**Prepare, Practice, Present: What You Need to Know to Get Your First Job**

Presented by Holly Eberhardt, NBCT

Lead Teacher for Music, Omaha Public Schools

Nebraska Music Education Association Conference

November 16, 2022

[holly.eberhardt@ops.org](mailto:holly.eberhardt@ops.org)

Some Things to Think About

• An interview is simply a conversation. If you are invited to interview, that means they are interested in you!

• Tell YOUR story. Be explicit and explain why they should hire you. The burden is on you.

• If the interview is virtual, think about the setting in which you will interview.

Prepare

* Be familiar with state music standards (and the district standards, too!).
* What positions are you considering when you graduate?
  + Start building your experiences in that area now! Be proactive!
  + Some suggestions:
    - Teach music lessons (piano, voice, your main instrument)
    - Volunteer to help with marching bands or show choirs
    - Conduct a children’s choir at a church
    - Seek leadership roles and internships
* Start networking at conferences or workshops. You never know if that connection will turn into a job!
* Do your homework about the school and the district. Use that information to help you prepare.
  + NEVER ask about salary and benefits in the interview. This information is public knowledge and can be found with a simple search, or you can contact the HR department at a different time.
  + Visit the school or community before interviewing. Talk with teachers and community members.
  + Know the address and location of your interview.
* Build your resume and cover letter specifically to the job that you are applying. Let your references know you have applied for the position. Bring copies to the interview and print them on white linen paper (watermark).
* Consider building a website to create a portfolio of your accomplishments (Google, Wix).
* Social media accounts: would you show what you post to your grandparents?
* At the end of the interview, have 3-5 questions to ask the interviewer(s).
* Plan out your answers to possible questions.
  + What is your mission and vision as an educator?
  + What are your beliefs regarding:
    - Diversity?
    - Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment?
    - Student learning?
    - Examples: <https://sites.google.com/doane.edu/eberhardt-portfolio-site/home>

Practice

* Utilize the Career Center at your University. They can help you prepare your resume, do mock interviews, etc.
* Participate in a mock interview.
* Speak slowly and clearly. You will speak fast when you’re nervous.
* Be aware if you fidget.
* Make eye contact with the person who is speaking to you.

Present

* The interview begins as soon as you pull into the parking lot and ends when you leave.
* Arrive early. To be early is to be on time.
* Make sure what you wear is clean and ironed.
* Do not wear too much cologne or perfume.
* Use a firm handshake at the beginning and end of the interview. Use names whenever possible with proper titles. Make sure your hands are warm.
* Be aware of your posture and body language.
* Make eye contact with the person speaking to you.
* Make sure your phone and smart watches are turned OFF (better yet, don’t bring them in!).
* SMILE. BREATHE. YOU GOT THIS!
* The first 3-5 minutes of the interview are critical.
* Listen to the question that is being asked. Take a moment to think about the question. Restate it in your response. Do not be afraid to ask the interviewer to restate the question again or to ask for clarification.
* Be careful of your word choice. Use correct grammar and avoid slang.
* Take the water if it is offered to you. Drink it if you need time to think (or if your throat is dry).
* Put your questions in a professional portfolio pad. Many times, the questions you write down will be answered, and that is okay. Be sure to ask at least one question (besides “What are the next steps?”).
  + Behavior management systems
  + Schedules for teachers/specialists/special events
  + Opportunities for additional positions/extracurricular activities (clubs, coaching, etc)
  + New Teacher Mentorship
  + PD Opportunities
* If the interviewer asks if you have anything to add, do it!
* If you make a mistake, own it and move on.
* Remember: you are telling your story and explaining why you are the one they should hire. The burden of proof is on you.
* What types of questions will they ask me?
* Overview of your educational and professional experiences (“Elevator Speech”)
* Planning of instruction
* Learning environment (physical/emotional)
* How you use data and assessment to make instructional decisions
* Reflective practices
* Procedures and Routines/Expectations
* Relationships with students, colleagues, and families (the good and the bad)
* How will you learn and grow as a teacher?
* Use of technology in instruction
* What are your goals?
* What are your strengths and your weaknesses?