



TANDEM LEARNING PARTNERS
resourceful collaborative education

CAPACITY INTERVIEWS

Colorado Association of Charter
School Authorizers

April 29, 2019

AGENDA



1:00 pm

Framing

The What

- Part I: Clarifying
- Part II: Probing

BREATHER

- Part III: Common challenges

BREATHER

The Who: Interview participants

The How: The interview process

Reflections

4:30 pm

Closing/Evaluations

PURPOSES



- To understand the role and structure of effective interviews
- To practice framing questions for interviews

Introductions

- Name
- Organization
- Something you would like have the chance to discuss or work on today

LOGISTICS



- Polling set up
 - Take out your phone
 - Enter the text recipient number: **22333**
 - Type the message: **williamhaft825**
 - Press send



FRAMING

Prevent trouble before it arises. Put things in order before they exist.

APPLICATION DECISION FRAMING



- Is the plan sound?
- Is the group likely to execute the plan successfully?
- Is the plan “in the best interests of the pupils, school district, or community”? (standard of state board review)
- Is the school likely to improve public education options for children and their families?

ROLE OF THE INTERVIEW



- Clarify your understanding of the plan
- Evaluate depth of applicant preparation
- Evaluate capacity to implement the plan successfully

CAPACITY INTERVIEW REFERENCES



- **Quiz:**
 - What does charter school statute say about capacity interviews?
- Answer: Nothing!
- NACSA Principles & Standards: A quality authorizer “Rigorously evaluates each application through thorough review of the written proposal, *a substantive in-person interview* with each qualified applicant, and other due diligence...”



THE WHAT

PART I: CLARIFYING THE PLAN

WHAT IS A CLARIFYING QUESTION?



- A clarifying question solicits a brief response in the nature of
 - yes/no OR
 - fill-in-the-blank OR
 - Short answer
- The additional information will sharpen your *factual understanding* of what the applicants propose to do.

CLARIFYING QUESTIONS



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FOCUS AREAS



- Educational program
- Governance/management
- Operations
- Finances/budget

LINES OF INQUIRY



- Operating assumptions
- Individual roles and responsibilities
- Scheduling
- Budget lines and assumptions
- Program selection and/or development

CLARIFICATION EXAMPLES



- Does the school intend to be a “neighborhood” high school or a “city wide” high school in terms of its enrollment and recruitment efforts?
- How far along is the school on the Early College planning rubric at this time?
- Please clarify which parts of the curriculum, if any, are teacher-created.
- How will you make parents aware of culture expectations?
- What supports will be in place for students that come in behind grade level?
- Has the school selected a specific program for implementing restorative justice?

CLARIFICATION EXAMPLES 2



- Who is responsible for developing the budget?
- When do you anticipate hiring the school leader?
- What is the basis for assuming 3.5% year-over-year increase in per pupil allocation?
- Please clarify the extent to which [contractor] will engage with the school beyond the application process.
- What is included in the “professional services” line in the budget?

CLARIFICATION PRIORITIES



How do you decide what areas require clarification?

- Is this a legal compliance issue?
- Is this a substantive area you need to explore more deeply in the interview?
- Does this relate to core performance requirements (e.g., academic performance targets)?



WHAT PART II: PROBING QUESTIONS

WHAT IS A PROBING QUESTION?



A probing question

- is an open-ended, thought provoking question intended to encourage elaboration on a particular aspect of the application.
- Provides information you can evaluate in relation to the criteria and standards for approval.

PROBING QUESTIONS



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LINES OF INQUIRY



- Internal alignment
- External viability
- Evidence of success

FOCUS AREAS



SAMPLE PROBING QUESTIONS



- ④ Is there a curriculum for the Student Advisory block? Discuss.
- ④ What adaptations/modifications will [CMO] need to make in translating the program from the NYC to the Aurora context?
- ⌚ Can you be more specific about the plan for when teachers will receive, analyze, and use interim data to inform instruction?
- ⑧ What is the status of your potential partnership with [COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION]?
- 💰 Say more about the costs/budgeting for the partnership.
- 💰 Y4 budget shows average teacher salary at \$41K. Is this viable? What are your reference points?
- ⑧ What are your primary needs in terms of board capacity? What are your plans for addressing those needs?

LET'S GET TO WORK: PROBING QUESTIONS



- **Individually:** Read the school background and generate probing questions (12 min)
- **Pairs:** Share and discuss your questions (12 min)
- **Full group:** Discussion (20 min)



LET'S TAKE A BREATH



PART III: COMMON CHALLENGES

What's past is prologue; what to come.

LEADER CAPACITY CHALLENGES



- Ability to execute/implement vision
- Demonstrated effectiveness
- Potential to grow
- Key capacities needed

BOARD CAPACITY CHALLENGES



- Does the board
 - Understand its role and responsibilities?
 - Have current capacity to fulfill its responsibilities?
 - Know and have a plan for filling unmet capacity needs?
 - Show preparation to oversee and hold school leader/management organization accountable?

MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES



- Management of services relationship
 - Understanding of services
 - Facilities terms
 - Negotiated services
 - Financial incentives & penalties
 - Performance evaluation
 - Termination

FINANCIAL VIABILITY CHALLENGES



- Enrollment projections
- Expenditure assumptions (e.g., salaries)
- Facilities
- Fundraising assumptions

LET'S GET TO WORK



- Read the introduction and background
- Individually (10 min): Generate at least one probing question for each statement.
- In Pairs (15 min): Share and discuss your questions. Ask each other
 - What are you hoping to learn from the question?
 - How is it relevant to your evaluation of the plan?
- Full Group (20 min): discussion

TIPS ON EFFECTIVE QUESTIONS



- Focus on what the person/people *are doing* or *have done*.
- Ask applicants to articulate choices or decisions that they have made.
- Ask applicants to reflect on those choices or decisions.
- Ask applicants to assess what they know or don't know.
- Direct your questions specifically to the people whose capacity you want to assess.
- Avoid hypotheticals and questions about future plans.



MAXIMIZING INSIGHT; MINIMIZING BIAS

Applying cognitive science research

INTERVIEWS AND COGNITIVE SCIENCE



- Read the statement in your envelope.
- Rate the school leader's capacity on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high)

SCHOOL LEADER RATING



- Take out your phone
- **If you haven't joined the poll already...**
 - Enter **22333** as the text contact number
 - Type the message: **williamhaft825**
 - Send the message
- **Otherwise**, just enter your rating of the school leader (1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) and send to the same polling number: 22333



Your poll will show here

1

Install the app from
pollev.com/app

2

Make sure you are in
Slide Show mode

Still not working? Get help at pollev.com/app/help
or

[Open poll in your web browser](#)



THE FUNDAMENTAL CHALLENGE



- We are trying to predict the future based on limited information.
- Statement 1:
 - **The school leadership is intelligent, decisive, and compelling.**
- Statement 2:
 - **The school leadership is stubborn, arrogant, and can be misleading.**
- We are not aware of the information we don't have.
- But our brains take the information we do have and make the best story possible out of that information.

APPLYING BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE TO INTERVIEWS



- Have some **standard questions** linked to key capacity judgments that you want the interview to inform.
- Have interviewers **rate applicant responses** to those questions (e.g., 1 to 5 scale).
- At the end of the interview, have interviewers also provide a **gut-check rating** of applicant capacity.
- Weight all ratings equally.



LET'S TAKE A BREATH



THE 'WHO': INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

WHO SHOULD ATTEND: APPLICANT



- Proposed school leader
- Finance lead
- Other identified management team members
- Board members
- Management organization representative(s) (if applicable)

WHO NEED NOT ATTEND FOR THE APPLICANT



- Application writers
- Other third-party service providers
- Community supporters
- Prospective school families
- **Exception:** if any of the above will *also* play a role identified in the preceding slide then they should attend in that capacity.

WHO CONDUCTS THE INTERVIEW?



- Potential interviewers include
 - District staff
 - District Accountability Committee
 - *District board



THE 'HOW': INTERVIEW PROCESS

INTERVIEW TIMING



INTERVIEW PREPARATION



- Read the application
- Rate the application individually against the criteria
- Debrief initial assessments together
- **Prepare for the interview**
 - Prioritize topics
 - Write out the topic question(s)
 - Designate an interview lead
 - Clarify other roles and responsibilities
 - Document the plan (See interview preparation form)

SAMPLE INTERVIEW STRUCTURE



- Application debrief/Interview preparation (> 2 days prior)
- Pre-meeting (15 minutes prior)
- Interview (90 minutes)
 - Introduction (5-10 min)
 - Applicant opening (5 min)
 - Questions and discussion (70-75 minutes)
 - Closing (5 min)
- Debrief (30 minutes)

INTERVIEW LEAD: RESPONSIBILITIES



Before...

- Develop interview preparation form

During...

- Introduction
 - Welcome applicants
 - Set expectations
- Manage time
- Manage content based on established priorities
- Closing
 - Take applicant questions
 - Outline steps and timeline going forward

After...

- Manage debrief

AFTER THE INTERVIEW: WHAT NOW?



- Review areas addressed by the interview
- Adjust ratings for specific application requirements as appropriate
- Document any approval conditions such as contract terms or pre-opening requirements for an approved school.

REFLECTIONS



- What did you learn today that you can use to strengthen your process?
- What challenges or obstacles do you have to making the necessary changes?

CLOSING



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