

Iowa Department of Education



2013-2014 Conversation Starters

Site Visits for Non-Public Accredited Schools



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BOARD OF EDUCATION 2013-2014

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?
(If needed, prompt with: employability skills, working in a diverse environment, life-long learning skills, and financial, health, civic, and technology literacy)
3. What do your data show about the achievement of **ALL** students? Positive changes? Changes still needed? Or have changes been made as a result?
(If needed, prompt with: Free/Reduced, Racial/Ethnic, ESL, Gifted/Talented, etc)
4. How does the school board communicate important school information to the public?
(If needed, prompt with: finances, student achievement, etc.)
5. Describe the process and materials used to evaluate the Principal.
6. How is this process of evaluating the Principal benefiting the principal and the board?
7. In what ways does the school board seek input? Please provide examples.
(If needed, prompt: Administrators, teachers, parents, community)
8. How is the board kept informed of the school's professional development focus and results? What professional development has the board engaged in over the past year?

GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHERS 2013-2014
PreK-12

1. Please 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 and building?
3. Please share how teachers are evaluated in the school. What impact does the evaluation have on instructional practices?
4. Please describe the opportunities of collaboration among:
 - Colleagues
 - Students
 - Parents
 - Community
5. What does the school do to ensure a safe learning and social environment for **ALL** students?
6. To what degree is bullying/harassment occurring in your school and what is being done to address these occurrences?
7. What tools and technology are available in your school and how are they used to enhance instruction and student learning?
8. Describe the school's progress toward implementing the Iowa Core.
9. How are teachers involved in determining the focus of professional development?
10. How has the school's professional development helped to improve teaching and learning?
11. What do your data show about the achievement of **ALL** students? What changes in achievement have occurred?
12. What steps has the school taken to address achievement gaps?

13. How do teachers adjust their classroom instruction to meet individual student learning needs?

14. Please share what changes you hope your school will achieve in the next five years.

HIGH SCHOOL / MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS 2013-2014

These are two separate interviews:

1. Please introduce yourself by stating your name and grade and respond to this question:
What tools and technology are available in this school and how do teachers and students use the technology?
2. Describe the opportunities students have to develop and use leadership skills and provide input to school staff.
3. Describe an effective strategy teachers are using to help you learn.
4. How do you know if you are learning?
5. How do your teachers know if you are learning?
6. What does your school do to help **ALL** students be successful and learn?
7. In what ways do teachers make the connection between the real world and what you're learning in the classroom?
8. How is the school preparing students for the next level of education and/or the workforce/careers?
9. 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)
10. What actions do students take if they are bullied or harassed or see that happening to someone else?
11. Please share what academic and non-academic (such as extra-curricular, climate, culture or other) changes you hope your school/school will achieve in the next five years.

INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT STAFF 2013-14

This interview is with paraprofessionals (e.g., Special Education and Title I).

1. Please introduce yourself by stating your name and assignment and describe the collaboration that occurs among yourselves and the classroom teachers with whom you work.
2. Describe the instructional duties assigned to you by your supervising teacher. (If not already described in response to question #1)
3. How are you informed of your job role and responsibilities?
4. What training have you had to prepare you for your assignments?
5. Do you feel you need additional supports 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 student 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. Describe the evaluation process for paraeducators?
10. Please share what changes you hope your school will achieve in the next five years.

LEARNING SUPPORTS STAFF 2013-2014

PreK-12 Learning Supports Staff-(Gifted and Talented, Media, ESL, Title I, Technology) - 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, and Technology.

PreK-12 Learning Supports Staff - (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 Guidance, At-Risk, and Alternative Program/School, and School Nurse.

1. Please introduce yourself by stating your name and the program you represent and **briefly** share what you believe to be a strength of your program.
2. Please describe the components of the program you represent, including:
 - identification criteria
 - program components
 - transition supports
 - exit criteria
3. What data points are used to determine program effectiveness (academic/non-academic) and what is being learned from these data?
4. Please describe the opportunities you have for collaboration among colleagues, students, parents, and community.
5. 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?
6. What are the implications of Iowa Core implementation for your program and how are you aligning your program to the Iowa Core?
7. How does professional development provided within or outside the school enhance your work with students and staff?
8. Please share what changes you hope your school will achieve in the next five years.

PARENTS / GUARDIANS 2013-2014
PreK-12

1. Please introduce yourself by stating your name, telling us about your children in school, and respond to this question: What do you think the school, or your child's school, does well?
2. How does the school/school involve parents/guardians as partners in their child's education?
3. How do you know how your child is progressing in school?
4. How 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)?
5. How does the school support learning experiences for children prior to kindergarten?
6. 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.)
7. Are there any obstacles that stand in the way of your child's learning?
8. How does the school involve community members?
9. What does your school/school do to ensure student safety?
10. How are parents' concerns addressed and suggestions used?
11. Please share what changes you hope your school will achieve in the next five years.

PRINCIPALS 2013-2014
PreK-12

1. How do you communicate the school's vision, mission, and goals to staff, students, and parents?
2. In what ways do principals seek and use input from staff, students, parents, and the community? Were any actions taken as a result of this input?
3. Explain the **principal evaluation** process used in the school. How has it led to positive changes in instruction and student achievement?
4. Explain the **teacher evaluation** process used in the school. How has it led to positive changes in instruction and student achievement?
5. How do (you) principals promote a school-wide environment that is safe, healthy, inclusive, and caring for all students, staff, and families?
6. What are the processes used by the school and buildings to collect and analyze formative and summative data regarding student achievement and program results? How is data analysis then used to plan next steps?
7. How does the school determine the focus of professional development (including use of data, 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. Please tell us about the progress the school is making toward implementation of the Iowa Core.
10. Please share what changes you hope your school/school will achieve in the next five years.

SCHOOL ADVISORY COMMITTEES 2013-2014

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

1. Please introduce yourself by stating your name and representation. What is your understanding of the role and responsibilities of this committee?
2. What do you view as the strength of this committee?
3. What kind of information/data do you receive as a SIAC member, (probe for disaggregated data)? What does the SIAC do with the information?
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, in the required areas of:
 - Annual improvement goals;
 - Major educational needs;
 - Student learning goals;
 - Long-range goals that include, but are not limited to, the state indicators that address reading, mathematics, and science achievement; and
 - Harassment or bullying prevention goals, programs, training, and other initiatives.
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. Please share what you believe to be your school's:
 - Accomplishments since the last site visit (5 years ago)
 - Obstacles
 - Changes hoped to be achieved in the next five years

