

# Making the Grade

## 2012 Interview Preparation for TECs

Graduate & Professional Programs

# Learning Objectives

- **Recognize** common interview pitfalls
- **Understand** how to prepare pre-interview
- **Discover** the importance of follow-up
- **Introduce** interview preparation resources

# Job Market Reality Check

**“Toughest job market we have  
seen in 20 years.”**

*-Conclusion of Recruiters polled across Canada*

**Any effective professional job search takes  
between six months and one year**

**To find a target career job may require  
building your career over several years**

# A Unique Job Search process

“This is the (hiring) trend we are seeing with most School Boards in Ontario...”

Obtain approval for  
**Daily Supply Teaching List**

Apply for  
**Long Term Occasional Assignments**

Apply to  
**Permanent Teaching Roles**

Mark Laurie  
President,  
applytoeducation

**1 – 7 year timeline to land a permanent teaching role**

# Trends in launching teaching careers

- Ontario's new teachers ...are increasingly **piecing together partial appointments and daily supply teaching** in more than one school or school board



# Patience and flexibility...

**“...are among the important attributes that new teachers can bring to their first classroom ... and they are absolutely vital in the search for that first job.”**



**...and Preparation!**

# **Today's agenda**

**8:45 – 10:00**

Session 1 – Interview Preparation

**10:15 – 11:30**

Session 2 – Résumé Development

# So... Are you Interview Ready?

1

**“Tell me about yourself.”**

Exceptional

Satisfactory

Needs Improvement

# Interview Ready?

2  
“What are your weaknesses?”

Exceptional

Satisfactory

Needs Improvement

# In a competitive interview process



... **exceptional** responses will ensure that you stand out from other candidates

# Demystifying the Job Interview

Think of the job interview as a Meeting

- The purpose is to find out whether or not there is a **suitable match** between your needs and skills, and the needs and opportunities of the employer



# “Fit” is IT

- ‘Fit’ refers to more than the list of requested qualifications
- ‘Fit’ refers to the proper qualities that fit the needs of the students, team culture, school and community

**The interview is an opportunity for you to discover or confirm if there is a match between the job, team, school and your needs.**

# Composition of an Interview Team

- May include any or all of the following:
  - Principal**
  - Parents**
  - Vice principal**
  - Board members**
  - Teachers**
  - Community residents**
- Varies by Board and School
- Inquire prior to your interview
- Be sure to address each audience in your responses

# Common Interview Pitfalls

What do you think are some common interview errors or pitfalls?

- Being too vague
- Talking too much
- Dressing down
- Not asking questions
- Bringing up topics of salary/negotiation
- Projecting lack of career clarity
- Absence of job-specific knowledge or vocabulary
- Lack of enthusiasm
- Forgetting to follow-up
- “Trash talking”

# Employers say...

- ...not personable, enthusiastic and conversational
- ...does not know why he or she wants the job
- ...does not know anything about the school, board or community
- ...cannot articulate why they are the right candidate for the position
- ...does not have any questions to ask the interviewer

**5 Reasons cited by employers  
as to why students don't get hired after an interview  
(Career Insider)**

# **Part I – Before the Interview**

# Homework: 3 Areas of Research

## Yourself

Teaching philosophy, Skills, Qualifications

## The position

Requirements, environment, student

## The environment - School, Board & Community

Policies, philosophies, politics, culture, issues, dress code

Recent Survey of TECs - (only) 21% tried to learn as much as possible about the policies of the Board where they were scheduled to be interviewed.

# Research: Yourself

## How well do you know yourself?

1. Identify, assess and understand what you are offering an school or board.
2. Compile a comprehensive list of your:
  1. Relevant Skills – Technical and Soft
  2. Related Experiences
  3. Key Qualifications
3. Be prepared to discuss these in depth

# Research Your Skills

**Technical Skills** are tangible skills that are quantitative and can be measured objectively.

- Years of Experience
- Education/Certification levels
- Artistic/Musical training
- Computer Skills  
(Programs/Hardware/Software)
- Knowledge of relevant methods or procedures
- Athletic abilities (training or coaching qualifications)
- Mechanical/technical knowledge
- Languages (written/verbal)
- Specialized Training (e.g. AQ's)

# Research Your Skills

**Soft skills (a.k.a. Transferrable Skills)** are qualitative and job-relevant but not easily measurable. More during Resume

- Communication (written/oral)
- Ability to learn
- Responsibility/Maturity
- Analytical/Logical abilities
- Leadership
- Decision-making
- Tact/Diplomacy
- Negotiation/Consultation
- Adaptability
- Positive Attitude
- Initiative/Innovation
- Team Work/Collaboration
- Interpersonal Abilities
- Presentation/Public Speaking
- Co-ordination/Planning

**For more on Transferable Skills  
Resumé Workshop**

# Presenting Transferable Skills

- Review and select 5-6 job-relevant transferable skills/qualifications
- Deconstruct the underlying components of each skill (layers)
- Identify past achievements where your skills have been effective
- Provide insight into how you would use your skills on the actual job

**How can you demonstrate your skills effectively?**

# Before You Interview...

Think about the skills, experience and knowledge you have and how they will apply within a teaching environment.

**How do you believe learning occurs?**

**How do you facilitate learning?**

**How have you grown throughout your student teaching practicum?**

# Research the Position

**Identify, Assess and Understand** the Specific Position including –

1. **Technical** and **Soft** Skill Requirements
2. Daily Tasks and Responsibilities
3. Profile of students
4. Hierarchy of authority and affiliations
5. Unique policies, accountabilities or procedures

**Be prepared to demonstrate your understanding.**

# Research the Environment

**Identify, Assess and Understand** the School and Community environment including –

1. History/Current Status or Reputation
2. Programs/Services
3. Areas of Interest and Emphasis
4. Level of Parental – Community - Board Involvement
5. Culture/Environment

# Prepare your Portfolio

- Lesson plans
- Academic projects
- Copies of résumé
- Laurier program overview
- Photos/Videos :  
classroom, displays, you  
in action
- Student Teaching  
evaluations
- Letters of  
recommendation
- Copy of Transcripts
- Copy of Teaching  
Certificate

**More on Portfolios**  
**Job Search Communication Guidelines**

# Prepare your Interview Agenda

**Key points you want to communicate to the interview committee during your meeting including:**

- Relevant skills/qualifications
- Key experiences and achievements
- Knowledge of the position, school/board and community
- Questions to ask the interviewer

## **Part II – The Interview**

# Common Opener

## The Opener – “Tell me about yourself?”

- Interviewers are looking for **professional information**, education, experience and activities (not personal details)
- Begin with a tangible time period and tell the interviewer what path took you to the current opportunity
- The answer should take approx 45 seconds and include only the **highlights** of your journey!
- Use this opportunity to set an agenda to build upon throughout the interview

# Common Questions

## 1. Tell me about your...

**self · strengths · weaknesses**

## 2. Behavioural-based (a.k.a. Situational)

Past performance predicts future performance

**Tell me about a time when...**

**Describe a situation that...**

## 3. Competency-based (a.k.a. Skill-based)

Identify and/or discuss the competency (skills)

**How would you approach...**

**Describe the core skills required to...**

# Common Questions

## What do you see as your Key Strengths/Skills?

- Identify 3-4 Strengths (Technical and Soft Skills)
- Select relevant, non-generic skills
- List the 'main' skills you are going to discuss first, then discuss them one at a time, connecting them to the job:

“The three keys skills I would like to focus on are my classroom management, organization and communication skills.

Specifically, in terms of my classroom management skills, my ability to...

# Common Questions

## “What do you consider to be your Weakness?”

- **Avoid** a ‘fake’ weakness!
- Identify a **trainable skill** (professional) not a **character trait** (personal)
- If you have an obvious weakness – address it and how you plan to resolve it.
  - New to school, board or community/region
  - Unfamiliar classroom or team culture/environment
  - Limited experience in a relevant curriculum or program area
- Be **brief** and indicate how you will address the weakness

# Common Questions

## “Why have you chosen this career path?”

- Begin with identifying experiences that have tweaked your interest in this field
- Do not reveal any uncertainty toward the role; employers are concerned about retention
- Consider adding a statement about how your skills are a good match for the demands of the job
- Consider referring to your teaching philosophy

# Common Questions

**“What do you know about our school?”**

- Demonstrate that you have researched the school, community, board (history, mission/mandate, special initiative, extra-curricular emphasis)
- Identify what resources you utilize to keep tabs on the school (community newsletters, teacher networks, supply teaching, volunteering etc.)

# Other Common Questions

## What are your career goals?

(Hint: make them career-enhancing and relevant e.g. **AQs** in progress, ongoing professional or extra-curricular development )

## What do you think about recent changes in this field or where do you see this field heading?

(Hint: do your homework e.g. **Professional Speaking** trend reports)

# Common Types of Questions

## Behaviour-Based (Situational)

- Interview involves using past experiences as predictors of future performance
- Examples include – “Tell me about a time you had to deal with a disruptive student” or “Tell me about a time you had to resolve a classroom management issue”

## Competency-Based

- A competency interview involves identifying and/or discussing a set of competencies (skills) that have been selected by the employer as being necessary for success on the job
- Examples include – “Tell us what you see as the ‘core competencies’ required to adapt curriculum for second-language learners.”

# The STARR Response

S	Situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Describe the setting/situation (briefly)</li></ul>
T	Task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Indicate what needed to be accomplished</li></ul>
A	Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Detail the actions you took and the skills utilized</li></ul>
R	Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Describe the job-relevance of the skills used</li></ul>
R	Result	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Outline the outcomes &amp; benefits</li></ul>

# Responding to Questions

## To effectively answer behaviour-based or competency questions:

- Draw upon past experiences and use a STARR format
- Avoid including too many details or being too vague
- Describe your thought process/actions step- by- step
- Clearly & concisely indicate the skills you used
- For negative outcomes, indicate what you learned or what you would do differently

# Sample Question

**“Tell me about a time you had to intervene in a difficult or complex classroom situation”**

Which transferable skills might you present within your STARR example?

# Sample Question

**“How would you handle an angry parent during a parent-teacher conference?”**

Which transferable skills might you present within your STARR example?

# For “exceptional” responses...

Ask yourself –

- What are they **really** asking?
- What approach will make my answer “exceptional”?
  - STARR examples (for behavioural or competency)
  - Highlight relevant technical or transferrable skills
  - Respond in the language of your profession

**Practice Questions**

**Job Search Communication Guidelines**

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# Questions for the Interviewer

- Do not ask: superficial or salary/benefit questions
- Prepare 5-8 future-focused questions which demonstrate your familiarity with the school/board e.g. extra-curricular opportunities, your role, team /school philosophy, primary initial duties, work environment, community environment
- Be respectful of the time - do not ask too many questions, especially if the interview is running late

**Sample Questions**  
**Job Search Communication Guidelines**

# **Part III – Interview Follow-up**

# After the Interview

- At the end of the interview, thank each interviewer, shake hands again, and say something positive about the experience
- Inquire about “next steps” in the process
- Immediately following the interview, ensure that you have the titles and proper spelling of each of the interviewer’s names (e.g. request business cards)

**Why do you need this information?**

# Follow- Up

- Within 24-48 hours of the interview, you should have provided the interviewers with formal thank-you letters

## To whom and how do you send your thank-you letters?

- Personalize letter to each interviewer (if less than three)
- If interviewed by a panel, send letters to your key contact and any senior interviewers (e.g., Principal, Hiring Committee, HR)
- Know the preferences of the recipients – e.g. personal letter, email, phone call depending on the culture of the school/board

# If you haven't heard a response...

- ...within 10 days, you can follow up with a phone call
- ...indicate that you are checking on the **status** of their decision (do not request the decision over the phone)
- ...even if you are not the successful candidate, thank the employer for the opportunity and ask if you may contact them again in the future

**Do not burn bridges – you may not have been the person who FIT  
the current job,  
but things may change and there may be other similar or new  
opportunities!**

“Exceptional” candidates stand out  
in **every** setting...

Interviews – Formal & Informational  
Networking & PD Events

Practice Teaching

LTO – Supply – Volunteer Teaching

 **Application** – Résumé | Cover Letter | Portfolio

Performance Review Discussions

Online Images

# Additional Resources

- **Job Search Communication Guidelines**
- **Interview Guidebook**
- **Career Resource Centre:**
  - Industry-specific resources on job search and interviewing available
  - Career and Employment Workshops
- Meet with a **Career Consultant** for interview coaching

**TEC Career Forum & Practice Interviews**

**Friday February 3, 2012**

**519.884.0710 ext. 4495**

**[www.wlu.ca/career](http://www.wlu.ca/career)**

**“Luck prefers the  
prepared!”**



**Louis Pastuer**

Please complete & submit the  
**Learning Objectives**

**LAURIER**  
**Career Development Centre**