

Sample 3: Superintendency Interview Questions

Editors Note: The following are questions asked by the board and questions asked by a candidate. The information provides insights into both the process and procedures. - JMM

The **first interview** lasted approximate 1 hour and 15 minutes. The questions were from the Board of Education directly. These are the candidate's memory of the questions:

1. How would you create your first BOCES budget if you were to be hired?
2. What would be the first thing that you would cut from the budget if you came onboard?
3. What do I think about mandatory ID card for all students and staff?
4. How do I feel about paid armed guards in schools?
5. What is micro-managing?
6. What percent (a number) of the budget should be dedicated to sports, arts, and music?
7. How many contracts have I negotiated?
8. Do you think that the same code of ethics should apply to staff and students?
9. How do you remove a tenured, non performing administrator?
10. What are the first three things that I am going to do if hired?
11. Do you have any questions for the group?

The **second interview** was a 14 hour day that started with a tour of the elementary schools followed by lunch, and then a tour of the district office, middle school and high school. There was a one hour break then dinner with board and my wife where they interviewed her and me. Dinner lasted about an hour and a half then they excused my wife and interviewed me for another 2 hours.

The following are building tour questions that I asked each administrator:

1. What do you really want from me besides for me to be a leader?
2. What have been the specific challenges of managing this building?
3. How many students are served at each lunch period and how long is that period?
4. Where do you hold your concerts, etc... (Note: Discovered a lot of bitterness between building administrators in relation to the condition of each gym and auditorium)
5. How often and by what means to you communicate with your administrative colleagues from other buildings?
6. What are your plans for the next five years? (funny note: When I asked this question one of the principals announced right then and there for the first time that they were leaving the district on October 1. The BOE president was not pleased.)

The following are lunch questions that I asked the current retiring superintendent:

1. What are some things that I am going to need to give immediate attention to?
2. How has your interaction with the board been?
3. Are you planning on continuing to be active in the school system after you retire?
4. Do you plan on remaining in the area after you retire?

The following are dinner questions that were asked of my wife:

1. What organizations are you going to join during the first six months?
2. Do you select teachers for your children?
3. How did you get more votes as a trustee than your mayor did? (Note: they had Googled my wife and got all of her village board voting results from well over a year ago)
4. How involved will you be in the school? Will we see you daily, weekly, monthly?

The following are questions asked of me after my wife was excused:

1. Why do you disagree with our lunch time for K-6 students? (it is currently 40 minutes. I asked them where they wanted me to start. They did not like that)
2. What am I going to do about making the principals follow board policy?
3. How will I remind the assistant superintendent for finance that I am the boss, not him?
4. How quickly will I be able to hire 3 principals and an assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction?
5. What are my personal “sacred cows”?
6. Explain why you got your doctorate online and not at a traditional university and how can I prove its’ validity?
7. How long before I make a “real” decision on the job?
8. How am I going to sell the budget to our elderly population?
9. Do you have any questions for the group?