

Worksheet for Interviewing and Informally Assessing Students

Interviewing a student is a great way to learn more about students and informally assess their attitudes toward school and a specific subject area. It helps to be prepared with some questions when you go into an interview, but don't simply read them one by one. Make it conversational.

Part I. Introductions

You: What are you going to share about yourself with the student in order to "break the ice" and set the stage for the interview session? You don't have to go into your life story, but be fair. You have to give some information to get some. This helps build trust.

Student: What prompt are you going to use to have the student tell you something about him/herself?

Suggestion: Tell me a little about yourself.

***Think ahead: What if the student says nothing? What questions are you going to ask to illicit information?

Suggested prompts: What kinds of things do you like to do? What else? What do you usually do afterschool? What's your favorite thing to do?

Part II. What do you want to discover?

Decide on the overarching questions that will guide your interview so that you get the insight for which you are searching.

Suggestions: Attitude toward content area, self-perception about proficiency in content area, knowledge of content area, use of resources for content area, strategy use in content area, reading in the content area.

Part III. Interview Questions

Tell the student you have some questions of which you may ask some or all. Start out with general questions and get more specific.

Brainstorm the questions you want to ask the student:

Suggestions:

General information questions: What do you think about school? What classes do you like? Which is your favorite/least favorite class? Why?

Focused or specific questions: Tell me about _____ class. What makes that class hard/easy/fun? I am thinking of being a _____ teacher. What advice do you have for me?

Content Reading questions: (See attached sheet - Rhodes' adaptation of Vacca & Vacca's Content Reading Interview)

Part IV. Content Knowledge Assessment Questions

Brainstorm additional questions that tap into the student's knowledge about your content area of interest:

Suggestions: Tell me what you know/have learned about math/science/history/English. What do you find easy/hard about math/science/history/English? Why?

Interviewing tips:

1. Be relaxed.
2. Keep the information you collect confidential and tell that to the student. Have the student and guardian sign a permission form.
3. To prompt for additional information, follow up with: "Tell me more about that" or "Why do you think that is that way"? However, don't be pushy.
4. Don't simply stick to your questions like a script. Allow the questions to give you a place to begin and to guide you when you can't think of a question. However, don't be afraid to explore a topic the student raises. This is a semi-structured interview format.
5. Thank the student for his or her time and contribution. If you'd like to offer your student a token of appreciation, let me know, and I'll get a UNCC College of Education pencil for you to give to him/her.