

Sample Interview Questions

What follows is a large sample of possible questions collected from a variety of sources. As you will see, many do not fall neatly into one category. Committees should also feel the freedom to write their own questions.

As much as possible, questions should compel stories: “Tell me about a time when...” Stories tend to reveal more than questions that allow for hypotheticals and philosophizing.

It is customary (though not required, of course) to allow the candidate to make a brief opening statement, describing his or her enthusiasm for and attraction to the job in response to an open-ended question such as, “Tell us a little bit about your background and what drew you to this opportunity.”

General Introductory Questions

Describe the conditions under which you do your best work. What are you doing when you are “at your best”?

What types of job responsibilities are most frustrating for you? Most rewarding?

Describe the ideal supervisor for you.

What types of people do you surround yourself with in order to complement your leadership style, strengths, and weaknesses?

What aspects of your educational philosophy align most fully with our School?

What gives your professional life purpose and meaning?

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Our school is committed to providing an inclusive environment for a wide range of students, families, and employees. What recent experiences have you participated in or led that have helped deepen your understanding around the nuances of diversity, equity, and inclusion?

Describe a time you took responsibility/accountability for an action that may have been offensive or hurtful to a person from a different cultural background than yours. How did you handle the situation?



**Carney
Sandoe**
& ASSOCIATES

Carney, Sandoe & Associates

The Search Group

200 High Street, Suite 610, Boston, MA 02110

T 617.542.0260 · F 617.933.3426

search@carneysandoe.com · carneysandoe.com

What do you do on a regular basis to cultivate your own appreciation for diversity or improve your cultural competency? What do you do to promote inclusion and respect for differences in others? How do you challenge stereotypes and encourage authentic relationships?

Please describe a process you have gone through (or would go through) when you entered a new community or worked with a group you have never worked with before.

In your own classroom, how do you intentionally design your communication, curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment to be sure that you are meeting the needs of students with a range of identities and backgrounds? (For candidates who currently teach.)

What do you look for in a community that is committed to DEI?

Describe a time when you had to handle a racially charged issue and how you dealt with parents, students, community through that?

How does your commitment to DEI play out for you on a daily basis at work?

How does your commitment to DEI show up in your personal and professional life?

To what kind of standard/fluency with DEI would you hold your administrative team?

How do effective Schools support identity development in children and adolescents?

How do you ensure all voices are heard when making decisions on behalf of the School?

What are the most effective ways to ensure faculty feel a strong sense of belonging?

What are effective ways to recruit a diverse faculty?

Suppose a student shares with you that they have witnessed a racist incident. How do you proceed?

How and why have you gotten involved in the work of diversity, equity, and inclusion?

Everyone is on their own journey in DEI work. How have you worked with members of an organization who are varying levels of understanding, engagement, and investment in this work?

How have you engaged and supported colleagues—teachers, staff members, administrators—in learning about and/or increasing their understanding of equity and inclusion? What, if any, professional development opportunities did you provide or create? Please give an example or two.

How have you engaged and supported other adult community members (e.g., parent, alumni, Trustees) in learning about and/or helping to increase their understanding around equity and inclusion?



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How have you engaged and support students in learning about and/or helping to increase their understanding around equity and inclusion?

Describe a project or initiative related to DEI work that you oversaw. What issue was the work trying to address? How and with whom did you go about approaching the issue? What steps were taken? What were the outcomes?

Academic Program and Student Life

Our goal is to become the best school possible in the context of our mission. How would you define excellence in an independent school? What are the two or three most important measurements? If you were our new XXXXX Role, what kinds of things might you want to do to move the school to a new level?

We serve students with a range of learning profiles and needs. In what kinds of practices must we engage to ensure that all our students are supported? In what ways is it possible to support all students without taxing the limits of the faculty?

Our school has a challenging program. Some parents complain that it is not challenging enough; others complain that it is too challenging. What are your views on homework, testing, exams? How do you balance high standards with student wellness?

What practices would you examine to determine whether the School has achieved an appropriate balance between classroom and extracurricular demands? How would you suggest making adjustments?

Please tell us about your experience in (1) teacher supervision and evaluation, and (2) professional development of teachers. Please provide some specific examples. What role would you expect to play in these areas at our school?

How do you elevate a teacher's practice from good to outstanding? What type of professional development models have you tested in your current position? How have you and/or your leadership team assessed personal and professional growth for faculty members and student outcomes?

Describe a change in the academic program in which you played a role, how it was accomplished, and the effect it had on faculty and students.



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When hiring faculty, what qualities and experiences do you look for? How do you discern those qualities during an interview?

Describe a time when you had an uncomfortable, difficult, or controversial situation with a faculty member and explain how you handled it to reach a positive outcome.

Please describe some of the faculty members in your school of whom you are most proud. What are their strengths? What role have you played in their development, mentoring?

In what ways have you educated parents about the college admissions process in order to support the school's mission and the college counseling office and support parents during this potentially stressful time?

What do you feel are the most important components in creating a positive educational experience for both teachers and students?

We are committed to building partnerships with schools and community organizations to further our mission. Describe a partnership you have pursued and developed and how it enhanced both organizations.

Independent school teachers value autonomy. Give an example of something that should be required of all faculty.

Students and Parents

What do you see as the XXXXX Role's work in building a cohesive community of students, parents, faculty, and Board? Give us an example of how you have created a cohesive community--or how you would go about doing so.

What should be the role of parents in independent schools and how do you communicate this role?

In your role as XXXXX Role, what level of visibility and engagement would you expect to have with students and parents? Give us some examples of how you have related to students and parents in your present position.

Provide us some examples of how a school's administration can both be responsive to parent concerns but clear about boundaries. As XXXXX Role, how would work to build an effective partnership with parents?

Marketing and Enrollment



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What do you consider to be the primary advantages and challenges facing your current school in marketing and admissions? Give us some thoughts about how those efforts might be enhanced or expanded.

What should be the XXXXX Role in marketing, specifically in increasing enrollment, college placement, fundraising, and attracting quality faculty and administrators? What role would you expect to play in promoting our school in the larger community and beyond?

What do you believe are the most worthwhile activities in which someone in this role can participate to showcase the school in order to advance its reputation?

Leadership, Management, and Vision

From where do you draw your sources of inspiration as an educator? Are there any resources or references that have deeply influenced your thinking, your practices, or your educational philosophy?

What do you see as the most pressing challenges ahead for independent schools? What structures might you put in place to mitigate those challenges?

Tell us about an experience, an encounter, or an event in your professional or personal life that has left a lasting influence on you and how it has affected your thinking or your outlook as an educator or leader.

What special qualities and leadership experiences would you bring to the job as our XXXXX Role? How were those skills developed in your current school?

If you were hiring a new person to join the senior administrative team what characteristics would you look for in that person so that she/he would best complement your style and talents?

How do you organize your work and your day in order to accomplish both the strategic priorities and the more tactical and immediate work?

Other than working too hard, describe your biggest challenge as a leader. How do you overcome that challenge?

Please share your philosophy on the decision-making processes in a school. Give an example of a time you have seen the process undermine the desired result.

There are many "styles" of leadership. Describe yours.



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In your work in schools with administrators, faculty, and board members, how do you ensure consistency and accountability?

Could you give us an example of when you facilitated change in your current school/organization? How did you handle the resistance (if any) to this change, and what was your take-away from that process? What can we learn from that example about your leadership style and abilities?

Please give us an example of each of the following:

- a specific incident which demonstrates clearly your strength(s) as an administrative leader
- a specific incident in which you measurably demonstrated your ability to articulate a vision in a school setting and to inspire other stakeholders with that vision.

Please describe your experience working with a Board of Trustees and the specific work you have done around Board. What do you see as your role in relation to the Board?

How are you different now from five years ago? What has been the cause for change/growth? How have you changed as a leader over the course of your career?

Based upon what you have been able to learn about the School, why do you consider yourself a good fit for us?

Even the best leaders make mistakes. Describe a failure or a mistake you made, what you learned from it, and how you approach your work differently as a result.

What is the most effective feedback you have received as a leader? How did you process that feedback and, if appropriate, in what way did you grow or change as a result?

How do you gather feedback about your own performance?

How do you want to be perceived by those whom you lead? How do you help them affirm or discover this perspective?

Tell me about a time you didn't get your way.

Describe a situation that, in hindsight, you wish you had handled differently.



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