Best Practices for Remote Interviews

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Read about best practices for conducting effective phone and video interviews—both the technical logistics and interpersonal considerations for remote interviews.

In advance of interviews:

Set and communicate clear expectations for virtual interviews.

Let candidates know what they can expect and how they can prepare, even if it's similar to what they would experience in an in-person interview. Provide logistical details like if the interviewer will call them, if a conference call line will be used, or how to join the video conference.

Norm interviewers to minimize bias.

Make sure selectors have a common understanding of selection materials, rubrics, rating systems, and what constitutes an interview response at each rating level. This norming can minimize bias, create consistency across interviewers, and ensure the interview yields actionable, reliable selection data. This could look like scoring and debriefing the first round of candidate interviews together, drafting sample exemplary candidate responses, and identifying specific ways candidates will demonstrate the competencies you are seeking. Here are a few resources to get started:

📄 **Selector Norming Overview (.DOC)** ⟩

📄 **Anti-Bias Hiring Resources (.DOC)** ⟩

Share logistics with interviewing team.

Inviting other stakeholders to join as interviewers—like teachers, other leaders, students, and/or families—is a strong interview practice but does require coordination in advance. Make sure all interviewers know what questions they will ask and when, the protocol for asking follow-up questions, and when and how to join the interview.

ENHANCED TECH TIP:
Create a shared place for interviewers to take notes and silently communicate with one another as needed during the interview (e.g. on a Google doc, Microsoft Teams, or Slack).

During interviews:

Limit distractions.

Silence or turn off phone and computer notifications and minimize background noise. At the same time, let candidates—and interviewers—know that it is okay if unplanned interruptions happen. Candidates without access to ideal interview environments shouldn't feel discouraged from interviewing.

During Covid-19: *Be flexible. The COVID-19 response and its implications are rapidly changing, so provide candidates with additional flexibility for scheduling interviews. As much as possible, provide options convenient to candidates with varying work or childcare schedules (e.g. morning, day, and evening options) and be understanding if plans need to shift on short notice.*

Introduce the interview.

Begin the interview by introducing yourself and each staff participating staff member (even if a staff member may join simply to take notes or assist with tech, introduce that person and their role). Explain the interview format and length. Decide whether and how interviewers will take notes on the interviews, so that the practice is uniform for all candidates. If you'll be typing notes as candidates respond, explain that up front. You want them to be aware that they may hear the clicking of a keyboard, and that there may be a slight delay in your response as you finish capturing what they had to say.

Slow down.

Be sure to speak slowly and clearly so that you don't have to repeat yourself. Remember that with virtual interviews, participants often experience a delay. Assure your candidate that they can ask you to repeat your questions, and that you're well aware you may run into delays or even overlap in communication. Don't be too concerned if this happens. You can take this as another opportunity to see how you and the candidate might work together.

Special considerations for Video Interviews

In advance of interviews:

Choose a video platform. While some platforms are free, others offer free trial opportunities. Keep in mind the need to familiarize yourself with your chosen platform and establish a structure that remains flexible in case of technical difficulties. Common options include Zoom and Google Hangouts.

Test your platform. Familiarize yourself with the basic functionality of the video interview tool you choose. For example, you'll need to test the camera, speakers and microphone to ensure they're working properly, and you'll want to make sure you know the basic features well enough to use them on the call and be able to direct or instruct candidates to do the same. Other core functions you'll need to know how to operate: sharing your screen, muting your microphone, and using the chat feature if you plan on sharing links in real-time during the call.

Send calendar invites to schedule interviews with candidates and interviewers. These invites are helpful for sending auto-reminders to the candidates. You can include the link to the

meeting platform to give the candidates and interviewers easy access to the virtual interview.

Provide specific anti-bias training for video interviews to selectors. See below for sample guidance. You might also norm staff on a few sample videos and conduct the initial round of interviews in teams to build consistency.

- *Look out for potential bias triggers in video interviews like non-standard English, a candidate's surroundings (background, lighting), their dress, or background noise. (Keep in mind that positive bias—like recognizing the school a candidate references—can also interfere with your objectivity).*

- *Remember that everybody has biases, some explicit, others unconscious. As screeners, it is crucial to ensure those biases do not influence selection decisions, either positively or negatively.*

- *During video interviews, stay conscious of triggers, take low-inference notes, be objective, and flag if you are not sure you can be completely objective.*

Send clear instructions. Let your candidates know how to dial in, screen share if necessary, mute their microphone, use the chat feature, etc. Provide an opportunity for candidates to try out the video conference technology on their own before the interview. For example, send instructions for how candidates can try out the platform if it's free; alternately provide a link to an "empty" meeting on a paid LEA account. Additionally, share interview expectations like professional dress, how to prepare, and recommended interview conditions (e.g. reliable wireless signal, minimal background noise, and sufficient lighting). However, do let candidates know that they will not be penalized for not having access to an ideal interview environment – this should not discourage candidates from interviewing! Consider creating a one pager for joining your video platform, like this resource for Zoom.

Joining Zoom Calls (.DOC) >

Tidy up. Be aware of what the candidate might see and remember that this may be their first visual impression of your organization. While most of us are working from home, selectors' video appearance should maintain a reasonably professional look.

Consider ways to give candidates the "feel" of your school that they might have received in person. It could be several 15- to 20-minute one-on-one interviews with teachers in your building or a panel with students or families from the school.

During interviews:

Be early. Log in several minutes before the scheduled start time to ensure the technology is working properly. Also, schedule these interviews with the necessary buffer time to remain early (and prepared) for each consecutive call.

Give grace. Not every candidate will have experience video interviewing, so be understanding if they're having trouble signing, if a tech issue arises, or if they seem nervous. It can be uncomfortable acclimating to seeing or hearing yourself on video!

Be mindful of your body language. Unlike with a phone screen, candidates can see you. Sit up straight, look into the camera whenever possible, and use visual cues like head nods to acknowledge candidate statements.

Stay flexible. If technical difficulties persist, know that it is acceptable to end the video interview and call the candidate via phone. If it's necessary to your process to have something that feels more face-to-face, you can reschedule that portion for a later date.