

School Improvement Conversation Starters For Accredited Non-Public School Visits



2012-2013 School Year

Iowa Department of Education

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BOARD OF EDUCATION 2012-2013

Board of Education - This interview should include less than a quorum of board members unless notice of the meeting has been properly published.

1. Please introduce yourself by stating your name and number of years you have served on the Board of Education and respond to this question: How does the board maintain focus on the school's current vision, mission, and goals?
2. How is the school preparing students to be college and career ready? Please address things such as: employability skills, working in a diverse environment, lifelong learning skills, and financial, health, civic, and technology literacy?
3. What do your data show about the achievement of all students (including students with disabilities, students whose families qualify for free and /or reduced meals, students from diverse racial/ethnic groups, students for whom English is a second language, and students who have been identified as talented and gifted?) What positive changes in achievement have occurred? What changes still need to occur?
4. How does the school board communicate school information to the public regarding finances, student achievement, Iowa Core Standards and other aspects of the school?
5. Describe the process and materials used to evaluate the Principal. How is the process currently being implemented benefiting the school board and the Principal in their work toward continuous improvement?
6. In what ways does the school board seek input from administrators, teachers, students, parents, and the community? Please provide examples.
7. What does the school do to create and sustain a safe learning and social environment for all students?
8. In what ways do the school and its local and regional community share resources?
9. How is the school board kept informed of the school's professional development focus and results? How does the board plan for its own professional development?
10. What will be the board's role in helping the school meet its long-range goals? What supports has the board put in place to help the school move forward?
11. Please share what you believe to be your school's:
 - accomplishments over the past five years
 - obstacles delaying progress
 - changes hoped to be achieved in the next five years

GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHERS 2012-2013
PreK-12

PreK-12 Teachers (group of 10-12 PreK-12 general education teachers): This interview should contain a group of 10-12 PreK through grade 12 teachers representative of grade levels and content areas. The group should have a balanced representation of gender and include teachers of diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds when possible. School enrollment will determine the number of PreK – 12 teacher interviews to be conducted.

1. Introduce yourself by stating your name, grade level or content area, and respond to this question: How do your professional practices align with the vision, mission, and goals of the school?
2. How are you encouraged and supported to take on leadership roles in your school?
3. Explain the teacher evaluation system and how it enhances instructional and professional practices.
4. Please describe the opportunities, purposes, and results of collaboration among:
 - Colleagues
 - Students
 - Parents
 - Community
5. What does the school do to create and sustain a safe learning and social environment for all students?
6. What tools and technology are available in your school and how do teachers use these to enhance instruction and student learning?
7. Describe the opportunities teachers have for building level conversations about curriculum, including progress toward implementing the Iowa Core.
8. How are teachers involved in determining the focus of professional development, including teachers' individual professional development plans? How has the school's professional development helped to improve teaching and learning?
9. What do your data show about the achievement of all students (including students with disabilities, students whose families qualify for free/reduced meals, students from diverse racial/ethnic groups, students for whom English is a second language, and students who have been identified as talented and gifted)? What positive changes in achievement have occurred? What changes still need to occur?
10. What instructional changes have occurred to address achievement gaps?

11. How do teachers adjust their classroom instruction to meet individual student learning needs?
12. How does the school make connections with the community?
13. Please share what changes you hope your school will achieve in the next five years.

INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT STAFF 2012-2013
PreK-12

PreK-12 Instructional Support Staff (group of 10-12 instructional support staff). **This interview is with paraprofessionals (e.g., Special Education and Title I). The group should have a balanced representation of gender and include staff of diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds when possible.**

1. Introduce yourself by stating your name and assignment and respond to the following: Please describe the collaboration that occurs among paraeducators and classroom teachers.
2. Describe the instructional duties assigned to you by your supervising teacher.
3. How are you informed of your job role and responsibilities?
4. What training have you had to prepare for your assignments?
5. What additional supports do you need to do your job well?
6. For those of you assigned as a one-to-one paraeducator for a student, how have you been trained to decrease students' dependency on your assistance?
7. What training and support have you received to prepare you for addressing student behavior and school climate issues, including bullying and harassment?
8. What is your role when the supervising teacher is out of the classroom for other assignments (e.g., to co-teach in a classroom)?
9. How does the school make connections with the community?
10. How does the evaluation process for paraeducators enhance job performance?
11. Please share what changes you hope your school will achieve in the next five years.

LEARNING SUPPORTS STAFF 2012-2013
PreK-12 (2 Interviews)

PreK-12 Learning Supports Staff (public schools) (Gifted and Talented, Media, ESL, Title I, Technology, Guidance, At-Risk, Alternative Program/School, School Nurse) -

This interview should include staff members that coordinate programs and/or provide services PreK-12. Included should be the coordinators for Gifted and Talented, Media, ESL, Title I, Technology, Guidance, At-Risk, and Alternative Program/School, and School Nurse.

1. Please introduce yourself by stating your name and the program you represent, and respond to this question: How does your program support the vision, mission, and goals of the district?
2. Please describe the components of the program you represent, including:
 - identification criteria
 - program components
 - monitoring and evaluation processes
 - transition supports
 - exit criteria
3. Please describe the opportunities you have for collaboration among colleagues, students, parents, and community.
4. What does the school do to create and sustain a safe learning and social environment for all students? In what ways does your program contribute to a positive school climate for all students?
5. What are the implications of Iowa Core implementation for your program and how are you aligning your program to the Iowa Core?
6. How does professional development, provided within or outside the school, enhance your work with students and staff?
7. What data points are used to determine program effectiveness (academic/non-academic) and what is being learned from these data?
8. Please share what changes you hope your school will achieve in the next five years.

PARENTS / GUARDIANS 2012-2013
PreK-12

PreK-12 Parents/Guardians (group of 10-12 parents/guardians) - This group should reflect the PreK-12 system with the same demographic distribution as that for the student interviews (e.g., academic performance, college and non-college aspirations, gender, and race/ethnicity). Interviewees in this group should also be selected from parents of students who are receiving services through programs such as Special Education, At-Risk, English as a Second Language, Gifted and Talented, Title I, and Alternative School / Program. District enrollment will determine the number of PreK-12 parent/guardian interviews to be conducted.

1. Introduce yourself by stating your name, telling us about your children in school, and respond to this question: As a parent, what do you think your child's school, does well?
2. How does the school involve parents/guardians as partners in their child's education?
3. In what ways and how frequently do you learn about your child's progress?
4. Are there any obstacles that stand in the way of your child's learning?
5. In what ways does the school accommodate students with special learning needs in the regular education classroom (for example: students with IEP's, talented and gifted, and At-Risk)?
6. In what ways does the school support learning experiences for children prior to kindergarten?
7. Describe the transition process that takes place as students move from level to level (Preschool to elementary, elementary to middle school, middle school to high school, high school to post-secondary, etc.)
8. Do you think that your children are safe at school? What does your school do to ensure student safety? Are you aware of any incidents of violence during the last year that caused a student physical harm? If yes, what was done about it?
9. How does the school monitor and investigate reported incidents of bullying and harassment?
10. How are parents' concerns addressed and suggestions used?
11. How does the school make connections with the community?
12. Please share what changes you hope your school will achieve in the next five years.

PRINCIPALS 2012-2013
PreK-12

PreK-12 Building Principals – Elementary, middle school, and high school principals may be interviewed as a group or individually at a designated site. Follow-up interviews may be conducted with individual principals, if necessary. In large systems, a representative sample group of administrators may be selected for the interview.

1. As a principal, how do you communicate the school's vision, mission, and goals to staff, students, and parents?
2. How would teachers describe your building's shared vision of effective instruction? How do you as a principal foster the shared vision?
3. In what ways do principals seek and use input from staff, students, parents, and the community? Please provide examples of actions taken as a result of this input?
4. Explain the evaluation process used in the school. Has it lead to positive changes in instruction and student achievement?
5. How do principals promote a school-wide environment that is safe, healthy, inclusive, and caring for all students, staff, and families?
6. Describe your curriculum development process.
7. Describe the building leadership structure for determining the focus of professional development (including implementing, monitoring, and evaluating professional development).
8. How does professional development prepare all staff to address specific needs of students who have IEPs, are at-risk, potential dropouts, ELL, and/or gifted and talented?
9. What are the processes used by the school to collect and analyze formative and summative data regarding student achievement and program results? How is data analysis then used to plan next steps?

SCHOOL ADVISORY COMMITTEES 2012-2013

School Advisory Committees - This interview will include representatives from the school's School Improvement Advisory Committee (SIAC).

The interview groups should reflect diversity in terms of gender, racial/ethnic background, and disability, when possible, and should include, as mandated by law, students, community representatives, parents, staff, and school board members. **(Please avoid including individuals who have participated in other interviews)**

1. Introduce yourself by stating your name and representation and respond to this question:
What do you view as the strength of this committee?
2. What kind of information/data do you receive as a SIAC member? What does the SIAC do with the information?
3. How do school leaders involve the SIAC in the process of continuous improvement? What is your understanding of the role and responsibilities of this committee?
4. What training have you received in understanding and using data?
5. In the recent past, what are some of the recommendations this committee has made to the board of education?
6. Were the recommendations approved, and what has been the result?
7. Please tell us how the school and community work together, including sharing resources.
8. What do you hope to see as school goals are set and priorities are determined?

MIDDLE/HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS 2012-2013

Grades 5-8/Grades 9-12 students (group of 10-12 students) –. This student group will include students from the **highest grade levels** served by the school. The student interview group should reflect the student population, including demographic diversity in terms of academic performance, college and non-college aspirations, gender, and race/ethnicity. The student interview group should also reflect low, as well as middle and high, income representatives. Students in this group should be chosen from students who are receiving services from programs such as alternative school, Special Education, At-Risk, English as a Second Language, Gifted and Talented, and Title I.

Schools should avoid selecting students who are children of teachers, administrators, school board members, or other employees for this interview.

1. Please introduce yourself by stating your name and grade and respond to this question:
Describe an effective strategy teachers are using to help you learn.
What does your school do to help all students be successful and learn?
2. How do your teachers know if you are learning?
3. How do you know if you are learning?
4. In what ways do your teachers help students make real world applications to life outside the classroom?
5. What tools and technology are available in this school and how do teachers and students use the technology?
6. How is the school preparing students for the next level of education and/or the workforce/careers?
7. Describe the opportunities students have to develop and use leadership skills and provide input to school staff.
8. Sometimes in all schools, some students are teased (harassed). In your personal opinion, to what degree is that happening in your own school? (Above average, average, below average)
9. What actions do students take if they are bullied or harassed or see that happening to someone else?
10. Please share what changes you hope your school will achieve in the next five years.