

# HELPFUL HINTS FOR ESTABLISHING SUCCESSFUL HIRING PRACTICES



Southwestern Union Conference  
Office of Education

# Foreword

This manual is provided to assist those who are responsible for hiring educational personnel in developing a thorough hiring process from start to finish. Careful consideration and implementation of the suggested steps will not only facilitate greater diligence in the search and hiring process, but will demonstrate sensitivities to the party hired.

## **Employment Philosophy**

### **Employment Philosophy for Seventh-day Adventist Educational Institutions in the Southwestern Union**

For Seventh-day Adventists the free exercise of religion includes the right to operate educational institutions that are distinctively Seventh-day Adventist. The creation and maintenance of such institutions require that they be staffed only by those individuals who are in complete harmony with the beliefs and practices of the Church. Hence, in the employment of personnel for its educational institutions, one of the occupational qualifications for any position is that the individual must be a Seventh-day Adventist committed to the program of the Church.

School boards shall, officially and in practice, abide by the following policies relating to employment:

- A. Equal employment opportunities shall be afforded to all on the basis of qualifications, without regard to race, color, gender, national origin, ancestry, physical handicap, or age.
- B. Inasmuch as the personal life and the professional identity of an individual are inseparable, it is an express condition of employment that all employees conform to the standards of conduct that are in harmony with Seventh-day Adventist principles.

Seventh-day Adventist education institutions also comply with applicable state laws and local ordinances regarding non-discrimination.

## **Certificated Instructional Personnel**

### **Definition of Instructional Personnel**

Instructional personnel include persons employed as elementary school, junior academy, or senior academy classroom teachers, those who perform related services that require certificates, and persons employed as paraprofessionals to serve as classroom instructional assistants.

### **Certificated Instructional Personnel**

#### 1. Definition

Certificated instructional personnel include the following:

- A. Classroom teachers
- B. Administrative personnel who have responsibility for the instructional programs
- C. Other personnel who perform related support services
  - 1. Librarian or media center coordinator
  - 2. Guidance and counseling personnel
  - 3. Coordinator of work-experience education

#### 2. Qualifications

- A. Spiritual – Instructional personnel shall be members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and exemplify high standards of Christian conduct. They shall maintain membership in constituent or academy churches and are expected to participate in church activities, programs, and finances. Exemptions to this requirement may be granted by the conference board of education, K-12, or academy board when an employee requests such exemption in writing, showing good reasons for maintaining church membership elsewhere.
- B. Professional – Instructional personnel shall maintain valid denominational certification applicable to the positions held. (*See Certification Requirements, K-12, for North American Division Seventh-day Adventist Schools*)

## **Employment of Instructional Personnel**

The conference K-12 board of education derives its employment authority from the conference Executive Committee. To ensure the effective and orderly operation of the schools within the conference, the conference K-12 board of education delegates certain functions to school boards.

However, because of legal obligations to protect both students and school assets, the hiring of all instructional personnel in Seventh-day Adventist schools in the Southwestern Union Conference shall be supervised by the conference office of education. All instructional personnel are subject to thorough background checks, including, but not limited to, criminal background checks. All instructional K-10 personnel shall have their payroll services provided by the local conference treasury department.

Individuals given a conditional offer of employment in an instructional classified position must sign an appropriate "Employee Inquiry Release" giving unqualified consent to and be subject to a background check. Results of that check must be satisfactory to the employing organization in order for the individual to be eligible for employment.

## **Employer**

The employment relationship, including but not limited to the assignment, transfer, retirement, termination, or non-renewal of regular appointments of educational personnel shall be by the authority of the conference K-12 board of education in consultation with the local school board.

## SEARCH/PRE-INTERVIEW PROCESS

1. Prepare a specific job description for the open position that has been carefully reviewed with and, if necessary, revised by the search committee.
2. Consider all sources and/or avenue for securing names of qualified individuals to fill an administrative or teaching opening:
  - Network with other superintendents and union directors.
  - Post the job description on the NAD education website.
  - Post openings on your own organizational website.
  - Careful review of:
    - ✓ Union education directories
    - ✓ SDA school websites
    - ✓ Adventist Yearbook
3. When the preliminary list of potential candidates has been secured, be sure to...
  - Reinforce, if necessary, the understanding that a representative of the conference office of education **must** be present in each step of the hiring process and that the conference is the employer.
  - Ask for a copy of current teaching certificate and endorsements.
  - Establish and employ standards, in collaboration with the local school board to “narrow” or prioritize the list and set dates for search committee meetings.
  - Take the necessary steps to:
    - ✓ determine interest levels in the opening
    - ✓ secure and prioritize resumes of candidates in which you have interest
    - ✓ extend the courtesy of contact with top candidates’ current employing organizations
    - ✓ assign colleagues (*search committee/office of education*) to check references
    - ✓ set date(s) and time(s) for search committee to review reference date and consider possible interviews
4. Prior to actual interviews, set a schedule for interviewing top candidates. (See below)
  - Secure all necessary contact information
  - Determine order of interviews

Candidates’ Names	Assigned Conference Rep.	Location	Date	Time
(1)				
(2)				
(3)				

5. Determine the inquiry approach to be taken in the interview process:
  - Use of discriminators, i.e., (certification)
  - Standard questions
  - Random questions
6. Inform candidates/interviewees of the date, time, and place of his/her scheduled interview and make the necessary arrangements, re: travel, hotel, reimbursement (per diem), etc.
7. Be sure to establish an understanding with candidates of whether expenses for spouses will be covered in the event a candidate brings him/her and whether the spouse is to be present at the interview.
8. Pre-arrange for candidates (and spouse) to:
  - Meet the constituent pastor(s) to:
    - ✓ understand expectations, re: holding church office(s).
    - ✓ establish preliminary understandings, re: church-school relations.
    - ✓ be briefed on children's Sabbath School departments, re: candidates' children
  - Tour the school (including possible classroom he/she will be assigned) and meet faculty.
  - Meet key leaders (H&S, Board Chair, etc.)
  - Check for/tour available housing.
  - Visit the school where his/her school-aged children might attend, i.e., special needs.
9. Arrange the interview setting in advance to facilitate:
  - Physical comfort
  - Eye-contact
  - Privacy
10. The conference office of education should check with the hire's current employer to determine whether the hire has any residual financial obligations or expectations, i.e., existing debt, owed vacation, etc. Such matters should be resolved before the hire joins the workforce of the hiring conference.

## **INTERVIEW PROCESS**

1. Before the interview
  - search committee members should be provided "Hiring Process Checklist;"
  - search committee members should be provided candidates' resumes and a briefing on the findings of respective reference checks;
  - resumes and data from references should be compared against the established position profile and job description;

- the questioning process should be determined in advance (id a standardized approach to comparing candidates' responses is desired), re: who might ask what questions and when;
  - the search committee should determine how long each interview should, at maximum, last (*no more than 90 minutes is recommended*).
2. Start each interview with prayer – offered by a search committee member. The candidate should also be asked if he/she would like to offer a prayer as well.
  3. Before the start of the candidate's interview, the conference representative should introduce the candidate to search committee members and provide a brief description of the candidate's experience, education, and certification(s)/endorsements.
  4. During the questioning period:
    - Follow the pre-determined order of questions.
    - Do not allow any one search committee member to dominate questioning.
    - Ask questions that require more than a "yes" or "no" answer. The best questions are open-ended, requiring the candidate to provide substantive responses in how he/she might apply skills to the unique needs of the school.
    - Questions should, at the very least, cover such topics as:
      - ✓ Spiritual vision and commitment
      - ✓ Professional mission and vision
      - ✓ Leadership qualities (*faculty meetings*)
      - ✓ Facilities/program management skills
      - ✓ Understanding/management of school finances, i.e., budgets, financial statements, accounts, etc. (*particularly important for administrators*).
      - ✓ Interpersonal skills (*relating to faculty, parents, students, and community*)
      - ✓ Understanding/expectations of board governance (*board roles, responsibilities, and relationships, re: candidates for principalship*).
      - ✓ Candidates' views of organizational expectations/relationships (*union and conference*)
      - ✓ Professional growth expectations (*of faculty and self*)
      - ✓ Expectations of principals (*for teacher candidates*)
      - ✓ Capacities (*greatest strengths, challenges, meeting physical demands of the position*)
      - ✓ Previous employment, re: non-renewals, terminations (*reasons*), expired certifications, etc
      - ✓ Education needs of/plans for candidate's children (*homeschooling, special needs, etc. – to avoid surprises or unmet expectations*).
      - ✓ Immigration status
    - Give each candidate an opportunity to ask questions of the committee
    - Close each interview with prayer.



## **POST-INTERVIEW PROCESS**

1. Upon completing interviews, and if interested in the candidate (*after sufficient discussion and vote*), a date should be set for the school board to meet to consider the recommendation(s) of the search committee. The board should make a decision to extend a call at its earliest convenience.
2. Search committees and boards should anticipate a possible call rejection. If more than one candidate appealed to the committee/board, prioritizing candidates and determining how the call process should be done in the event the initial placed call is rejected.
3. The conference office of education should be prompt in reimbursing candidates for travel expenses to and from interviews.
4. A called candidate should need no more than 72 hours to either accept or reject a call. Giving candidates more than 3 days, or a week at most, places the calling organization at a disadvantage, particularly in pursuing other candidates that appealed to the search committee/board.
5. Only a conference superintendent or associate (or in the case of academies, a designee-principal) should place a call, given the fact that the conference is the employing organization.
6. Some boards will offer a gesture of encouragement to a potential hire, perhaps sending flowers/fruit basket to the candidate's spouse and/or family.
7. Neither the conference nor the school board should hire a candidate for a position if his/her acceptance is contingent upon the hiring of, or the provision of a job for, a spouse. Spousal employment should not be the responsibility of the hiring organization.
8. If the candidate accepts the call, the conference superintendent or associate should inform the school board chair and the board members as soon as possible.
9. Other candidates in the running for the open position should be extended the courtesy of being informed of the board's decision. Candidates who did not qualify from the outset of the search process should be informed at the earliest possible time of their status.
10. A hire is not official until voted by the conference K-12 board of education.
11. Upon official hiring, the candidate should be provided all hire-related details, re: pay, vacation, ERI, retirement, and any and all other entitlements.

12. As soon as possible, the conference office of education should proceed with a criminal background check **BEFORE** a contract is issued. The contract should be contingent upon a “clean” check from the appropriate legal authorities.
13. The conference office of education should carefully review, **BEFORE** the contract is issued, the hire’s certification and endorsements to determine expirations, and discuss with the hire his/her plans to recertify **BEFORE** certifications/endorsements expire.

### **POST-HIRE CONSIDERATIONS**

1. The conference office of education should contact the union certification registrar as soon as possible, in order that an official request for the new hire’s certification records can be placed with his/her previous employing organization. The hire should also immediately request and provide official transcripts to verify earned academic credits for purposes of certification/recertification.
2. The conference office of education should work through the conference secretary or human resource director to secure the hire’s service record as soon as possible.
3. The conference office of education should work with the hired educator to arrange for the move from his/her present locale to (or near) the community in which the hire will work. The hire should have a clear understanding of what limitations, if any, are related to reimbursed moving expenses, weight limitations for furnishings, re: moving van, packing, etc.
4. The conference office of education should provide a job description to the new hire upon his/her official hiring. The job description should be the fundamental basis of the hire’s future performance evaluation.

This would also be an appropriate time for the new hire to understand the conference’s position/policy, re: outside part-time employment during the contract year; church attendance; pertinent CODE items, re: administrator/teacher responsibilities, etc.

5. Where possible, conference office of education and/or local school board members should assist the hire, re: housing; providing tips on available homes/apartments in or near the school community for purchase/rent that might help the hire and his/her family locate.

## HIRING PROCESS CHECKLIST

Hiring the best candidate for a position is a big responsibility. Interviews should be used along with reference checks to identify qualified applicants. The chart below references some essential elements of the hiring process. Space is provided for you to add others that your search committee considers “non-negotiables.”

	YES	NO
1. Candidate is a Seventh-day Adventist in regular standing.		
2. Candidate holds valid certification.		
3. Candidate’s skills and training adequately match skills and training established in the position profile.		
4. Candidate’s spiritual vision and commitment mesh with mission and philosophy of the school.		
5. Candidate’s professional mission and vision are clearly articulated.		
6. Candidate possesses understanding of management of school finances.		
7. Candidate demonstrates understanding of board governance.		
8.		
9.		
10.		
11.		
12.		
13.		
14.		
15.		
16.		

## Sample Interview Questions

### Competency

- What do you do on an ongoing basis to keep your professional skills up to date?
- In what professional organizations do you hold membership?
- Indicate some of the significant development efforts you have undergone in the last few years.
- What do you see as the key competencies needed in your current assignment and how have you gone about developing these?

### Respect for Resources

- What type of budgetary responsibility do you carry in your current assignment? How well have you kept within that budget?
- Have you had significant experience with cost reduction efforts? Tell us about an experience.
- How can you maximize the benefit produced from limited resources you are given to work with?

### Integrity

- Tell us what you do to ensure that you meet the work commitments you make to your students and others.
- Share an experience wherein you had to confront someone to give candid feedback. How did you do it? What did you say?

### Teamwork

- What are some of the things you are doing to ensure the effectiveness of the team you are leading/serving?
- Have you ever served on a dysfunctional team? What did you do as a team member or team leader to address the problems?
- Tell us about a time where you disagreed with the objective or direction of a team you were on. How did you handle this?
- What can you do to ensure that this school has a familial environment?
- How do you currently encourage people on your team to express their ideas and opinions? Give an example.
- How do you handle disagreements? Give an example.
- Tell us your experience in working with others of diverse background from yours. How do you handle differences that come from different backgrounds?

### Accountability

- What kind of system or method are you currently using for reporting student progress or concerns?
- What measure do you currently use to measure student success?
- How do you follow through on projects or assignments given?

### **Customer Service**

- What has been your most rewarding experience working with parents and school constituency?
- How do you handle dissatisfied parents?
- What types of things can you do to help alleviate parental dissatisfaction?
- Give us an example of a time when you were able to help an angry parent/customer with a problem.
- What kind of recommendation would your previous board give you regarding your customer relations skills?

### **Employee Supervision (Principal)**

- How many people have you supervised at one time? How many were part-time? Full-time? How long were you their supervisor?
- Give an example of a time you handle employee grievance that resulted in better working relationships.
- Describe your management style. How do you treat your teachers?
- What would your teachers say about you as a manager?
- What is required of a good leader? Which of these skills are you better at? What skills would your supervisor say that you would need to improve upon to be a better leader?

### **General Questions**

- Tell us your greatest strengths? Weaknesses?
- Why are you interested in this position?
- Why do you think this school should hire you?
- Do you consider yourself a self-starter? Why?
- How do you meet deadlines?
- How would you rate your skills with technology?
- Describe your classroom management system.
- What is “redemptive discipline” and how do you use it in your classroom/school?
- Are there any skills or experiences you see relevant to the job that we have not discussed?

## **AREAS TO BE AWARE OF AND QUESTIONS TO AVOID**

### **Sex and Martial Status**

According to EEOC guidelines, jobs may not be restricted to members of one sex for any of the following reasons:

1. Assumptions related to the applicant’s sex; e.g., some of the members of one gender are unable or unwilling to do the job.
2. Preferences of co-workers, employers, clients, or customers.
3. The job was traditionally restricted to members of the opposite gender.

4. The job involves heavy physical labor, manual dexterity, late-night hours, overtime, isolated working conditions, or unpleasant surroundings.
5. The job involves travel, or travel with members of the opposite gender.
6. Physical facilities are not available for both genders. Only in cases where the expense of providing additional facilities is prohibitive can this be used as an excuse.
7. The job requires personal characteristics not exclusive to either sex, such as tact, charm, or aggressiveness.

#### **Examples of Questions to Avoid**

1. Do you get along with other women?
2. How old is your youngest child?
3. Are you supplementing the household income?
4. Are you married/single/divorced/separated/widowed?
5. Who will watch your children while you are at work?
6. Why aren't you married?
7. Do you have any children?
8. What is your spouse's annual income?
9. Will your spouse mind if you have to go away on business trips?

#### **Race**

It is unlawful to deprive an applicant of a job because of his or her ethnicity. Each applicant must be evaluated solely on merit. Do not permit generalized stereotypes or myths to block employment of qualified or qualifiable minority women or men.

#### **Examples of Questions to Avoid**

1. How do you feel about having to work with members of a different race?
2. Your supervisor will be Asian; does that create any difficulties for you?
3. Are "you people" good at working with numbers?
4. Did you ever receive public assistance?
5. What do your parents do?

## **National Origin**

The United States has traditionally been termed the “melting pot” and at one time it was common practice for interviewers to discuss “old world ties” as an ice-breaking technique. This practice can now lead to discrimination charges. Another technique frequently used is the telling of ethnic jokes. However, discrimination cannot be charged by any group that serves as the butt of these jokes and slurs. In addition, many applicants will infer that if you deride another group, you will not hesitate to do the same to their group. Any reference to ethnic background, whether innocent or not, may be sufficient cause for a suit to be filed. The possibility of this becomes even greater if the person does not get the job.

### Examples of Questions to Avoid

1. You don't mind ethnic jokes do you?
2. That's an unusual name. What nationality are you?
3. Were you born in this country?
4. That's an awfully hard name to pronounce, why don't you shorten it?
5. Do you have people in the “old country”?

## **Age**

It is illegal to discriminate on the basis of age.

### Examples of Questions to Avoid

1. Do you think you'll get along with the younger people in the office?
2. This is a hectic place; do you think you can keep up with the younger people?
3. Are you on any type of medication?
4. Why did you come back to work after being out of the work for seven years?
5. Would you be willing to work for a person who is younger than you?

## **The Disabled**

Interviewing the disabled may prove your most challenging interview assignment. There was a time society largely ignored, pitied, and underestimated the abilities of this segment of the population: Therefore, disabled individuals have been shut out of the working force to a great extent. The federal government, through the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, has stated that discrimination against disabled applicants on the basis of non-job-related criteria is illegal. Employers must now take an affirmative stance towards that group in their recruitment and selection programs.

### Examples of Questions to Avoid

1. Can you keep up with a full schedule of work?
2. Can you arrange for transportation to work?