

Interview Preparation For School Counseling/Guidance Candidates



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DRESS SMART

Do's and Don'ts: Dress for Interview Success

Business Professional

Business Professional (Conservative)

- Most common dress code in the western world today.
- Consists of, for men, a dark-colored suit, worn with a long-sleeved shirt and tie. For women, a jacket with matching skirt or trousers plus a blouse.
- Appropriate for nearly all formal settings, but commonly worn at job interviews and in business settings.



Men

- A conservative two-piece business suit
- A conservative long-sleeved shirt
- Neck ties should be silk with a conservative pattern
- Dark shoes (black lace ups are best)
- Dark socks
- No rings other than wedding band or college ring
- No earrings

Women

- A conservative suit with a jacket; no dresses
- A conservative shirt/blouse
- No stilettos or high heels; shoes should be polished, competent, no-nonsense pumps
- Conservative hosiery at or near skin color
- Clear or conservative nail polish
- Minimal use of makeup
- No more than one ring on each hand

- One set of earrings only
- No tank tops or clothes that are too short, too sheer, or too low cut

Both Sexes

- Conservative two-piece business suit (solid dark black, blue or gray is best)
- Well-groomed hair style
- Shower; wear deodorant
- Makeup should be light and natural
- Clean, polished conservative shoes
- Clean, trimmed fingernails
- Minimal cologne or perfume
- No visible body piercing (nose rings, eyebrow rings, etc.); no tacky jewelry
- No gum, candy or cigarettes
- Light briefcase or professional portfolio case
- Empty pockets-no bulges or tinkling coins
- Black belt (belt should always match shoes)
- NO RINGING CELL PHONES (turn your cell phone off or set it on vibrate)

Cracking the Dress Codes

CORPORATE: Suit, shirt and tie mandatory. Closed toe shoes with a low medium heel. Blouse, crisp shirt or a knit sweater or shell under a suit.

BUSINESS APPROPRIATE: Shirt mandatory. Tie optional. Jacket mandatory. Suit preferred. A skirt and blouse or sweater set worn with heels or boots; tailored trousers paired with a turtleneck and jacket.

BUSINESS CASUAL: Shirt or sweater mandatory. Jacket not required but preferred. Ironed khakis with a classic white shirt; a casual skirt and a sweater set; a cleaned tailored pair of dark jeans with a jacket.



LAST MINUTE INTERVIEW TIPS

- **Prepare**: access your skills, values & interests
 - **Research**: learn about the organization
 - **Practice**: go over what you want to express

Before the Interview:

- Draw a line down the center of a piece of paper. On the left side, make a list of what the employer is looking for (based on the job posting). On the right side, make a list of the qualities you possess that fit those requirements – *What Do I Bring to the Table?*
- Organize a professional interview portfolio.
- Research the company, the industry, and the competition. Visit the company website and put the company name in a search engine to see what pops up.
- Prepare a brief statement to answer “Tell me about yourself.” Focus on your powerful qualities and accomplishments vs. just listing out your resume.
- Write at least five success stories to answer behavioral questions (such as “Tell me about a time where you dealt with a difficult student/parent”). Focus on what the situation was, what action you took, and what resulted from your action.
- Write out your successful classroom management plans.
- Prepare 10 questions to ask the interviewer about the job, the company, and the industry to take with you to the interview.
- Research salary data and determine your worth.
- Determine your salary needs based on your living expenses – what is your bottom line?
- Get permission from your references to use their names.

Before you to to the interview:

- Do you look professional? Check yourself in the mirror; part of your confidence will come from looking good.
- Bring the following with you to the interview: several copies of your resume on quality resume paper; a copy of your references with complete contact information; addresses and phone numbers of previous employers; a pad of paper from which you can take notes; directions to the interview site and a contact person’s name.
- Review what you would say to the 10 most common interview questions:
 1. Tell me about yourself.
 2. Why did you leave or why are you leaving your present position?
 3. What do you know about this school district/company?
 4. What are your career goals?
 5. What are your strengths and weaknesses?
 6. What to you want to work for this school district/company?
 7. What has been your most significant achievement?
 8. How would your last supervisor and colleagues describe you?

9. Why should we hire you?
10. What are your salary expectations?

Upon Arrival:

- Arrive early – enter the building 10 minutes prior to your interview time.
- Go to the restroom and check your appearance one last time.
- Announce yourself to the receptionist in a professional, courteous manner.
- Stand and greet your interviewer with a hearty – not bone crushing or limp – handshake.
- Smile and look directly into the interviewer’s eyes.

During the Interview:

- Try to focus on the points you have prepared without sounding rehearsed or stiff.
- At the conclusion: express your interest for the job; thank the interviewer; and determine the next steps.
- Ask for the interviewer’s business card so that you can send a follow-up letter.

After the Interview:

- As soon as possible, write down your thoughts and feelings about the interview.
- Look at your notes and assess how well you did.
- Within 24 hours, write a follow-up thank you letter, reminding the interviewer of your qualities.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR COUNSELORS

1. Tell us about your educational background.
2. Tell us about your work/professional experience.
3. Why do you want to become a school counselor, guidance counselor?
4. What are your professional goals for the next 5-10 years?
5. Suppose you have a new idea for parent-school communications that you want to try; how would you go about it?
6. Do you think social faculty functions are important? Why?
7. What is your greatest professional strength? weakness?
8. What are your three best leadership qualities? Describe at least one situation where one of these qualities was exemplified?
9. How would you improve school-community relations?
10. How do you view the current teacher evaluation procedure used by the school district? Would you change it if you could and how?
11. Describe your philosophy of discipline? In which methods of discipline have you been formally trained?
12. Please respond to the following: "Instruction and classroom management are related."
13. On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate yourself as a disciplinarian? Why?
14. What is the counselor's role in disciplining a child? The parent's role?
15. If problems arise with a student, what support services should the school provide?
16. Do you think schools should be "single-point-of-service" providers? Why?
17. What skills or interests do you have that would benefit our extracurricular programs?
18. In this era of fiscal belt-tightening, what are some ways which you would maintain services/activities without incurring extra costs? How would you cut costs?
19. How would you involve parents in the education of their children?
20. What are some ways you measure a teacher's effectiveness?
21. How do you deal with a teacher's deficits?
22. A teaching assistant in your building comes to you, in confidence, to complain about something a teacher has done. How would you handle it?
23. What methods/strategies have you used in resolving conflicts between students? Teachers? Parent vs. teacher?
24. How would you help teachers and staff improve student achievement?
25. What is the role of a school counselor, guidance counselor? (position for which you are interviewing)
26. What is your vision of Special Education?
27. What is the impact of inclusion on the school community?
28. Why do you feel that you are the best candidate for this position?
29. What would you do if an angry parent came in unexpectedly to demand that their child Not be suspended for fighting?
30. How would you go about improving Instruction?
31. Correlate student achievement to teacher evaluations.

32. A teacher has an unusually high failure rate. What would you do? What if that teacher was uncooperative with you? What if that teacher started discussing these issues in the teachers' lounge?
33. Several teachers have been grumbling in the lounge, about lack of administrative support. What would you do?
34. An informant (student) comes to you and reports that another student has brought drugs into the building. What would you do?
35. You suspect a female student has hidden a box cutter in her undergarments. What would you do?
36. What have you done with your life?
37. Why do you want this position as a school counselor, guidance counselor?
38. After being with the same large school district for so long, do you think you'll be able to adjust to a small, rural district?
39. What was your biggest career disappointment? How did you deal with it?
40. What are the skills you most need to develop to advance your career?
41. What do your supervisors tend to criticize most about your performance? Did you agree or disagree with them?
42. What types of teachers (people) do you find it most difficult to get along with?
43. Have you ever hired anyone? Was it a successful experience?
44. Have you ever had to write a critical Incident report on a teacher? What was the outcome?
45. A bus driver angrily demands that a disruptive student get off the bus immediately and at a place that is not the student's regular stop. The child calls home, the parent calls you and demands assistance in getting the child home. Are you responsible? What do you do?
46. What does the word "success" mean to you?
47. What does the word "failure" mean to you?
48. What does "Integrated Thematic Instruction" mean? What experience do you have with ITT?
49. Please elaborate on Learner Outcomes. What is your training experience in implementing Learner Outcomes?
50. What is a variance? Have you any experience in obtaining a variance? Developed a program involving a variance?
51. a.) Three students approach you, in confidence, and they state that a particular teacher has been hitting them with a ruler. What do you do? b.) This is the second time in two years that this complaint has been made. Now what do you do? c.) The teacher admits to this practice. Now what?
52. An angry cafeteria worker refuses to serve a very rude student and demands that the student be denied lunch for the next three days. What do you do?
53. What should a counselor expect from teachers and staff?
54. What should teachers and staff expect from the counselor?
55. Are there any questions that we did not ask you that you wish we had? If so, what are they?
56. Discuss the relationship between instructional improvement, teacher evaluation and staff development.
57. List three of your leadership strengths and provide an example of each.
58. Will you briefly describe your leadership/counseling style?
59. What are your strong points as a counselor?
60. In what areas do you feel need improvement?

61. How would students in your school describe you?
62. If I were to walk into your faculty workroom and ask teachers to describe you, what would they say?
63. What is your most significant achievement in educational counseling?
64. What have you done to keep abreast of developments in your field?
65. What steps would you take when developing a budget for your school?
66. What do you see as the role of the department head?
67. How would you involve the professional staff in the decision making process?
68. What do you do for recreation?
69. How would you involve your community?
70. How would you describe your student evaluation procedures?
71. What is the role of students in your program?
72. What is your position on competency-based education?
73. What is the most exciting thing going on in educational counseling today?
74. What changes have you made in your department since becoming a counselor?
75. What means of communication do you rely on most?
76. What inservice programs have you developed?
77. What curriculum changes have you made?
78. How do you make curriculum changes?
79. What role does student council play in your school?
80. What is the ideal role of the public school counselor?
81. How important are athletics at your school?
82. What activities do you rely on to improve or maintain student morale?
83. What do you consider a counselor's biggest pressure?
84. What are your educational goals, personal goals?
85. Where do you plan to be five years from now, ten years from now?
86. What methods do you use to evaluate your school and its programs?
87. How would you involve parents in your school?
88. What do you like most about being a school counselor/guidance counselor? Which part of the job do you least like?
89. Would you enjoy living in this community?
90. How important is it that people like you?
91. How do you resolve conflict between staff members, students and staff?
92. What is your personal philosophy of education?
93. How would you describe the appearance of an effective counseling?
94. What special programs have you developed?
95. What is your school doing for the special needs children?
96. Can you site evidence of recent professional growth?
97. What is your experience with management by objectives, or with working a management team?
98. How would you describe the role of the student counselors/guidance counselors?
99. How would you react to a student calling you by your first name?
100. What are the most crucial issues facing a counselor today?
101. What motivates you?
102. Why do you want to leave your current position?
103. How would you describe your last superintendent.
104. How would you describe your last day at work? How do you deal with personal stress?
105. What process do you use to understand all facets of a problem?

106. If you could, what would you change about your current situation?
107. Are there yearly goals established for your current staff? If so how are they determined and how are they achieved?
108. Will you tell me about your personal experiences with school?
109. How do you resolve parental complaints when you know the teacher is in error?
110. How would you describe an effective drug policy for schools?
111. How do you manage your time effectively in school?
112. What are the last three books you have read?
113. How would you describe an effective public relations program for a school?
114. Can you tell me about your most successful professional experiences?
115. What personal qualities do you think are important for a principal to possess?
116. How often and in what manner do you conduct faculty meetings?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

SCHOOL COUNSELORS

Slippery Rock University
www.sru.edu/pages/5609.asp

- What is your philosophy of school counseling?
- Tell us about your experience school counseling?
- Describe your ideal school counseling program?
- Name and describe three different roles of the school counselor?
- What does the phrase developmental guidance program mean to you? Is it really a developmental guidance program?
- Describe the program or activity you developed for which you are most proud.
- Describe your view of an excellent working relationship between the school counselor and the teachers. How would you go about achieving this relationship?
- What are the limits of confidentiality?
- What do you know about our school district?
- What would you do if a teacher referred a student to you and then stops you to ask information?
- In your first days in a new school counseling position, what things/activities would you establish to promote a positive working relationship with teachers?
- A student comes to you and says her friend Jennifer is talking about killing herself. What do you do?
- In a small support group, 12-year-old John tells everyone he is tired of being picked on and is planning to shoot a boy who is bullying him. What do you do?
- A student comes to you and begins to cry, telling you she is being picked on by those who used to be her friends. She shares with you that the problem has been going on for over two months and now it is getting worse. What do you do?
- In a counseling session, 13-year-old Sara tells you that her father has touched her inappropriately. What do you do?
- When we get emotionally involved in a problem situation, it is often very difficult to be objective. Tell me about a time when you were proud of your ability to be objective even though you were emotional about a situation.
- You hear a rumor from a student that two boys took some kind of pills in the cafeteria. What do you do?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR GUIDANCE COUSELORS

1. What is your education and experience that qualifies you for this position?
2. What personal characteristics do you possess that would enhance your work as a counselor?
3. What is the role of the school counselor in a Comprehensive Competency Based Guidance program?
4. What is your understanding of classroom guidance and how would you work with a classroom teacher?
5. What is the counselor's role in student academic achievement?
6. How does Comprehensive Competency Based Guidance directly effect/relate to student achievement?
7. How would your present or previous employer describe you in terms of effectiveness as a counselor/teacher/employee?
8. If you are assigned to a school with many challenges, what are some programs you would start to help improve the school climate?
9. A teacher comes to you concerning a child with the following behaviors: aggression; poor peer relations; inattention to learning; will not accept adult authority or responsibility for behavior. Overall, how would you handle this situation?
10. How would you deal with a parent who is upset with his/her student's progress in class?
11. What is a counselor's agreement and how would you use it to implement a Comprehensive Competency Based Guidance program?
12. How do you see the word "leader" fitting in to your role as a counselor?
13. What is the counseling theory that you most closely follow?
14. What is the most creative and innovative counseling technique you have used?
15. How would you divide your time between meeting the immediate needs of the students and keeping up with the paperwork?
16. How will you evaluate your programs to meet (a) current state standards; (b) standards of best practice for a comprehensive guidance and counseling program; and (c) the [National School Counseling Standards](#) per the American School Counselor Association?
17. How would you handle an irate parent?
18. How would you handle a passive (perhaps irresponsible) parent?
19. How would you handle a large group of students having attendance problems?
20. How do you see yourself fitting in with counselors who have many years experience as veteran teachers?
21. How would you fit in with a large staff?
22. What is your strongest asset?
23. What do you think is the most important characteristic of a counselor?
24. What do you see as the role of a counselor in a school this large?
25. What preconceptions do you have of our school?
26. What have you heard about our school?

27. What makes you want to work at _____ School?
28. What is it that you like about (level) school students?
29. What is something new you could bring to our program?
30. How do you handle criticism?
31. How do you handle stress?
32. Are you opposed to working above and beyond school hours to get the job done?
33. Are you opposed to working at night for functions such as college night, senior night, etc.?
34. Does your principal know you're applying for this job and how does he/she feel about it?
35. What technology applications do you see being useful in your work?
36. What might your professional development plan look like?
37. What do you think the role of the counselor is in preventing school violence?"
38. What experiences have you had as a teacher that make you feel capable of being a counselor?
39. What experiences have you had in working with special education students?
40. What can you provide that is different from a social worker, school psychologist, or mental health counselor?
41. When considering ethical standards and school policies, how would you handle a conflict between the two?
42. What do the most recent state standardized test results indicate about this school district and this school; and what is your role regarding standardized testing?
43. How does a school counselor assist with the implementation of ESL (English as Second Language) in-building programming?
44. Describe how you would implement small group guidance lessons?
45. Because time is a scarce resource in schools today, and because of a strong push for improved standardized test scores, best educational practices suggest that in-class guidance lessons not take away from classroom instructional minutes. How will you address this issue as a school counselor?
46. What has your experience been in working with students of color & LGBT?
47. What is your experience with parenting programs? Describe past interactions with parents in home visits.
48. What does your future comprehensive program look like?
49. How do you handle conflict with a colleague, parent, administrator?
50. What does a good home visit look like?
51. How do feel about writing letters of recommendation (HS)?
52. How do you keep yourself organized? Discuss how you multitask.
53. Where do you see yourself in the next five years?
54. Can we ask you a question in Spanish, and can you respond likewise?

School Counselor Interview Questions

PERSONAL

- What is your education and experience that qualifies you for this position?
- What personal characteristics do you possess that would enhance your work as a counselor?
- What practical experiences have you had that make you feel capable of being a counselor?
What are your three greatest strengths? Weaknesses?
- Are you a team player or like to work alone?
- How do you handle criticism?
How do you handle stress?
Are you opposed to working at night for functions such as college night, senior night, etc.?
- What experiences have you had in working with special education students?
What has your experience been in working with students of color and LGBT?
How do you handle conflict with a colleague, parent, administrator?
How do you feel about writing letters of recommendation (high school only)?
How do you keep yourself organized? Discuss how you multitask.
- What technology applications do you see being useful in your work?
How would your present or previous employer describe you in terms of effectiveness as a counselor/teacher/employee?
- What is it that you like about working with (grade level) school students?
What will you do to introduce yourself in this new position?
- Tell me about your work attendance habits.

ROLE

- What is the role of a school counselor?
What do you think is the most important characteristic of a counselor?
How do you see the word "leader" fitting in to your role as a counselor?
How do you see yourself fitting in with counselors who have many years experience?
- What do you think the role of the counselor is in preventing school violence?
What can you provide that is different from a social worker, school psychologist or mental health counselor?
What is the counselor's role in student academic achievement?

THEORY

- What is the counseling theory that you most closely follow?

DAILY

- How would you handle a situation where a student tells you he is considering suicide?
- How would you divide your time between meeting the immediate needs of the students and keeping up with the paperwork?
- How would you handle a large group of students having attendance problems?
- Describe how you would implement small-group counseling/guidance lessons.
- What is your understanding of classroom guidance and how would you work with a classroom teacher?

PROGRAM

- How will you evaluate your programs to meet (a) current state standards; (b) standards of best practice for a comprehensive guidance and counseling program; and (c) the ASCA National Model®?
- When considering ethical standards and school policies, how would you handle a conflict between the two?

PARENT

- How would you handle an irate parent?
- How would you handle a passive (perhaps irresponsible) parent?
- How would you deal with a parent who is upset with his/her student's progress in class?

SCHOOL SPECIFIC

- What do you know about our school that you would consider a strength? a weakness?
- What makes you want to work at this school?
- What is something new you could bring to our program?
- What do the most recent state standardized test results indicate about this school district and this school, and what is your role regarding standardized testing?

Be sure to have questions for them. Remember - YOU ARE INTERVIEWING THEM AS WELL!! Bring questions written down and ready. This is always impressive.

Potential Candidate Questions

- What is the level and type of parent involvement in this school
- What kinds of new or innovative guidance programs have you implemented recently?
- Do you offer professional growth opportunities for school counselors?
- How do administrators offer counselors support if the need arises?
- Do you offer cross-cultural activities to students (if ethnic diversity exists)?
- I consider myself to be a team player and feel it is a productive way to accomplish tasks. Do faculty, counselors, and staff plan or work on projects together? (showcase skills)
- When will you be notifying candidates of your decision?

