist, trying to understand who's at risk.

Then we will proceed with each case individually, since each student is different and what works with one of them may not work with another. Emotional support, free tutoring, helping them to develop resilience, and mentorship are some ways of helping them. At least that's my experience, but as I said each case is different and we need to approach the problem individually with each student.

In my experience as a teacher, working with these students is really difficult, since many of them are emotionally hurt and won't respond positively to any effort from the teacher.

Nevertheless, as an assistant principal I plan to collaborate with school psychologist and counselor, and develop the program of identifying at risk students, and working with them, in the course of their studies.

I know that the success rate won't be high, but for me every student is important, and we should at least try to help each one.

What is more, at risk students are often hostile to their classmates, or even to teachers.

Therefore it is important to work with them, trying to improve the school environment for everyone else.

10. How did you cope with stress at school?

Hint: School is a stressful environment. To work with children can actually be sometimes nerve-racking.

However, as a good applicant for assistant principal position, one of the leaders of the institution, and a role model for the others, you should be able to cope with stress.

Try to mention situation from the past in which you **successfully coped with the pressure, or when you helped someone else to overcome their stress.**

The interviewers want to hear that stress won't affect you negatively in your job.

Sample answers

When I worked as a teacher at a grammar school, I tried to help the students to cope with stress they felt, especially before important exams. I always tried to motivate them, to encourage them in a positive way, and I eased the situation with a joke, or a short, interesting story. It worked well in most cases.

To work with children from different social groups was really stressful for me. Eventually, after many attempts, I found a way how to understand and talk to each group in their own

language, what helped to reveal blocks and stress on both sides. Once we found common topics and way to follow, we didn't feel pressure anymore.

Sometimes I feel stress in work, because I take my job very seriously. I really want to do my best, and I felt that each person walking down the school corridor is somehow important. But I believe it is difficult to notice my stress, and I never let it to get the better of me. When I felt my stress would influence the rationality of my actions, I went for a walk, or even took a day off. A bit of relaxing has always helped me to get over the stressful situation.

11. Did you supervise any school event in the past? What problems did you face? How did you handle them?

Hint: Assistant principals are often responsible for organizing and supervising various school events. Interviewers are testing if you have such experience—if you know what it takes to supervise such an event.

All in all, **you should stay positive, talk nicely about the event, and choose an example event that you supervised, and a problem that you managed to solve.** An event with a worthy purpose (e.g. charity) will be the best possible answer.

Sample Answers

I organized and supervised a yearly fundraising event at our school. It took place exactly one year ago. Children invited parents and people from local community to auction their works of art. The funds we raised were sent to the local charity that supported homeless people. As I carefully planned everything in advance, no big problems occurred. There was just a little problem with discipline of four students. I talked to them and stressed the purpose of the event, and why we were there at the first place, in a very friendly, human way. They stopped making problems and co-operated. The event was a success, we collected decent money.

I used to take twenty students on a three-day long trip every year, in the nature. I believe it is important to develop right values in young people, such as understanding and love for the

nature. As you can imagine, there were always problems with alcohol and cigarettes on the trip. However, setting strict rules, such as “alcohol found, you go home immediately” and sticking to these rules invariably, helped me to deal with the problems, and minimize them for the other years.

12. How did you motivate the students to do their homework, or to prepare for an exam?

Hint: While teacher should motivate directly, they do not have to lead, and understand how to motivate—that’s a goal of an assistant principal, since they should know more about the psychology of youngsters than the teachers do. They should be able to guide teachers on the subject of motivation.

You should come up with a specific solution for problems of low motivation, and you should stress the **practical application** in your last employment (if you do not apply for your very first job).

Sample answers

I always believed in positive stimuli. When I was teaching, we made the following deal with the students: the one who did their homework were never tested during the lesson. This worked perfectly fine, and soon all of them started to do their homework. This helped them to practice, and when we did the quarterly exam, they scored marks that were better than average.

In order to motivate students to prepare for the lessons, I always tried to connect the subject with real life experience. With each new lesson, I tried to find application in real life. I also listed jobs where the knowledge would be needed, or useful. Students did not see the lessons as useless theory, and they had better motivation to prepare, and to actually listen in the classes.

It is important to see the real cause of the problem of low motivation. I always tried to make my lessons funny and interactive. When students like the subject, the lessons, and the teacher, they have motivation to do their homework, to learn, and to do good things in the classroom. My way of motivating students has always consisted in making the lessons interesting.

13. Why do you think you are suitable to work with young people?

Hint: Generation gap is growing. It is not easy for us “old” people to build relationships with children, and to work with them effectively. School principals, as well as other people in hiring committees try to find out why you think you can win the hearts of students, and **what you consider important when working with them.**

You should stress that you try to **understand their problems, desires, and way of thinking, and to become their role model, mentor, and friend.**

Sample answers

I try to be a good listener and understand each person and their position in class. This helps me to find the best possible way to approach each student. I also try to stay humble and friendly, and students can feel it, and are more open to me.

To be honest, I still feel very young. I like sports, I listen to modern music, I like going out with friends. I am close to the youngsters since we share the same hobbies. If I get this role, I plan to actively participate in school events and in after school activities, so they feel I can be “one of them”, and not just someone who gives orders and distributes punishments.

The key to work with young people lies in understanding their problems, and their vision of life. This is what I always try to do, consulting the school counselor, and talking to their parents.

14. What actions would you take to monitor staff members on their performance?

Hint: To monitor the staff members, to encourage them and to give them advice on how they can improve their work, will be one of your most important duties.

You can say that you would **set a system of goals for each staff member**, and later monitor their progress as they try to attain them.

Alternatively you can say that you would stick to what they are doing at the moment to monitor the performance of staff members. This is a good answer especially when you find that **they have such a system in place**, while researching about the school and talking with the representatives before the start of your interview.

On the top of that, you can mention one-on-one meetings with the teachers, and that you will use the opportunity to inquire about their progress and to monitor it.

Sample answers

I would evaluate the situation in each class. Following my observations, I would set goals for every staff member, and I would try to quantify most of these goals. I would regularly monitor their progress, consult them and give them advice on how to proceed towards the achievements of the goals we set together.

Goals would be reconsidered on quarterly basis. Best teachers would be rewarded during regular staff meetings. This should motivate everyone to perform better, or at least to try their best. If nothing else, it should help us to keep our best teachers, which I consider absolutely necessary for a success of any educational institution.

As far as I know, this institution has a very good system of monitoring staff members' performance. Therefore I would likely continue to work with the system that had been set by the leaders of the school. However I would personally interview each staff member, to understand their strengths and weaknesses, and to be able to set realistic goals for everyone.

I would create a personal file for everyone, and work with each teacher individually, trying to assure the best quality of teaching in the classes. Of course I'd do all of this only if you set it as my responsibility.

15. What classroom management strategies have been most effective for you? Do you think that assistant principal should help teachers to improve their classroom management?

Hint: First and foremost, **you should accept the responsibility**. Problems with discipline and bad classroom management (which later transforms into other problems) belong to common reasons why a school needs a new leaders—principal or assistant principal—they need someone who will finally sort things out.

What is more, **new hires and teachers without experience will hardly know what to do** once they enter a classroom and find children running around and playing with their smart phones.

In my experience, to some great classroom management strategies belong: setting clear rules and expectations—**in written format**, making **engagement of students the first priority** and choose teaching methods accordingly, offering praise to students who deserve it (**including the average students**, measuring the level of improvement they made rather than the actual results they achieved), giving **tangible rewards at the end of the lesson (or week)** to students who were active and respected the rules, etc.
Feel free to add your own ideas to the mix.

Sample answers

I definitely plan to help the teachers with their classroom management, and will stress this in the one-on-one meetings, which I plan to have with the teacher. They should feel my support. In my experience, setting clear rules (including the punishments for not obeying them) and making sure that every student understands the rules, and leading the lessons for students—that means choosing teaching methods that lead in high engagement in the classroom, are the best possible strategies for classroom management.
But obviously each class is different, and I'd be eager to hear more from the senior teachers and other staff members, to understand the challenges they face while teaching.

It is difficult to pick one strategy, or even a few of them, since not every teacher is able to apply every strategy, and what works in one classroom may not work in another one.

Therefore I always prefer to have individual discussions with the teachers, to understand how they see the classroom, what problems they experience, and also what they are capable of.

Only then can you advise them the right course of action, which may not even work on the first try.

Obviously it is important to have some general rules, rules that apply to every classroom, and students should be aware of them. But in terms of choosing the teaching methods, the system of rewards and punishments, the engagement of students and parents, and other things, one has to adjust his choices to the particular class, lesson, and even the teacher.

16. What do you consider most important when we speak about maintaining high staff morale?

Hint: You should take partial responsibility for keeping teachers motivated and professional, though how they feel and act in job doesn't depend on you only, and other people should motivate them as well. In my experience, **one-on-one meetings work the best**. You can have a one-on-one once a week with all teachers from your department (if you won't respond for too many).

Just a short ten-twenty minute meeting, ensuring that they know what they are doing, asking whether they need help with anything, asking about their concerns.

Besides one-on-one meetings, I'd go with keeping a **positive atmosphere in the staffroom, following a mutual vision**, and **addressing conflicts promptly**. All of it will help to maintain high staff morale.

Sample answers

The most important thing is to always know how the people feel, understand their concerns and worries, hear them out, and offer words of encouragement and praise when they deserve them, or need them.

Everyone should feel important, and a part of something bigger. I plan to have one-on-one meetings with teachers from the department I will respond for, and do all I can in the meetings to lift their spirits and help them stay motivated and effective.

First and foremost, they should understand how the goals we have at school relate to their personal goals and ambitions.

Everyone should know exactly what their role is, and feel that we are here to help them on their way.

It is important to encourage people, to praise them for their good work, and to identify problems as soon as they occur, and address them promptly.

17. What do you consider the main challenges assistant principals face in their jobs?

Hint: We live in challenging times. Youngsters are not interested in traditional subjects and the boom of social media and smart phones brought a lot of new challenges to schools.

You should be able to list these challenges and outline a strategy to address them.

Average candidate sees only the problem, while the exceptional one have a solution on their mind.

Sample answers

I personally consider high dropout rate and low academic achievements, as well as little interest in study, especially in traditional subjects, as the main challenges we face at this moment in education. I believe that making the lessons more entertaining, using innovative and interactive teaching methods, while maintaining strict rules regarding the use of mobile phones, is the way to go.

Worsening level of communication and social skills of young generation, as well new forms of addictions, such as social media addiction or smart phone addiction, are the new challenges we face. I believe that we need to let the children to talk more in the lessons. And we should

use exercises that develop creativity and courage. And we should have strict rules regarding smart phones. This is my idea on how we should try to deal with the challenges.

18. How would you win the hearts of the students?

Hint: If students like the vice-principal, they will follow the guidelines, take part in the events, and simply do good things, instead of creating problems. At least most of them will follow. You should have an idea about creating good relationships with students, and building respect and trust.

You can also say that assistant principal should represent an authority at school. Perhaps they shouldn't try to win the heart of anyone. Your choice depends on your philosophy and attitude to education administration.

Sample answers

Teachers and administrators are at school for students, first and foremost. I always try to think about everything we change, or organize, from a point of view of the students. Is it good for them? Will they like it? Will it help them in their career? Is it what they are looking for? I always ask myself these questions. I also make a lot of surveys, to understand what they want, and what they think about innovations we applied in classes, or want to apply. I believe this is the right way to win their hearts—one simply has to give them a chance to speak, and then listen to them.

My personal philosophy is that assistant principal should keep some distance from both students and teachers. It does not mean that they should have bad, or cold relationship—not at all. It means to be an authority, someone who can objectively help them to deal with their problems. They should see that people respect the AP, that they have some power to make decisions, and are not affected by their emotions at work. All in all, I try to help the students as much as I can, but I never try to win their hearts. That is not my goal in work, and it never will be.

19. If there was a conflict between a student and a teacher, on which side would you stand?

Hint: If you decided about a conflict without careful investigation, **you could lose the trust of the students—not just one, but all of them.** And that would jeopardize your job as a vice-principal.

Therefore you should always approach conflicts **carefully, and address them individually.** Listen to both conflict parties before suggesting an action, or taking one.

People in the interviews have a tendency to say that they would stand on the side of a teacher or a school principal (just because these people interview them for the job).

This is not a good answer, however, since teachers are only humans, and they make mistakes. You should be transparent, have some conflict solving standards, and **try to always find the truth.** At least that's what they want to hear in your interview answer....

Sample answers

I really believe that assistant principals should be involved in solving conflicts, since they can look at them without emotions of involved parties. I would stand on the side of the truth in every conflict, letting both parties to tell me what happened, personally investigating the situation and deciding according to my conscious. Most important thing is to reconcile the conflict parties, so the relationship of teacher and student can continue, and both of them feel comfortable in the classroom, once the waters settled.

I would approach each conflict individually. It is hard to say on which side I would stand. Obviously, teacher is more reliable than student. But at the same time, teachers are only human beings—they can make mistakes, just like everyone else. Therefore I would approach every conflict cautiously, investigate what happened, and carefully consider the action we should take.

20. How would you lead an interview for a position of a teacher, with a candidate without experience? What questions would you ask them?

Hint: Participating in interviews with candidates for teaching jobs will be one of your duties. You may even lead the interviews, the first round. The quality of teachers (and whether you can motivate/lead them to try their very best in every lesson) will **play a pivotal role in the experience the students will have**—which is the most important thing.

Show the hiring committee that you are up for the challenge. You can narrate a situation from the past, when you recruited a new teacher, or belonged to an interviewing panel and came up with some great questions.

One way or another, I would advise you to **put emphasis on personal traits of the job candidates**. Whether they are a good person, whether they see the meaningful purpose in their job, whether they have what it takes to stand in front of a classroom and lead engaging and interesting lessons, whether they can accept responsibility, etc.

You can say that you will **combine personal and situational questions**, or anything else that works, according to your existing experience, to learn more about their personality and skills. Do not hesitate to say that you will always invite some staff members to participate in the interviews.

Sample answers

I took part in many interviews in my last job. First of all, I always tried to understand the personality of the job candidate, and their motivation. Why did they apply for a job with our school? What did they want to accomplish as teachers? What motivates them to try hard every day?

Such questions helped me to get a good grasp of their personality and communication skills. Then I'd progress to situational questions, asking them how they'd address certain situations in a classroom, such as conflicts with students, problems with discipline in the class, lack of motivation, chicane, and other.

This combination of questions helps, in my experience, to make a good picture of the job candidate.

But I will also always consider the options we have, and the situation on the employment market. If we need a new teacher and there is little interest from the side of the job seekers, I may focus more on presenting our school in a best possible light, and making a great impression on the job candidate, so they become interested in working for us.

First of all, I will always invite one or two staff members to participate in the interviews, typically a senior teacher and a counselor. I will discuss the interview template with them and give them a chance to add questions. Hiring a new teacher is an important decision, and I won't risk doing it on my own.

I will ask mostly personal and behavioral questions, trying to understand more about their motivation, goals, expectations, and attitude to various situations that happen in a classroom. In my opinion, an equally important thing is to make a good impression on them, and explain what we expect from them in a job, and what challenges they will face while teaching at our school. Both parties should be able to make a right decision at the end of the interviews.

21. What do you think are the main duties of an assistant principal in our institution?

Hint: It may seem that you should list **the duties and responsibilities from the job description**. If you decide to take this path, your answer will be acceptable, but you won't stand out from the other applicants.

An excellent applicant **should be creative and have proactive approach to their job**. Therefore you should talk not only about the job description, but also about the **mission you have as an assistant principal**. **You should know your goals**.

And if a school principal interviews you, do not forget to mention the support of their actions and duties as one of the main roles of the AP.

Sample answers

I believe that the true role of assistant principal consists in making the school more transparent, motivating and engaging for both students and teachers. Everything the AP does should lead towards this goal.

Good assistant principal spends a lot of time in administrative tasks, setting the school calendar for the year, determining the best time for examination periods and other major school events. It's usually the assistant principal's job to set the school timetable—determining how many classes are designated for each subject and grade level, and deciding what time of day each class will run. This also involves assigning room locations for each class. Assistant principals set exam schedules and oversee curriculum delivery in consultation with department heads. They convene department-head meetings as well as other staff committees. They also may be responsible for organizing special events including assemblies, sports and field trips. They also care about student discipline, prepare the duty roster when teachers are expected to supervise hallways or the cafeteria. They assist in determining staff vacancies and in the hiring of new teachers. They prepare mentoring programs between veteran teachers and new hires. They arrange professional development opportunities for the teaching staff and approve teachers' requests to attend conferences. They are responsible for teacher absences, engaging supply teachers or internal coverage of classes when necessary. They evaluate teacher performance and work with the principal to help marginal teachers to improve. On the top of that all, I believe a good assistant principal should be at hand for the school principal, helping with anything the actual situation requires.

22. How do you build a positive school culture or climate? Give examples of how you would do that here.

Hint: The difficulty of this question depends on your future place of work. If the school faces a lot of problems, if teachers leave soon after starting their jobs, and if everyone struggles with discipline and students fight each other, **creating a positive climate is a mammoth task.**

On the other hand, if everything works well, if people respect each other and everyone enjoys going to school, all you have to do is **keep the current practices at place**, and perhaps improve some minor details about the way the school is operated and managed.

One way or another, certain things will always improve the situation. To such things belong:

- An environment of open communication—where anyone can talk to anyone, without being afraid of a punishment, or other action taken against them, just for expressing their opinion.
- Showing respect to all parties at school, recognizing both teachers and students for their achievements.
- Being receptive to feedback, and discuss important decision with all stakeholders, including teachers and students (their representatives).
- Organizing team building events to strengthen the team spirit in the staffroom.
- Offering further education options and courses to your staff members, expenses covered by the school.
- Having a clear vision and goals, and ensuring that every staff member understands the role they play in achieving these goals.

Use any of them for your answer, but do not forget to do your homework to understand the current state of affairs at school, and whether any changes are necessary.

23. Would you allow students to give their opinion before you make an important decision that will have an impact on their routine in the classroom?

Hint: This is another tricky question. On one side, assistant principal should understand that **everything we do at school, we do it for the students.**

But on the other hand, students do not always understand what is good for them, not to say for the school as an organization.... Therefore the best way to answer this question is to say you

would collect regular feedback from students, consider it, but at the end you'd decide on your own.

Sample answers

I would try to improve many things and organize a lot of events, so it is not realistic to involve the students in every decision. However, I would like to conduct regular surveys in the classes, to measure their satisfaction with the teachers, with the environment, and with the changes. The survey would be anonymous, and I would give them an opportunity to come up with their own suggestions.

I would personally review the results, and discuss them with the board, and our decisions would take the opinion of the students into account. At the end of the day, however, we have to decide, and we carry the responsibility for the results.

My idea is to establish a student board (*check if it does not already exist at the school, for this practice is common in many countries*). Pupils from each grade should elect their representatives for the board. I would consult the board before making any important decision that impacts the students.

We can be sometimes blinded by our ignorance, and it is vital to hear the opinion of the students before making a final decision in any matter that impacts their life at school.

24. If you were reported about a sexual or child abuse case under your supervision, how would you handle it?

Hint: You should stress it is unlikely to happen, since you select and monitor staff members carefully. But at the same time, you **need to have a plan**, even for such an extreme situation.

It makes no sense to pretend anything. Such things happen at schools, at every school, even the one with best reputation. A good assistant principal should not only take care of reporting to police, and suspending the delinquent, but they should also help the affected pupil to get back on track.

Sample answers

I will always conduct personality tests with each job applicant, to ensure we will not hire a teacher with inclinations to sexual behavior in classes. Precaution is very important in this case, and I am very careful when selecting new staff members. Also I will conduct anonymous surveys among children to find out traces of sexual behavior, to be able to take necessary action, before something bad happens. However, if it happened; I would call the police and investigate the situation with them. It goes about a crime and any form of abuse should not be tolerated.

First of all, I would take all possible steps to avoid it happening. I would make observation during lessons to spot indications of inappropriate behavior, as well as warn about it during weekly staff meetings. I register serious problems with sexual abuse all across the United States, so I am well aware of the danger we face here. If it happened and the guilt was proved, I would solve the situation with police and suspend the guilty person immediately. But I would not stop there. I would appoint school psychologist and other experts to help the pupil to get over the terrible experience.

25. You probably know something about our school. What can you improve about it?

Hint: If you followed the advice from this eBook (the part about “doing your homework”), you’d have some **ideas of improvements to present in your interview**.

But be careful with your tone of voice and selection of words, since what you say can touch someone in the interviewing panel, which could ruin your chances of getting hired. At the end of the day someone is always responsible, for both bad and good things. That person may sit in the hiring committee...

Sample answers

I spent a lot of time researching about your school. I talked to teachers, met students, and consulted other people from local community. From what I heard and noticed, your institution is well organized, and it runs smoothly. You have balanced program of activities for students. However, I have some ideas for further improvement, as there is always a chance to make things better. It goes about the following ideas: (Your ideas)

This school has a good reputation, and I can see that the principal, as well as other staff members, are doing a good job. But from what I can see, it also faces a lot of problems: high dropout rate in higher grades, little or no interest in after school activities, and fighting between different social groups of students. These problems occur at many schools in the district, so it is definitely a big challenge to do something about them. I prepared a complex plan to address these problems, and if you want I can introduce the plan briefly right now.

26. Can you give us an example of how you have successfully managed a difficult situation at school?

Hint: You will face a lot of pressure in your new job. Expectations will be high, and you will respond for a lot of things. You will have to make difficult decisions, and **offer solutions when others will struggle to say anything.**

People in the hiring committee try to understand whether you can do that, and **demonstrate your leadership when it matters the most.**

Regardless of your past experience (or lack of it), you should show them that you are not afraid to make a move, and lead someone out of trouble.

Some good situations to talk about are:

- Problems of discipline on a major scale (and how you addressed them).
- Lack of quality teachers (and how you managed to bring new faces on board).
- Little interest of applicants for the study programs (and what you did to increase the number of applications).
- Internal problems of staff members, conflicts of teachers.
- Unfavorable PR, and how you helped to turn it around.

•

Sample answers

I taught in a multicultural school. Children were fighting each other, and some students suffered chicane, especially the outsiders who did not belong to any particular group or gang. It was a difficult situation, but I decided to try to improve the atmosphere, at least in my classes. I did a few things to make it happen.

First of all, I did many group exercises, and I always let children of different races and religious beliefs to work together.

I also screened movies, such as *Race: The Power of an Illusion*, *American History X*, or *Skin Deep*, to bring attention to the topic with a medium that is interesting for young people, and they pay attention to the message. Discussion always followed the screening of the movie. And I also created strong rules of discipline which everyone had to follow.

Gradually the situation in the classroom improved.

In my last job of an assistant principal, we faced a decreasing number of applications.

Children just weren't interested in our technical study programs. After conducting a survey with perspective applicants, I understood that the programs were outdated, at least their names and the way we presented them to the public.

So we redesigned the entire website, and crafted better description of each study program. We made new promotional materials, mostly in a form of online videos.

We also changed names of some subjects, and added two new subjects to the curriculum.

When this was done, we started a massive promotional campaign that was centered on showing how students enjoyed their time at school, and how they benefited from their graduation—the jobs they got, and Universities they attended later.

This strategy proved successful, and we recorded a fifty percent increase of the number of applications next year.

27. Please describe a situation in which you were a manager, a leader and a boss.

Hint: It feels great to lead, it can be demanding to manage, and it sometimes pain to boss people who work under you. Yet as a great assistant principal **you'll have to juggle all three attitudes to people, all three roles.**

Try to show the hiring committee that you can **get over your default mode of conduct**, that though you prefer to lead (and ideally **by an example**), you can also become a strict and organized manager, and in cases when nothing else works, you do not mind forcing your authority—being a boss.

You do not have to talk only about situations from school environment. You can also narrate **how you've been a leader in your personal life**, how you've managed your professional career, or perhaps how you had to boss your children (for their own good).

The most important thing is to show the interviewers that you understand the differences, and though you prefer to be a leader, you can also become a boss and a manager—whenever the situation requires such a position.

Sample answers

I basically had to alternate between all these roles in my last teaching job. We had several excellent students. For them, all I had to do was to give general directions, to show that I really care for their well-being and prepare something special for the lessons. Afterwards they did the work on their own, and I let them to use their creativity.

But we didn't have only excellent students. Some other progressed at a slower pace and demanded different approach in the lessons. That's where I put my management skills into practice, ensuring that each group of students (in terms of their predispositions to study and their intelligence) progressed at the right pace, and that we could coexist together as a class.

And just like in almost any other classroom, we had several children that simply wouldn't follow the rules. They made it more difficult for everyone, including myself. In such situations I didn't hesitate to become a strict boss, to give clear orders, or to take disciplinary measures against them.

In my opinion, if one wants to become an excellent teacher or administrator, they had to be able to juggle all these positions—leader, manager, and also one of the boss.

As a mother of three, running a household, I had to be an excellent manager during the last twelve years. Each of my three children had a different daily schedule, I had to drive them to places and care for a lot of other stuff. Without being an excellent manager of my time and our household, I'd be crazy and end up without any time for myself.

I also had to boss them sometimes, in order to ensure that we can coexist in the house, that they help each other progress, and do not cross the lines we drew.

But more than anything else I tried to be a leader, motivating them, recognizing their achievements, and helping them to utilize their strengths, and to enjoy their life.

Well, I could narrate also some examples from my professional life, but the message I wanted to convey is the following one: I understand the importance of all three roles in the work of an assistant principal, and believe that I can effectively handle them.

28. Tell us what you learned from your most influential administrators. Try to identify at least one positive and one negative characteristic.

Hint: First of all, try to focus on the positives. There is something to learn from every person we meet in life (even the least competent one), and an emphatic teacher/administrator learns something in every encounter.

You can either simply list their core characteristics which you admired (decisiveness, leadership, empathy, organization, responsibility, consistency, problem solving ability, etc), or you can describe a particular way in which they addressed a particular situation in school—a way that you found effective, and would like to follow in your own practice as a vice principal.

Once you talk about the negative characteristics, always remember the following rule: **Focus on the characteristic (practice, conduct), and not on the person of the administrator.** As a professional you should be aware that each of us has some weaknesses, and we should not judge or even condemn anyone because of that.

Sample answers

I have learned quite a lot from each administrator I worked with. They were all different, had different leadership styles, and I honestly believe that you can learn something from every person. What sticks with me the most probably is how my last administrator approached individual meetings with teachers. They were very supportive, listened carefully to all our concerns, and you had the feeling that they really tried their best for each teacher. It was an excellent example and I hope to follow similar behavior as an administrator.

One negative thing maybe, which I noticed with another administrator I worked under, was that they were very authoritarian. They weren't receptive to the feedback from either the teachers, or from their assistants. Do not take me wrong though. They knew their job, had an excellent system in work, and I learned a lot from them as well. But I think that if they were more receptive to feedback, they would be even better in their job.

My last administrator was an excellent communicator and problem solver. They were able to keep a calm head and professional distance even in the most trying circumstances. I must say it was very inspiring, and I learned a lot even from the way they talked to me, or led meetings in the staff-room.

On the other hand, they had a tendency to rely primarily on their own powers, trying to take care of everything in the office. This often resulted in a heavy workload, and I sometimes had a feeling that they would be more effective in work, if they entrusted their assistants, or even teachers, with certain tasks.

29. As an assistant school principal, how visible do you need to be and where would we find you?

Hint: Schools do not want to hire assistant principals who'd spend entire days locked in their offices. Of course, there is administrative work to be done, and you'll have many meetings in your office (or in other rooms), but you should still try to convince us that you **want to play an integral part in the school community, in the daily life of school.**

Talk about participating in the events, or about such a basic (yet essential) thing as walking in the halls. You can also mention talks to random students, sitting in a school cafeteria, or just visiting classes (for inspections or even for other reason).

The interviewers should get the feeling that you **want to always be there, for the students, for the teachers,** and basically for anyone who needs your help or advice.

Sample answers

I think that we need to be visible. Both students and teachers should feel our presence—in good means. I think that you should find me not only in the office, but also walking in the hall, talking to people, in the staff-room, or even in the school cafeteria.

I would like to keep my eyes and ears open. It is always easier to get new ideas and identify areas for improvement when once isn't confined to their office. When you walk down the halls, talk to staff members or even listen to the conversations of students, you will learn a lot of things. What is more, students will see that you are there, that they can easily approach you and talk to you—about whatever they want.

Having said that, I realize that there is also a lot of paperwork, and we have to organize our day carefully. We should simply find the right balance between the time spent in the office and outside of it.

One thing is to be visible, another approachable. And taking initiative is yet something different. That's the one I like the most, to be honest. To ask random students how they are doing, to talk to any staff member I meet in the hall.

Honestly, I believe that from the position of an administrator, we should take the initiative. We should participate in all kinds of meetings and events, but not as mere observers, enjoying one of the best places at the table. We should talk to people and keep our eyes open. That's what I plan to do. If I get this job, of course...

30. How would you encourage your teachers to take on leadership roles?

Hint: This is a tricky question, in my opinion. Not every teacher is a good leader. Sometimes it is better to not encourage someone to become one—it would cause more harm than good.

However, you can describe a few strategies in your interview answer, such as giving them more responsibility (of course within the rules and regulations), trusting them (in their decisions, in the way they lead the lessons), praising and appreciating them anytime there's an opportunity do do so, etc.

Sample answers

I think that we should encourage people to make decisions. We should also leave them at least certain freedom in the classes, in terms of teaching methods and other things. We should not set a template which every teacher should follow. That would kill their leadership, and perhaps also their spirit.

At the end of the day, however, not everyone is a natural leader. It is important to ensure the teachers that they can always seek guidance from me, or from other administrators/specialists working at school. We should simply work as a team and utilize the strengths of each one of us to the benefit of the students.

In my opinion the most important thing is to show the people that we trust them. But this is not only about words—it is also about the freedom we give them. We should not boss them or supervise them all the time. They should feel that we trust them with teaching methods, with the way they lead the classes.

For me it is also very important to show my appreciation to each teacher, ideally in weekly meetings, or even better, when we have a one on one together. In my opinion, people will do a better job and take on leadership roles in the classes when they feel our trust.

31. If you were working with a probationary teacher who was experiencing many challenges with effective classroom management, what would you do?

Hint: First of all, ensure the hiring committee that helping new teachers belongs to your responsibilities—that you consider it as one.

Secondly, you can suggest several strategies of addressing the issue. One is asking them to **participate in the classes led by veteran teachers** (or any teachers who don't struggle with effective classroom management).

Another one is simply participating in the lessons (as a quiet observer), trying to understand what **exactly causes the problem**, and what they need to change in order to eliminate it. They may lack the authority, they may struggle with student engagement, or perhaps they are just unlucky to teach in a class where every single teacher struggles with discipline (when teaching the particular subject).

At the end of the day, **your attitude is the most important thing for the interviewers**. They should feel that you'd try your best to help the probationary teacher. Strategies and techniques you'd use to do that are of secondary importance, as well as the results you'd achieve.

It may also happen that the teacher is **simply a bad match** for the school/class (or even for the teaching profession), and regardless of your efforts they won't learn to manage the classroom effectively. This just belongs to our work and shouldn't be considered as a failure of the administrators. People sometimes choose wrong professions. Teachers and education admins are no exception.

Sample answers

I would work closely with them, trying to identify the reason why they struggle with discipline. I would inspect the lessons. I would also interview some students from the class (to hear their opinion about the teacher and their teaching methods).

I would also talk to other teachers, especially those who succeeded with managing the same classroom. Trying to understand what could go wrong, I'd do my best to help the teacher get over initial difficulties.

This is a tough call to make. I know that you struggle with job applicants in this district, and the diverse classrooms are tough to manage—even for veteran teachers.

I believe it is important to work on an integration of a new teacher, and we should do this while cooperating with other staff members. We should encourage them and share with them the classroom management strategies that work for other teachers.

However, it's not easy to change the formulas of thinking and behavior of an adult. It may happen that our efforts end in vain, and the teacher simply won't be able to teach effectively at the given school. Maybe they are just a bad match for the job. In such a case probably the best thing to do is to not prolong their contract at the end of the probation period.

32. Describe your experience in working with special education programs.

Hint: Whether we like it or not, the number of children with special needs is growing each year. Gone are the days when special education was something extraordinary. A necessity today, we have to integrate these programs into the life of almost every educational institution.

If you can, talk about **your experience from a position of a teacher**. Individual plans, integrating children with special needs into regular classes (the benefits of this approach), etc. And though it is sometimes challenging to work with the children, you should try to remain optimistic in your words.

Ensure the interviewers that you **know what it takes to work with special needs children**, and believe that the experience will help you while devising and managing special education programs as an administrator.

Sample answers

I had a chance to work as a teacher assistant for one year. During this time I worked with more than ten children with special needs. This includes Down syndrome, processing disorders, visually impaired children, and ADHD.

I must say that the work was challenging, and every day was a learning experience. Nevertheless, I enjoyed the process. I believe that I made it easier for students to keep the pace with the rest of the class, and to get the most of the lessons.

And more than anything else, I believe that this experience helped me to understand how to work effectively with the children, and that I will be able to transform my knowledge into devising new special ed programs, or amending the existing ones—if it will be my responsibility.

I have worked a lot with them in my last job. We had many children with special needs, and experimented with both integration and special classes. It was a big school and so we had this luxury of being able to try various things, while trying to find the best model for both special and regular education students.

I have done some research about your school. I know that you also have here a lot of children with special needs. I believe that my experience from the last job can help us here a lot, to devise the most effective strategies of special education, considering the options you have at your school.

33. How would you lead an IEP meeting?

Hint: Working as an assistant principal, you may either participate in, or lead the IEP meetings (regular annual meetings (or semi-annual, depends on the country/city where you will work) with parents of children with special needs; other teachers/counselors from school will also take part in them).

Parents do often become emotional during these meetings (which is completely understandable). What is more, teachers and counselors **can get into an argument**, either with the parents or with each other.

You likely won't have sufficient knowledge to assess the progress of a child in question, or to suggest the next steps, the new educational plan for them. It isn't your role in the meetings after all.

What you are supposed to do, however, is to **somehow preside the meeting**, ensure that people follow the guidelines, that emotions won't win over rational thinking—because in such a case it would be difficult to achieve the best possible result for the child with special needs.

Ensure the interviewers that you understand your role in the IEP meetings, that you consider them important, and will lead them in a manner most beneficial for the children.

Sample answers

I have an experience of participating in these meetings as a teacher. I understand how difficult they can be for the parents, and also for the teachers. However, they form an integral part in the process of individual (special) education, and we can't just neglect them, or approach them as any other meeting.

More than anything else, I would try to lead them with a cool head. Not having any prejudice, calmly listening to each party, I would try to ensure that everyone has a chance to express their thoughts, and that the meeting doesn't get emotional.

Then there are certain legal obligations in terms of the outcome of the IEP meeting—the individual education plan for a child. I will ensure that we eventually reach this outcome.

To be honest, I have no experience with these meetings. I can just imagine how difficult they must be for the parents, but also for the special ed teachers. They often form a special bond with the children they work with.

Before doing anything else, I would consult the counselors and special ed teachers, to understand better the most common challenges these meetings propose, and also the way they perceive them as specialists.

For sure I do not want to intervene much, as far as the evaluation of the progress and planning for the next year goes. I believe that my role consists in organizing the meetings, inviting everyone, and ensuring that we follow all the legal procedures, and that everyone in the room gets the chance to speak and to express their thoughts.

As I said, I still hope to learn more about the most effective way of leading these meetings.

34. Assume you are offered and accept the position of Assistant Principal, and now it is the night before the opening of school. What is keeping you awake?

Hint: Staying awake can be interpreted in many ways. **It can be anxiety, but also excitement.** It can be **worries, but also the feeling of responsibility** that doesn't let you escape into the country of dreams.

Try to **focus on positive emotions**, rather than negative ones. For example, you can say that you are rehearsing the speech you will make in the morning (if there is any). Or that you can't fall asleep from sheer excitement, from all the new and exciting things that await you in your new job.

Actually this question is a **good opportunity to show the hiring committee that you care**, that you really want to do your very best from the first day of the year—and therefore may struggle to fall asleep. Try to make the most of this opportunity.

Sample answers

I think I can define it by one word: excitement. New year, new school, new people. All the great things we can achieve together for the students, all challenges we will try to tackle together. I still feel quite young and love to start from scratch. My excitement keeps me awake.

I presume I would have a lot of thoughts. How to make the best possible impression on both students and new colleagues, what to say during the opening speech, and so on. I take my job seriously, and therefore I would struggle to fall asleep before the school opening. At the same time, however, I trust in my experience and values, and know that the best thing to do is to simply be myself ... and fall sleep, so I am not tired on the next day. Easy to say, hard to do though.

35. Please give an example of an experience when you documented a teacher who was not performing up to expectations. Describe the steps that you followed in such a case.

Hint: Once again, it is more **about your attitude and your thought process** in a given situation, than about the actual situation you narrate to the interviewers.

If you weren't in a position to monitor and assess performance of other teachers (this is your first application for any job in education administration), you can simply say what you would do in a given situation.

First step should always **consist in trying to help the teacher**. You'd try to consult them, identify the areas of improvement, and give them advice on how to improve. An in-detail analysis of the situation is also important, because **it is not always a teacher we can blame** for an under-performing class/student.

Second step depends strongly on the results of the first step, and can change from one case to another. Sometimes you'd change their classes (if possible), sometimes you may **assign an assistant to the class**, and at times you may have to dismiss the teacher in question (or suggest it to your superior).

Anyway, you should ensure the hiring committee that you will always try to find the best possible solution for the school, and for the students.

Sample answers

I remember one teacher from my last place. She moved in from another district, and her teaching methods just didn't work with our students. I took part in the lessons, I talked to the students, and also to some staff members, trying to understand the situation better. I also had several short interviews with her, without any criticism from my side. I simply tried to understand.

Eventually I came up with a set of actions, some related to her teaching methods, plus some disciplinary measures. Before interpreting them to her I ensured about a good atmosphere in the meeting and I explained everything very politely. She was older than me, and I tried not to

touch her personally. It was a question of choosing right words, and not making it look like her mistake.

Eventually she agreed, applied the measures, and after a short time she started to perform up to our expectations.

This is my first application for any job in education administration. So far I haven't been in a position to assess or monitor the performance of other teachers—they were my colleagues, and I focused on my job, and not on their work, unless they asked me for an advice.

However, I understand it is an important part of a work of administrators—to monitor the performance of various staff members. We should take action anytime they aren't performing up to expectations. At the end of the day we should always take the best action for the students and for the reputation of the school—these two are closely interlinked.

So, I would always try to find the reason why they under-performed, and then I would try to address it. The exact course of action may change from one situation to another. In extreme cases (when nothing else works) we may have to terminate their contract. I would not mind doing that, if other actions we took failed.

36. How will you measure your success after the first year in this job?

Hint: This is a tricky question for several reasons. First of all, **it's not easy to see any major improvements in the way the school functions (or at least the administration of it) after your first year as an assistant principal.**

Lot of paperwork and lobbying is often required to move forward with any major changes you'd propose.

Even if you get a green light eventually, they'd likely implement the changes only from the next school year (or even later), so you'd have to wait a bit longer to see whether they succeed or fail.

On the other hand, **each good employee has some goals**, and tries to accomplish something in their job. You can't just say that one year is a very short time to measure a success of any school administrator.

Perhaps the best thing you can say is that you plan to set goals for yourself (they can relate to the students, teachers, effectiveness of processes, anything), **after talking to existing administrators and understanding the challenges they face at school** (and a role a new AP should play in addressing these challenges).

Each good goal can be quantified, and once this is done you will easily monitor your progress, and at the end of the first year tell whether or not you achieved the desired results.

You can also opt for a different approach, saying that you simply plan to try your best each day, working on the goals you set for yourself, and let the others (principal, superintendent) to measure your success at the end of the year.

Sample answers

I definitely want to set some realistic goals once I get this job. But these can't be set realistically until I have a long discussion with other administrators, until I understand the ins and outs of this school. Once this happens we should be able to devise some goals, perhaps goals we should work on as a team. We should be able to identify my position in the team, and how I can contribute to achieving these goals.

Then we should do our best to quantify them (though it is not always possible). At the end of the year we will simply compare the goals with the actual results we achieved.

To be honest, I prefer to let the others to consider whether I am successful in my job. Almost all great things we can achieve in education represent a team effort. We should set goals as a team, and we should also work on achieving them as a team. And the big changes cannot be implemented (and their results interpreted) in such a short term as one school year.

I want to try my best in work, every day, but I also do not want to be too hard on myself. I will try to do what I can within my capabilities, and let the leaders of the school and district decide whether I succeeded once the end of the year approaches.

37. Have you ever thought of becoming a school principal?

Hint: One of the trickiest questions you can get, especially if a principal is leading the interview with you. Just imagine then situation—a person who works as a school principal asks if you ever thought about taking their position over.

What to do in this case?

First of all, **you should analyze the situation**. Is the principal old? In such a case, they may look for someone to train and educate, for someone who can actually replace them once they decide to retire. In this case it's absolutely right, and even advisable, to **talk about your intentions to become a school principal one day**. Such a career path is not uncommon.

If a current principal is young, however, the question becomes difficult. **You can not see into their head**, you can not know their plans and goals.

The principal may plan to leave the school, but the opposite can also be true. Maybe they like their job and want to hire (or recommend) someone who isn't interested in promotion, **to protect their own position**.

It's tricky, indeed. I suggest you to choose **a neutral answer**, to take a swim without getting wet.

Sample answers

Role of a principal differs to a role of an assistant principal. Principal is more a decision maker and a school representative in terms of PR, the leader. I honestly do not know if I am ready to take such a responsibility. My goal for the moment is to work closely with students, and learn more about the way the school operates, in all fronts. Therefore I prefer the role of an assistant principal. I did not think about becoming a principal, but I do not exclude this option for the future.

I know that a role of an assistant principal prepares one for a role of a principal. However, I do not think that far at the moment. I want to focus on my job, and see what happens in the

future. If there is an option to become a principal, if my results testify to my ability, I may consider applying for the opening.

38. What are your salary expectations?

Hint: Good candidates **see the job of AP as their personal mission**. They would stress that **salary is not a decisive factor for them**.

However, when it comes to numbers, and you have to say something, you should pick median salary for AP in your country. You should find it online, for example on indeed.com website. After all, we should not forget that most schools are public institutions. They use salary tables and **there is no place for negotiations in an interview**.

Sample answers

Salary is not the decisive factor for me. I would be very happy with the average salary for assistant principal in this area, what is \$60,000, based on the information I found on salary.com.

I want to do this job for other reasons, not for a good salary. However, I did a little research and according to information on the website indeed.com, the average salary for vice principal at elementary school is \$62,000. However, I am ready to accept the salary according to the tables you use here.

39. Is there anything else we did not cover that you would like us to know about you as we consider you as a candidate for the position of an assistant principal?

Hint: In my experience from the interviews, it makes no sense to brag about your skills and experience at this point. **They have already made their decision, consciously or**

subconsciously. Each member of the hiring committee knows whether they will vouch for you or not, once you leave the room and they discuss the interview together.

But there are a few things you can do at this point, trying to **make a final push towards a coveted job contract:**

1. Emphasize once again your motivation to have the job, and the value you plan to bring to school.
2. If you have particular plan in your mind (regarding things you want to change and improve) and there wasn't time (or a right question) to discuss your plans, you can briefly introduce them at this point.
3. Thank the people for their time, praise them for a good job they do in the school district (or in the interview), and wish them best of luck. Simply make the ending a nice one.

Sample answers

I think that you have covered all important areas with your questions, and I hope that I answered them well. The one thing I want to stress is my motivation to have this particular position. I know the ins and outs of this school, the problems and challenges you face, and I believe I have the capacity to help address them, and make this school a better place for everyone, cooperating with all of you in the process. I am strongly motivated to make that happen, and hope I will get a chance to prove my abilities.

I think that we have discussed everything important. I want to thank you for your professionalism, and I hope you will make the best possible decision for the school, and for the students. Thank you for your time and for considering me for the position of a vice-principal.

40. Do you have any questions?

Hint: Whether you should ask a question at the end of the interview depends on how the meeting went up to that point.

If there wasn't any time for real discussion in an interview, you should definitely ask them something at the end.

But if you talked a lot and asked questions on the go, if **various members of the interviewing panel had a chance to express themselves, to answer your questions**, it is all right to ask nothing at the end.

If you decide to ask something, however, I suggest to **not addressing a particular person in the hiring committee**. Ask a question and let the people decide who will answer it. Do not make them feeling uncomfortable.

When you can't come up with anything better, you can always ask about the next steps of the recruitment process.

Sample answers

I think we have covered everything during the interview. Can you please tell me what the next steps of the recruitment process are?

Two years ago you were awarded the title of the best elementary school in the district. In your opinion, what has contributed the most to this distinction?

I heard a lot of good things about your interaction with the local community and charity. What are your plans for the next year in this regard?

IV . Last Impression and Interview Follow-up

Most job applicants do not use the opportunity to leave a good last impression in their interview. It is a pity.

Once your interview is finished, you should **thank the interviewers** for their time, **praise them for their efforts** and simply **leave a room in a positive and friendly manner**. That is called *leaving a good last impression*.

Even if you do not have a good feeling from the interview, you should still do it. You should take control of your emotions and leave a room with a smile on your face.

Last look into the eyes, firm hand shake, and good word can do a lot, especially if the interview is undecided, and personal preferences of the interviewers play a role.

What's more, I suggest you **to send a follow up letter** one day after your interview (if you have an email address to send this letter to).

You can inspire yourself with a following example:

Dear Mr. Abc,

I want to thank you for giving me a chance to present myself in the interview for assistant principal position at XYZ School.

After the interview with you, I am really motivated to work on this position. I like the vision, goals and ideas of your institution, as well as the working environment, and I believe I would fit in the team.

I hope you will make a right decision, and I wish you all the best in your job.

Best Regards

Your name

Your phone number

Your email

It is always good **to send at least a short thank you note** (you can find many examples online), in order to demonstrate that your interest for the job lasts after the interview.

Follow up letter can not win you a job contract. But it can help you to get one, or to open some doors that lead to other job openings. It is easy to send a letter and you should do it after every job interview. Do not be like the majority of job seekers, who send no follow up letters. The majority is screened out—you do not want to be. **Build bridges, not fences.** You'll benefit from it in the long run.

V. Final Word

Interview for a position of assistant principal belongs to difficult job interviews.

One competes against **many other applicants** with similar qualification and experience. What's more, interviewers use different forms of questions, such as personal, behavioral and technical, and they may surprise the applicants with a personality test.

They do it to get a complete picture of your abilities, and to uncover some important and some minor differences between you and other job applicants.

However, interviewers are only people, like I and you. They have their desires, like to be praised for their work, and they can not resist hiring an applicant who presents themselves as an ideal applicant for the job of an assistant principal. That's how it really is in every interview.

If you use the knowledge from this eBook, if you present yourself in a right way, bring everything with you, give good answers to their questions, and flourish in the tests, **they will have no other option to employing you.**

I recommend you to read the eBook one more time, mock the answers to interview questions, and follow the suggestions from each part of the book. Doing so, you should ace your interview and get a job, since you'll be better than the others.

Thank you for reading, and see you in an interview!



Glen Hughins,
Your Personal Job Interview Coach