



A teacher's sense of efficacy can be determined by asking 12 questions.

# Best in Class

## TEACHING



## 12 Good Questions...

School leaders are often asked to select teachers based on little more than an application and an interview. Interview responses are often poor predictors of future job performance. These 12 questions, however, can shed light on a dependable predictor of job success and student achievement—a teacher's sense of efficacy.

In **Creating the Learning Centered School™** we describe teacher efficacy as having three elements: deep content knowledge, pedagogical skills, and compelling nature. Below are questions and answers aimed at revealing a teacher candidate's level of development in each of the three elements of efficacy. Four questions for each of the three elements = 12 good questions.

### *Efficacy Element 1: Deep Content Knowledge*

**Question 1:** Can you identify a curriculum goal or standard that students find especially difficult to master? How might you go about teaching this standard differently?

Listen for... speed and ease of recall. Skillful teachers know which areas of the curriculum are more problematic and adjust accordingly.

**Question 2:** Describe a portion of curriculum where the sequencing of the learning is crucial.

Listen for...specific examples of dependent curriculum sequences. Skillful teachers know what parts of the curriculum require a specific order of instruction.

**Question 3:** Is there any curriculum you'd like to teach if there was more time in the school year?

Listen for...speed and ease of recall. Skillful teachers teach only a fraction, perhaps 20%, of what they know from the curriculum. It should be easy to give examples from the other 80%.

**Question 4:** As you think about a future episode of teaching, talk about specific learning goals that are most important to you.

Listen for...clear and assessable verbs such as diagram, solve, create, and discuss. Be wary of fuzzy verbs such as understand, know, appreciate, and experience.



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### *Efficacy Element 2: Pedagogical Skills*

**Question 5:** Describe some strategies you've found effective in increasing students' ability to remember what they have learned. Follow-up with: How do you think that strategy works? or, Why is that approach so successful?

Listen for...specific instructional approaches. Skillful teachers teach according to principles of learning that enhance memory and can describe how the principles of learning operate.

**Question 6:** Are there strategies that you've found successful in accelerating learning, actually causing students to learn faster?

Listen for...specific instructional approaches. Skillful teachers teach according to principles of learning that accelerate learning and can describe how the principles of learning operate.

**Question 7:** Describe a time that the classroom environment either helped or hindered the learning in your classroom.

Listen for...a specific element of the physical or social/emotional classroom environment and the teacher's understanding of environment cause and effect.

**Question 8:** Can you describe any other principles of effective teaching that you rely on for successful learning?

Listen for...specific conceptual or theoretical instructional approaches. Excellent teachers don't follow recipes. Rather, they teach according to scientific principles such as mental models, personal relevance, locale memory, etc.

### *Efficacy Element 3: Compelling Nature*

**Question 9:** For you personally, what is the most fulfilling and satisfying thing about teaching?

Listen for...genuineness and sincerity. High efficacy teachers derive genuine fulfillment from their work.

**Question 10:** Describe one of your favorite teachers...what made them especially successful?

Listen for...specific characteristics of compelling nature such as the ability to connect with students, genuine enjoyment of the work, accomplishments that were due to skillful practice.

**Question 11:** Describe a time when you found yourself so wrapped up in something that you lost track of time.

Listen for...an example from the teacher's work life. One proof of high efficacy is regularly getting 'lost in the moment' of an interesting and challenging task. Be wary if all the examples of this come from leisure time or hobbies.

**Question 12:** Teachers who establish a personal connection with students seem to be more effective in teaching them. Why do you think this is so?

Listen for...the teacher's understanding of compelling nature as the ability of the teacher to connect with students, draw them toward self, and, in so doing, connect them to the work at hand.