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## CHAPTER 1

# JOB-SEEKING & PROMOTION





## Learning the lessons from teaching job hunt

By Deirdre May, Career Coach, Slí Nua Careers

**Q:** I qualified as a primary school teacher last year. I've spent the last few months sending out CVs, but to no avail. Some of my friends are saying I should call into schools, rather than sending on CVs, but I think that might only make a nuisance of me to the principals. I've only got a few days subbing along the way. Even though I have applied for about eight longer-term positions (maternity leaves, mainly), I have only got called for one interview, and I didn't get the job. I'm beginning to despair. Any tips?

**A:** It is a very frustrating time for newly qualified schoolteachers who are trying to get by on a day here and a day there – but I suspect from the tone of your email that you haven't really accepted the reality of the current situation for people in your position.

From my experience of dealing with newly qualified teachers over the past number of years, the ones who are getting on are the ones who are getting out there. I would disagree with your decision to send your CV via the post rather than calling to schools in person: I think nothing beats the personal touch in this area.

You can call into a school and make an impression, particularly in smaller schools, without becoming a nuisance. Teachers I have dealt with in recent years say they generally get a very warm and positive reception when they call to a school with their CV – and, in many cases, the few minutes interaction in the corridor or schoolyard can lead to a few days of subbing work, and later to snagging a prolonged role covering a maternity or sick leave.

Your CV might be the best CV ever written – though your strike rate would suggest otherwise to me – but it's still only a CV.

There's little to beat the impact of meeting someone face to face, shaking their hand and commenting positively on their school, and asking them to bear you in mind if they need any subbing cover.

Know something about the school (the name of the school and of the principal would help, at the very least, but you should extend your knowledge beyond that – nothing that you wouldn't learn by some googling of the school the night before). Build rapport in those few minutes and you could be onto a winner.

Tell them you are available for a day's subbing at the drop of a hat. Let them know if you get the call, you will be there, no ifs or buts.

Some things to avoid:

- Don't over-stay your welcome – principals are busy people, and they haven't all day for talking to you;
- Don't come over all 'woe is me, tá mo chroí briste' – in those few minutes, it is better to convey the impression of someone who will bring light, not darkness, to the school environment;
- Don't beg – respect the principal's right to contract whoever they so wish for subbing days.

Building up your subbing days is crucial. It stands to you when you compete for longer periods of work.

I also believe you need to have your CV looked at: it may be doing a bad job for you. Is it too short or too long? Does it under-sell or over-sell you? Are relevant pieces of information left out?



## How to put yourself in the school leadership picture

By Arthur Geraghty, Career Coach, Slí Nua Careers

**Q:** I'm a primary school teacher and really love the profession. I qualified six years ago and am now thinking of moving into a school leadership role. Any suggestions on how to put myself in the school leadership picture?

**A:** We put this question to one of our coaches, Arthur Geraghty, who is also a primary school principal. His response follows:

### Leadership study

In recent years, leadership styles have evolved, and in most cases the 'heroic leader' – the isolated boss – has been replaced by a team where leadership is shared.

Distributed leadership is the favoured approach of the Department of Education and Skills (DES).

There is a whole language attached to leadership studies. Teachers who aspire to leadership roles need to be familiar with that language. Many universities and ITs offer excellent postgraduate courses in education leadership and applicants for promoted posts in school are advised to complete a course.

### DES circulars and documentation, and school policy development

School management is directed by DES rules and regulations. Circulars and other documents are sent to schools regularly setting out these rules, regulations and expectations, and are available on the DES website. It is very important that prospective school leaders are familiar with circulars, particularly those related to leadership and management.

[Looking at Our School \(2016\)](#) is the most important DES leadership document.

### Personal skills

Desirable skills include leadership, management, teamwork, communication and interpersonal skills. Good leaders have a clear vision and bring others on board to realise that vision. Furthermore, emotional intelligence is a central skill in interactions with colleagues. Strong interpersonal skills empower leaders to nurture important relationships with their team.

### Leadership roles in school

There are ample opportunities for teachers to undertake leadership roles in their schools. Distribution of leadership is referred to clearly in [Looking at our School](#), and principals are generally supportive of teachers who are happy to take on extra responsibilities. This gives aspirant leaders opportunities to experience leadership and develop relevant skills. These roles may include sports team management, choir or musical direction, Health and Safety Representative, Deputy Designated Liaison Person or Professional Support Team member.

### Give the application form time



The application form for promoted posts in schools is a searching document.

Applicants are advised to begin filling it well in advance of promotion opportunities.

The more thought candidates invest in it, the better they are prepared for interview.

The interviewers want to find out whether applicants can lead the complex journey involved in driving an initiative.

The application form centres around a small number of competencies.

Before approaching the competencies, applicants should first list every life experience where they led or managed in a school, organisation, business, club or society. Consequently, these 'life stories' can then be arranged into the various competencies and used in the application form and later at the interview.

However, if an applicant cannot come up with two to three stories for each competency, it may raise questions as to their preparedness for promotion.

### Volunteering and local community

It is accepted that anybody who volunteers gets far more out of it than they put in. Volunteering provides opportunities to meet new people, learn new skills, work in teams and lead projects while doing good for others and society in general.

The website [www.volunteer.ie](http://www.volunteer.ie) is a good starting point.



## How to make your overseas experience work at home

By Ines Gonzales, Career Coach, Slí Nua Careers

**Q:** "I have been working as a primary school teacher in London for six years. I've worked in some challenging schools, to say the least – in almost every class, I had children from backgrounds where drug and alcohol misuse was rampant. Behaviour was a constant issue in those schools. I have got on quite well. I've also done some courses on school leadership. Now I want to move back to my home place in rural Ireland. I'm afraid that what I have done in London won't really be relevant to rural or small-town schools in Ireland, and that I should tone down my CV. Any advice?" (CT, email).

**A:** We got three of our career coaches to consider your question, CT, in the hope that their views might help you as you prepare for the next phase in your career. Here is what they had to say:

My advice would be not to dwell on the negatives but to accentuate the positives of your professional competencies as a teacher with some international/broader experiences and perspectives. It is important that you do this as subtly as possible, lest you be seen as coming across as believing you are superior.

Mention the challenging situations that you had to overcome and emphasise the role that you played to deliver successful outcomes. Identify procedures and improvements that you have witnessed in London that could be used in an Irish setting for the benefit of the students and the school management system.

Bring things back to basics by pinpointing the similarities in both educational sectors. The mutual goals are to help young people gain a better education and to create a classroom and school environment where students can express themselves safely and securely.

Tailor your CV in such a way that highlights how your involvement in the UK educational sector has developed you as a teacher who can meet the demands in rural Ireland.

**MARY O'BRIEN-KILLEEN:** What you did there can transfer here, but you just need to make that clear in your CV/application forms.

Use phrases like:

"I have extensive experience of working with pupils with behavioural issues, including encouraging them to interact with fellow students during breaks and lunchtime."

"My leadership skills have been well developed through my education and I have put some of the key learnings from my courses into practice during each school day."

Rural/small town schools in Ireland have changed a lot in the past six years – what you learned in London will enhance the education that can be delivered in these schools.

**LIAM HORAN:** Every job application is about matching skills and experience to the needs of the employer.

Look through your experience in London and see what aspects of your experience transfer to the school you're targeting in Ireland today – there may be other items in your experience, such as leading the choir or training the football team, which will be very relevant here.

Give prominence to what matches or transfers best.

There's more to your London experience than challenging behaviour. Make sure to bring that home too.



## Business card for teacher subbing – good or bad idea?

By Liam Horan, Career Coach & Managing Director, Slí Nua Careers

**Q:** I am a teacher looking for subbing work. I was thinking about printing a business card to hand out when I go to schools. I thought it might help me to stand out. What do you think?

**DEIRDRE MAY:** I am absolutely in favour of business cards for anyone who is offering a service, and teachers are no exception. As a substitute teacher your business card shows you mean exactly that – business. To a principal you are presenting a strong, positive impression of someone who is professional and organised – two great qualities in any teacher.

So, what should your business cards look like? My advice to you would be to match your cards to your CV and LinkedIn profile – it is all part of your personal branding, use the same colours, font and photograph on all three media. A word of warning in relation to font size – most of the population over 35 are longsighted and have difficulty focusing on objects that are up close; so keep the font size big enough to read without the reader having to put on a pair of glasses.

The card should measure 2" x 3.5" and must be simple and concise, forget the gimmicks and remember it is not an art installation. If you do want to be different and practical at the same time, use business cards with a magnetic backing; they can be fixed to filing cabinets or notice boards within easy reach. The real benefit of a business card is that a principal knows how and where you can be reached quickly. Ensure your name, address, email and mobile number are clearly printed on the



card. You could also include your teaching registration number, that you are Garda vetted and the year of your graduation.

Last tip: before you distribute your cards, proofread them and, better still, get someone else to proofread also. As much as I am in favour of you sending out business cards, a misspelt word will ruin your best intentions and rather than it being a positive reflection of you, it will be a very poor and shoddy one.

**MARY O'BRIEN-KILLEEN:** An excellent idea, I would recommend same. Anything that will make you stand out from the crowd will get you the subbing work. What about putting your photograph on it as well?

**ARTHUR GERAGHTY:** First impressions carry a lot of weight when an employer considers the suitability of an applicant. Using a business card to accompany your CV can work in your favour if you get the basics right. Your business card has one purpose only – to make it easy for a potential employer to contact you. With that in mind, keep it simple with your name (maybe add academic letters BA, HDip, etc), phone number, email address and vanity (shortened) LinkedIn profile address.

Don't overplay your hand on the design of your business card. Keep it clear and professional. Using a business card to accompany your CV won't guarantee you get to the next stage, but it could possibly raise your profile with the key decision makers.

**SIOBHAN O'MALLEY:** A business card is a very good idea. While the concept of marketing has changed over the years, the practice of exchanging business cards has remained. And for good reason.



## Audios

By Liam Horan, Career Coach & Managing Director, Slí Nua Careers

- [Three key pointers when going for promotion in your own school](#)
- [London teaching experience can be relevant at home](#)

## CHAPTER 2

### CVS & FORMS





## Bad form as closing date passes by

By Liam Horan, Career Coach & Managing Director, Slí Nua Careers

**Q:** The closing date was today. Last night, after much procrastination, I finally opened the application form and started to fill it out. And I failed. Between competencies, experience and exact number of months worked in jobs I held 20 years ago, and lots more besides, I just couldn't get my head around it at all. Is this a common experience? I hate missing out on this job opportunity, but I had no alternative. (AC, email).

**A:** The exasperation you articulate about filling forms is very common, though, thankfully, I think most people manage to get them completed on time, writes *Liam Horan, Career Coach, Slí Nua Careers*.

Forms can be highly frustrating. In my view, they regularly seek too much minute detail and promote repetition and verbosity.

In fact, in this age of dizzying technological tools, it amazes me how teachers and other public service employees must fill out a new form every time.

Surely an online portal could hold the key information and allow them to just tweak and apply each time? I see teachers who must enter all their teaching experience repeatedly into similar forms, often struggling with just the copy-and-paste challenge of it all.

The key thing about all of this is that you must take time. Application forms are a rabbit hole. When you dive in, you'll be amazed how much you have to cover.

Not to mention the suddenly disappearing boxes and text.

Another key pointer is to observe word count guidelines. Many candidates think an instruction to write a maximum of 250 words somehow liberates them to roll onto 400 or 500 words. I have heard of a few cases where exceeding the word count has knocked candidates out – but even if it didn't result in a red card, I would question why you need to write so much.

Are you confusing or clarifying? Can you make your point quicker? Don't overstay your welcome.

Take your time with forms. Don't leave it until the last minute, as you discovered to your cost, AC.



## Make it real, make it about you

By Liam Horan, Career Coach & Managing Director, Slí Nua Careers

The application form asks you to outline the characteristics of an effective school principal – your answer should go way further than just a generic list of attributes, writes *Liam Horan, Career Coach, Slí Nua Careers*.

The answer should incorporate two key elements:

1. The characteristics needed to be an effective principal of this very school, the one for which you are applying;
2. The evidence you possess those characteristics, and a clear resolution to deploy them in this role.

Too often, I see candidates writing in this section a theoretical assessment of an effective principal. This is not a college exam. This is real, and you need to make it real.

So, look at the school. What challenges are coming? A building programme? Falling local population? An amalgamation? Whatever reality looms for this school is where you should pitch your answer.

And, to revisit No. 2 above, you're in six-numbers territory if you can link those challenges with experience you possess. Have you been involved in a building programme in the past? If not in a school, perhaps in your community? It's unlikely you were involved in an amalgamation – but brilliant if you were – but maybe you have led dramatic change heretofore? Excavate your career to find some parallels and list those too.

In this way, you move away from generic and go closer to the surgical strike you need to really impress those creating the shortlist for interview – and what you write should hopefully form part of your discussion in the interview.



## How's the form? Not as bad as you might think

By Mary O'Brien-Killeen, Career Coach, Slí Nua Careers

**Q:** An Assistant Principal position is coming up in our school. I want to go for it. But I hear it will be a competency-based application form that could run for pages and pages – I'm not sure I'll have the staying power for it. Anything to soothe my frayed nerves? (DR, email).

**A:** You, DR, and many others. Many Assistant Principal posts are now coming on stream so a lot of teachers will find themselves tackling the very forms you mention, writes Mary O'Brien Killeen, Career Coach, Slí Nua Careers.

Yes, they can be a marathon affair. A Principal I know is adamant said forms have been created with deliberate complexity to test applicants' mettle; the rationale being that "if you haven't the stomach for filling out forms on an ongoing basis, best we find out now – because school managers have to complete a lot of forms and make a lot of persuasive cases."

The Assistant Principal form you will be asked to fill will seek details under four or five competencies – for example, Leading Learning and Teaching, Managing an Organisation, Leading School Development and Developing Leadership Capacity.

To get yourself ready now, even before the form has been issued, write down half a dozen major achievements from your professional and 'private' life (e.g., community, sporting, cultural, social, charitable and so on). Elaborate on them without trying to slot them into a particular competency bracket just yet.

School achievements might be producing the musical, purchasing specialist language learning equipment for your subject or coaching the athletics team to success. Beyond the walls of the school, it could be your role in renovating the local town hall or running the annual community festival.

Once you have your achievements written down, you will find a home for them under the various competency headings in the dreaded form itself. The school musical role might equate in some way to managing an organisation, while purchasing the specialist language equipment could fit in snugly under Leading Learning and Teaching. Or the school musical might even do the job under Developing Leadership Capacity, if you happened to have a team of three other teachers working under you.



The trick here is to marry compelling examples with the required competencies. Examples can be versatile: if they are good enough, they'll do a good job wherever you decide to place them in the form. But, once used, they can't be re-used. One story proves one competency, no more.

I would strongly advise doing the above exercise now, DR. Don't leave it until you get the form, or it may overwhelm you. When you finally receive the form, break it down into 'mini forms' – create a Word document for each competency and work on them individually rather than tackling the entire form in one go. At the end, copy and paste the 'mini forms' back into the form itself; give it a thorough proofread; and get a respected teaching colleague to look at it all and act on relevant feedback they give you.

Show a willingness to take responsibility, an ability to distribute leadership among colleagues and a real desire to learn from your experiences to date. Don't just tell stories: put them into context and demonstrate what you have learned.

Final advice: give yourself time. Don't run up against the deadline. It's a bit too demanding for that kind of carelessness.



## Six tips to help teachers write better application forms

By Arthur Geraghty, Career Coach, Slí Nua Careers

**Q:** "I'm a primary school teacher searching for a permanent job in September. There are lots of opportunities out there but not only do I have to send in a CV and cover letter; I must complete an application form for each school. How should I go about this?"

**A:** Arthur Geraghty, Career Coach, Slí Nua Careers, has compiled these six tips that might help you or other teachers:

1. Remember that 'one size doesn't fit all' – tailor your application form for every school.
2. Research the school thoroughly before you complete the form. Lots of schools have their own website and Facebook page. The tips below will give you ideas on how you might research the school, what you might find and how you might use that in your application.
3. Find out the big interests in the school – it might be a choir, or a Green School programme. If you happen to have similar interests, make sure to highlight them in the form. If you've done a training programme on multi-culturalism in schools, and the school happens to be particularly multi-cultural, elaborate on that in your application. Meet their interests.
4. Talk to parents of children in the school – they know exactly what's going on. Get them to evaluate what they think are the strengths – and, indeed, the weaknesses – of the school. In the application form, highlight where you can shine, particularly if you know you can help to improve a weakness. If you have a talent that isn't currently being utilised in the school, tell them how you would benefit the school by bringing it to them – e.g., if you play a sport/instrument they don't already have, show them that you can introduce it and how popular it will be with students.
5. The Department of Education and Skills may have a Whole School Evaluation report or other details of the school on its website – check it out. Bit by bit, you should form a very clear overall picture of the school. With this, you can complete a form that makes sense to the Principal or Board of Management – yours will not merely feel like a generic application sent to half a dozen schools at the same time.

6. In interview, let them know you have researched the school. Use the information you have accumulated. Let them know you have gone deeper and further than other candidates to get this job.



## Audio

By Liam Horan, Career Coach & Managing Director, Slí Nua Careers

- [Firing the big shot in the application form](#)

# CHAPTER 3

## INTERVIEWS





## Break the ice, not their will to live

By Liam Horan, Career Coach & Managing Director, Slí Nua Careers

The question “can you talk us through your career to date?” is often used as an icebreaker. However, many candidates hear it as “can you please tell us every little twist and turn you ever took in your career and, in the process, bore us all to death?” writes *Liam Horan, Career Coach, Slí Nua Careers*.

They are not really interested in that three months you did in an insignificant and irrelevant role back in 1983. Trust me, they’re not. If it’s not relevant, cut it.

Think of an answer as lasting for approximately three minutes. If you start in 1979, zzzzz, and lead them exhaustively from that point onwards, you won’t be in 1985 let alone 2019 inside three minutes.

Curate your career. Before the interview you planned to talk about items relevant to their requirements. That should also govern your approach to this question.

Therefore, you can cover 20 years of your career in five seconds. This may be “for 20 years, I worked as a primary school teacher in schools in Dublin and Limerick”.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> year, however, you became a deputy principal. This might be where your answer starts to get relevant because you are now going for a principalship.

Also, come away from the chronological look at your career, and think solely of relevance. So, you might well go back 30 years, as I said above, to find that time you were involved in teaching in a newly opened school – because now you are applying for a job as a teacher in a newly opened school.

Use that opening question to give them one, two or three more reasons to hire you. Please, please, don’t bore them to death.



## Teachers – Have a look at our school

By Deirdre May, Career Coach, Slí Nua Careers

Some teachers, including school leaders, often enquire where they can find that one document that is the ‘fountain of knowledge’, from which to work from, when preparing for the interview process. Sad to say there is no definitive ‘golden book’, if only life were so easy! However, it is surprising how many teachers, preparing for interview, fail to understand the importance of the contents of the publication [LOOKING AT OUR SCHOOL 2016](#), writes *Deirdre May, Career Coach, Slí Nua Careers*.

There are two separate LOOKING AT OUR SCHOOL 2016 (LAOS) publications that individually set out the required quality framework for our primary and post primary schools. Both are published by *The Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills*, and they are broadly similar in content and layout.

LAOS outlines the required educational standards and explains how those standards will be assessed. It also aims to give a clear picture of what good educational practices in a school should look like. More importantly for the interviewee, the document highlights and explains the teacher, and school leader, competencies and practices (called ‘Domains’ in the document) that are required to deliver the desired learner outcomes and experiences for pupils.



The competencies sought nowadays on most educational sector application forms are taken from the LAOS domains. Consequently, it is smart preparation for candidates to read the document and give back exactly what the interview board wants. This is also the case for the required standard of teaching practices both as an individual and working collectively as a part of the school staff team.

‘It’s a 32-page document and I have no hope of retaining all that information!’ I hear you say. Well, in their wisdom, and luckily for the interview candidate, the publication’s authors have synthesised a very well laid out overview table of the required competencies and practices on page 12 of the document. Normally I am not one to advocate a short cut, but official publications can be hard work, so take the break when it comes. Caveat emptor and all that!

Amongst other things the overview presents the standard for good teaching practices as having the requisite professional knowledge, classroom management skills and assessment techniques that optimise pupils’ learning. It advocates continuous professional development and places a significant emphasis on teachers working collaboratively to improve pupils learning outcomes and experiences. These outcomes and experiences are also explained in the overview and include pupils engaging purposefully in their education and enjoying the experience while doing so.

The overview calls for school leaders to be competent in four domains. In the first domain for example, ‘Leading teaching and learning’, school leader candidates can use page 12 to guide their example preparation and demonstrate where they improved learning, fostered equality, managed the school curriculum and encouraged professional development. Candidates could devise a similar preparation method to prove that they meet the requirements of the remaining three domains: ‘Managing the organisation’, ‘Leading school development’ and ‘Developing school leadership’.

To meet the standards required of our teachers and school leaders, candidates must first know what these requirements are and then be able to prove, best done through prepared examples, where they met or exceed these standards. [The LAOS: 2016](#) publication provides a pathway that prompts you how to focus and improve your interview preparation. It may not be the ‘golden book’ for teacher candidates, but in my view, it is not too far off it.



## How to handle the conflict question in job interviews

By Patricia Maloney, Career Coach, Slí Nua Careers

A question that regularly comes up in job interviews for teachers, assistant principals, deputy principals and principals is ‘how do you deal with conflict?’ It can really throw candidates, so it is important to be prepared beforehand, *writes Patricia Maloney, Career Coach, Slí Nua Careers.*

Based on my experience interviewing and managing numerous teachers as a school principal, and as a career coach with Slí Nua Careers, your answer should show you to be mature and reflective, and eminently capable of defusing conflict situations before they get out of hand. It should also demonstrate that you have a structured approach to dealing with conflict, whether with students, parents or colleagues.

Your answer, therefore, can only be as good as the method you deploy for dealing with conflict. Here, I have written what I believe to be a good interview answer, offering as it does an overview of a structured approach and a high level of reflectiveness and self-awareness. A teacher reading this might be interested in the structured approach deployed when dealing with the conflict, either in

terms of adopting it into their own practice or in the way in which I have communicated it in the answer:

“In a conflict situation, I am somebody who listens first, and acts or responds later.

“The first step in resolving any conflict or issue is to establish the common ground with the other person. See what we are both committed to – e.g., if the conflict is with a colleague who wants to deliver high quality education to the students, the common ground is that this is what I, as a teacher, also want.

“Therefore, by establishing the common ground, I immediately shrink the conflict. We can both see that we’re not actually in full conflict, but in agreement on something, with just one area of conflict or disagreement. In this way, I isolate the exact problem or conflict, making it smaller rather than bigger.

“I always allow the other party an opportunity to fully outline their point of view. From experience, I know that by allowing somebody to get something off their chest, the job of resolving the conflict becomes easier. People want to be heard.

“To make sure they know I am actively listening to them, I reflect back to them what they have said. This might take the form of ‘am I correct in understanding that...?’ or ‘I can see that this is an issue that has caused you a lot of upset...’

“Then, in a very calm and professional manner, I put forward my own view of the situation. I do this in a solution-focused manner, not defensively, so that we are working towards a win-win for both parties. I take the emphasis off the conflict and put it on a specific task or activity that we can now carry out to resolve the problem.

“I suggest a task or activity, and ask the other person to suggest their own, or modify mine. In this way, we are now working together on a solution. It is vital to put the energy and attention there, rather than dwelling on the conflict.

“We agree to carry out the tasks or activities and also, crucially, to review them at a specific point in the future to see if we are making progress. I have generally found this to be a very useful way of resolving conflict.”

Some further points about the ‘conflict’ question:

1. Perhaps, you can use an example of when you deployed this approach, and the results you achieved.
2. Conflict is always best dealt with in a timely manner, and in private – no audience. It should not be allowed to fester.
3. Sometimes, yes, there may need to be a cooling-off period if there is a lot of anger in the air – show that you have the maturity to recognise when this is the case. But, as I said above, don’t let it fester; resolve it as soon as possible.
4. Look for ways to reframe conflict when in conflict with a student. The sandwich approach (a positive start and finish, either side of some future-oriented instructions in the middle). For example, if your conflict is with a student who regularly turns up late for school, you could give the student positive reinforcement before introducing the negative (i.e., ‘you are a very good student, and you’re making a big contribution to the school through sport and drama, but we could do with looking at your punctuality. Is there any reason why or how we might be able to improve this?’) Once you agree on an action designed to solve

the issue, you could finish with more positive feedback (“great to see that everything else is going great for you or good luck in the match next week, I’m sure you will do great”).

5. Avoid conflict with groups. If, say, a group of 30 students come to a Year Head requesting a meeting, ask that they nominate a representative group of four or five students. It is easier to negotiate in this way. In large groups, things get polarised easily. Nobody wants to back down or lose face.
6. I favour the LISTEN approach when working with an irate parent as it can defuse a difficult situation:
  1. **L is for Listen** – actually listen. Take care to hear what they are saying;
  2. **I is for Inquire** – ask questions. Clarify that you’ve heard them correctly;
  3. **S is for Sympathy** – if they had to take time off work to come to meet you, say that you appreciate this and you’re sorry they were inconvenienced;
  4. **T is to Thank them** – ‘thank you for bringing this matter to my attention’;
  5. **E is for Empathy** – ‘I can see how upsetting this is for you or how frustrated you are’;
  6. **N is for Now** – as in, act now. Give an undertaking to do something about the issue.



## Teachers, remember to read the question

By Deirdre May, Career Coach, Slí Nua Careers

**Q:** “I am a qualified and experienced teacher looking for a permanent teaching post. I have subbed, filled-in and temped for two years now. I know I am a good teacher; I love my job and my students but am always being pipped at the post when it comes to interview. What might I be doing wrong, please advise?”

**A:** Securing that coveted permanent, contracted position or Contracts of Indefinite Duration (CID) within teaching is a competitive and highly contested process, writes *Deirdre May, Career Coach, Slí Nua Careers*.

I have met many brilliant and enthusiastic teachers, both primary and post primary, who are disheartened with their situations. The merry-go-round of applications, short listing and interview process will take its toll on the hardest of teachers, but when ‘nearly but not quite making it’ is a constant, disheartenment can slowly turn to complete disillusionment.

The following points may help in your next interview.

### Do your homework

As obvious as it seems, you must prepare for each interview as if it were your first time interviewing for a teaching post. A board will expect to hear about your classroom management skills, your ability to collaborate with colleagues and the fact that you are up to date with developments in education practice and policy.

The onus is on you to present this to the board. Do not assume they know this, even if you have taught in this very school before.

## Stay positive

Maintaining the level of enthusiasm required can be difficult if you have been through it all before. Although you may have answered these questions previously, it is the first time this board is meeting and hearing you.

If you are finishing with high scores, chances are you are a strong candidate and interviewed well. However, a tired and disheartened interviewee can translate as a tired and disheartened teacher to an interview board. You must show your resilience and determination.

## What to research

The clue can be in the question: dissect the job specification/ competencies found in the application form. This can provide a good place to start preparing what you want to get across at interview.

If the application form required you to provide information on your communication and interpersonal skills, you will be more than likely asked to expand on these points, so you can prepare accordingly. Have your examples ready and relate them to the job and the value you bring to teaching and education.

## Add value

The chances are that all applicants shortlisted for interview have similar qualifications and experiences. A strong candidate will identify the extra value they can bring to the school. Again, this comes from researching the school and identifying what is particular to them. Do they stage a school musical production, have they entered BT Young Scientist Expo, do they need an underage football coach? What extra value can you bring that pushes you past the strong candidate result and onto being the winner?

## Tailor your approach

Finally, tailor your preparation to each different school. There is little point spending your time talking about something you identified as important to the last school you interviewed with, if it has no relevance in the school you are now chasing.



## Learning the drill for teaching interviews

By Liam Horan, Career Coach & Managing Director, Slí Nua Careers

**Q:** I'm a primary school teacher, fresh out of college, and getting by with subbing days here and there. I have done two interviews, and though I felt I did well in both, I was unsuccessful on both occasions. Are there any general tips for teachers? And should I speak Irish at any stage in the interview?

**A:** Competition for teaching jobs is intense, so it is possible you did a wonderful interview, highlighting your talents and attributes. It could just be that somebody else did a better interview or had more experience than you. All you can do in an interview is your best, and trust that one day soon an interview you do will lead to the position you are seeking.



We tell our primary school teaching clients that it is crucial to link everything you do to the ‘bottom line’ – namely to help young people gain a better education and to create a classroom and school environment where they can express themselves safely and securely.

So, if you’re telling the interviewer that you’re a good team player, go the extra mile and add that “teachers must function as part of a team – only through the entire staff pulling together can we successfully carry out our job of helping young people to learn.”

If you are outlining how you’d like to get involved in training the school cross-country team, talk about how “sport contributes to a happy environment, allows young people to tap into talents they possess, and generally assists in creating the kind of atmosphere that is appropriate for learning and personal development.”

Ultimately, that’s what the Principal and Board of Management are looking for: it is important to see the whole process from their side of the interview table. We have a Key Issues form that elaborates on that and helps you to prepare for the interview by looking at the job from the perspective of the interviewer. To get it, email [GetThatJob@SliNuaCareers.com](mailto:GetThatJob@SliNuaCareers.com) with ‘Key Issues form’ in the subject line.

Should you speak Irish? Why not? Part of your role will be to teach Irish, so what better way of showing your proficiency than by rolling out a *cúpla focail*. I wouldn’t do it for too long, in case somebody on the panel hasn’t got much Irish. Prolonged use of the *cúpla focail* might alienate them.

## Questions candidates get asked in job interviews: Assistant Principal

We deal with hundreds of clients going for job interview each year – and we’re constantly asking them what they get asked.

This a collection of those very questions. We update it on an ongoing basis and hope you find it useful.

### These are actual questions asked of our clients in job interviews

- Briefly talk me through your education, work experience and any voluntary or charity work you do?
- XXXXX school is under the XXXXX charter, discuss how you have followed this charter in your daily teachings/living or what does it mean to you?
- What is the ethos of the school – how is it linked to your subject?
- What is your understanding of Looking at our School 2016: A quality framework for Post-Primary Schools?
- School self-evaluation – discuss one example where you have been involved in this and what learnings did you get from it?
- How have you contributed to the assessment for learning in the school?
- How can we improve links with parents?
- What makes a good team? Can you give me an example of where you worked in an effective team or name a time when you lead a project/group in your school?

- Do you have ideas for communication strategies and how to improve communications? What forms of communication has the school got, for example a website, a Facebook page, internal or external WhatsApp networks?
- How do you facilitate the student voice in the school? Give me an example of where this worked well for you.
- Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a complex situation?
- Extra-curricular activities?
- What do you believe is your greatest strength?
- If you have a weakness, what is it?
- Why should we promote you into the role of AP?
- Do you have any questions for us?
- What does it mean to be professional?
- What are your goals in five years?
- What are your strengths?
- What are your weaknesses?
- What makes a good Assistant Principal?
- What improvements would you make to the school?
- Regarding policies (e.g., child protection, data protection), can you give concrete examples of the challenges they pose?
- What are some of the common challenges faced by schools today?
- What makes an effective and successful school?
- Are you reading any interesting articles on education now – whose writing do you follow?
- What are the key elements of a professional code of conduct for teachers?
- Tell me about an initiative that you have taken a lead in?
- What competencies you have shown in Teaching and Learning?
- Can you tell us about a time that you encountered challenges from a complex situation?
- Say, hypothetically, you were organising an event and another teacher did not want to help you because it was your post, and they wouldn't get paid for it. How would you encourage them to assist?
- How do you work the vision of the school into your daily life?
- What makes us (a Catholic school) different from an Education Training Board (ETB) school?
- What Continuing Professional Development have you done to develop leadership and management in this school and where have you brought it in?
- What courses you would like to do in leadership and management?

- Is there anything that you would like to add?
- Domain One – Leading Teaching and Learning (practices in the classroom)
- Self-evaluation: How do you self-evaluate? Name a significant change you made in the classroom. Were you involved in School Self-Evaluation (SSE)?

## Questions candidates get asked in job interviews: School Principal

These are actual questions asked of our clients in job interviews

- What do you think of Assessment for Learning; what do you think it is useful for?
- What do you think of Junior Certificate reform?
- I notice you have a wide variety of studies on your CV. You did business in 2003, can you take us forward from there?
- Why was it a natural career progression to do the Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE)?
- What topics were the focus of your Irish degree?
- Tell us about your most recent qualification that qualifies you for this job?
- What kind of leadership style do you have?
- How can you get everybody on board with your ideas?
- Imagine you're three months in the job, what kind of changes would we see?
- Scenario: There are six children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in the school. The school does not have a special class and six teachers come to you asking for children to be removed from mainstream classes due to behaviour and put into a special class. What would you do if three parents agree with the suggestion of the teachers and three do not?
- Scenario: The Christmas play is being organised and one teacher has a pupil who has been told they cannot have a part due to their behaviour. The teacher says that it has been more than one incident and it is ongoing. The parent comes to you very upset. How would you handle this?
- How have you dealt with conflict with colleagues?
- Scenario: A Special Needs Assistant comes to you saying the 'newly qualified' teacher in the class cannot handle the class at all and they are fed up having to handle the classroom management. How do you deal with this?
- Scenario: It's November, Term 1, a Special Needs Assistant comes to you looking to be moved as he/she is not getting on with the class teacher. Would you move them?
- What do you think of the Special Education Model 2017? Is it good?
- Tell us about a successful initiative you were involved in?
- How would you promote the standing of the school in the community?
- How can you forge stronger links with the other schools in the community?

- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is in force since May 2018, how would you handle this issue? What things do you need to be looking at? Do you need to change anything?
- The Admissions to Schools policy is now in force, what would your school need to be aware of?
- As Gaeilge: How would you promote the use of Irish in the school?
- Have you any final questions or is there anything else you want to say, that we may not have covered?
- Have you got any questions for us?

## Questions candidates get asked in job interviews: Primary School Teacher

These are actual questions asked of our clients in job interviews

- If you were to write to the Department of Education and Skills, what would you change about the curriculum?
- How would you deal with conflict with a colleague?
- How would you describe your teaching style?
- What are the key elements of a professional code of conduct for teachers?
- What aspect of your experience most prepares you for this role?
- How do you keep your skills current?
- How do you handle behavioural issues such as bullying in the classroom?
- How would you motivate disinterested pupils?
- What makes a good team? Give me an example of a time when you worked in an effective team or name a time when you led a project/group in your school.
- How important are the arts in education?
- How important is teamwork?
- What do you think of tumoideachas (total immersion in Irish)? [This question was asked in a Gaeltacht-based school].
- How will you contribute to the Catholic ethos of the school?

### INTRODUCTORY

- Tell us a little bit about yourself?
- Can you please talk us through your CV?
- What inspired you to become a teacher?
- What has attracted you to this school?

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- Do you carry out short-term and long-term planning? What approach do you deploy?
- Please outline an example of a lesson you planned and taught that you were very happy with?
- Our classes are all multi-grade, how would you ensure each child is learning at an appropriate pace?

## USE OF INFORMATION COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT):

- ICT is a growing area in this school – how would you propose to use ICT to help the children to learn?

## BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

- What behaviour management approaches and systems do you deploy in the classroom?

## SPECIAL NEEDS

- What type of experience of working with Special Needs Assistants do you have?
- What is your understanding of the role of the SNA and the role of the teacher, and how those roles might co-exist effectively?
- We have two support teachers in this school, how would you work with them to improve the learning of the special needs children within your class?

## EXTRA-CURRICULAR

- Do you have an interest in some area that you would wish to pursue as an extra-curricular activity with the children in the school?
- What personal qualities will you bring into our staffroom?

## WORKING AS A MEMBER OF A TEAM AND COMMUNITY

- How do you think you would deal with conflict with a staff member or a parent?
- How would you involve parents in your classroom and with their children?
- Why should we take you on in this role?
- Do you have any questions you would like to put to us?
- Is there anything in the interview that we didn't cover that you'd like to raise now?



## Audios

By Liam Horan, Career Coach & Managing Director, Slí Nua Careers

- [Questions a primary school teacher might be asked](#)
- [Going for a teaching interview in your own school](#)

## CHAPTER 4

# USEFUL APPS





## Useful websites and apps for schoolteachers

As teachers, we encounter the technological revolution head-on simply because we meet digital natives every day. New ways of teaching and learning are emerging all the time.

It can be dizzying at times, but technology can bring real benefits in the classroom. Here are some websites and applications you might find useful.

[www.Post-it.com](http://www.Post-it.com) – capture notes, organises and then shares physical sticky notes

<https://classroom.google.com> – Google Classroom is a free web service developed by Google for schools that aims to simplify creating, distributing and grading assignments in a paperless way

[www.examinations.ie](http://www.examinations.ie) – exam papers, marking schemes, chief examiners reports and other useful examination material

[www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) – YouTube is a video sharing service where users can watch, like, share, comment and upload their own videos. The video service can be accessed on PCs, laptops, tablets and via mobile phones

[www.quizlet.com](http://www.quizlet.com) – Quizlet makes simple learning tools that let you study anything. Start learning today with flashcards, games and learning tools — all for free

[www.memrise.com](http://www.memrise.com) – learn a new language with games, humorous chatbots and over 30000 native speaker videos

[www.kahoot.it](http://www.kahoot.it) – Kahoot! is a free game-based learning platform that makes it fun to learn – any subject, in any language, on any device, for all ages

<https://vocaroo.com/> – Vocaroo is an online tool that allows users to record, send, and download voice messages

[www.Dropbox.com](http://www.Dropbox.com) – A secure file sharing and storage solution. All files are in one central place. They are easy to find and safely synced across all devices, so you can access them anytime, anywhere. Dropbox is built for creative collaboration

[www.edmodo.com](http://www.edmodo.com) – Edmodo is an application that can be used on mobile devices and in the web environment to create an online community of practice. Edmodo is a free social learning platform that allows students to access the course content uploaded by their teachers

[www.padlet.com](http://www.padlet.com) – Padlet is an application to create an online bulletin board that you can use to display information for any topic. Easily create an account and build a new board. You can add images, links, videos, and more

[www.jct.ie](http://www.jct.ie) – Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) is a dedicated continuing professional development (CPD) support service of the Department of Education and Skills

[www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie) – The NCCA is a statutory body of the Department of Education and Skills and an excellent source of Primary, Junior and Senior Cycle curriculum developments. The NCCA work with learners, teachers, practitioners and parents to develop research-based curriculum and assessment

[www.pdst.ie](http://www.pdst.ie) – Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) offers school support and teacher professional development. Support is provided regionally by multi-disciplinary teams who work closely with the Education Centre Network

[www.twinkl.com](http://www.twinkl.com) – instant access to inspirational lesson plans, schemes of work, assessment, interactive activities, resource packs, PowerPoints, teaching ideas at Twinkl!

[www.curriculumonline.ie](http://www.curriculumonline.ie) – view the curriculum in lots of different ways; view examples of student work; use the clipboard function to save to, a private *curriculum* library

[www.nicurriculum.org.uk](http://www.nicurriculum.org.uk) – UK curriculum resource

[www.ccea.org.uk](http://www.ccea.org.uk) – UK curriculum resource

[www.studyclix.ie](http://www.studyclix.ie) – site divides all the junior and leaving cert subjects into topics and gives you all the past exam questions, marking schemes, sample answers, notes and videos

[www.scoilnet.ie](http://www.scoilnet.ie) – Official education portal of the Department of Education and Skills in Ireland. Curriculum focused resources and support for primary and post primary teachers

# Slí Nua Careers

## Professional Training & Coaching

### CV Writing

Think of your CV as your own Personal Sales Brochure highlighting your unique selling points. A trailer for a film, if you like. Make yours so engaging the employer can't wait to see you. Put yourself ahead of the competition.

### Interview Preparation

Our two-hour Interview Training Programme will revolutionise your interview performance. Convince the employer. You won't realise how much you needed this training programme, until you've done it.

### Career Planning & Direction

Decisions, decisions, decisions. Careers can be hard work, if you'll excuse the pun. Our coaches help you to make a logical plan that sets you off in the right direction.



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