

This is a semi-structured interview protocol. Questions are presented in categories. Although there is some logic in the ordering, it is expected that conversations will wander in predictable and unpredictable ways. In turn, the interviewer adjusts the protocol as necessary. To the extent possible, main questions are asked as stated. Probing questions—those listed and improvised—transform the protocol into something that makes sense given who the interviewee is, what s/he shares in response to questions, and what the context suggests.

Tell me about yourself.

Probes: Where did you attend elementary school? High school?
What kinds of work do you do now?
How did you get to your current position (as an assessor for principal eligibility, as a coach for new principals, etc.)?

A. Expectations for the School Principal. These questions focus on the interviewee’s understandings of and expectations for the role of the school principal.

A.1. How do you see the role of school principal?

Probes: [*Listen for key descriptors/phrases (‘facilitator,’ ‘sharing responsibility’ ‘instructional leader’, etc.) and for each ask:.*] What do you mean by ____?
How would you gauge if someone was/had ____?

A.2. What is a good school principal?

Probes: [*Listen for key descriptors/phrases and for each ask:.*] What do you mean by ____?
Can you tell me about a good principal that you know or remember?
How did he/she demonstrate ____?
How does ____ make for a good school principal?
If you had to describe—fairly quickly—the role of principal to someone who really didn’t know what one was or did, how would you do that?
[*If former principal:.*] Complete this sentence: Being a good school principal is like...

A.3. What are the qualities/characteristics that make for an ineffective school principal?

Probes: [*Listen for key descriptors/phrases and for each ask:.*] What do you mean by ____?
How does ____ make for an ineffective school principal?
How would you be able to tell if someone was/would be an ineffective principal?

B. Role in Eligibility Process. These questions focus on the interviewee’s role in the principal eligibility process.

B.1. What is your role in the principal eligibility process?

Probes: What does ____ involve?
Which aspects of the process were/are you involved with?
Did/do you have preferences as to which parts you would be involved in? If so, why?

B.2. How did you get involved in the principal eligibility process?

Probes: What made you want to be a part of this process?
How did the district prepare you for your role(s) in the revised process?
What was emphasized?

B.3. How were you involved in principal eligibility prior to this year?

Probes: What did ____ involve?
How would you compare the eligibility process this year to past years?

C. Role in Interviewing Process. These questions focus on the interviewing process for applicants seeking admission to the Principal Candidate Pool.

C.1. Tell me about the process involved in determining an applicant's eligibility for the principalship. [*may result in some repetition; amend protocol as needed*]

Probes: How are you going to/do you learn about an applicant through this process?

C.2. Tell me about the [*insert specific process components; for each ask:*].

Probes: How does the ____ [*insert specific component*] tell you if a candidate is qualified/not qualified?

What do you hope to learn about a candidate from the ____ [*insert specific component*]?

How do you know when you see ____?

If they mention a specific quality (e.g., 'leadership'), what do you mean by ____?

What might a strong candidate look like in the ____ [*insert specific component*]?

What might a weak candidate look like in the ____ [*insert specific component*]?

[*If applicable:*] Based on a ____ [*insert specific component*] you conducted recently, can you describe a response that got a [low score]?

[*If applicable:*] Based on a ____ [*insert specific component*] you conducted recently, can you describe a response that got a [high score]?

D. Perspective on Eligibility: These questions ask the interviewee to reflect on eligibility process generally.

D.1. Which of the success factors stand out to you as most important to the overall success of a new principal?

Probes: What makes ____ so important?

Can you describe some evidence that suggested candidate strength in relation to ____?

Can you describe some evidence that suggested candidate weakness in relation to ____?

D.2. How does a good principal lead and manage change?

Probes: What understanding and evidence about a candidate does ____ [*insert specific process components*] provide?

D.3. How does a good principal develop others?

Probes: What understanding and evidence about a candidate does ____ [*insert specific process components*] provide?

How does a good principal develop other leaders? teachers? students?

D.4. How has the principal eligibility process gone so far?

Probes: What has worked out well/been a success?

What has surprised you thus far? How?

What have been the main challenges/hurdles?

How was ____ a hurdle?

How has ____ been handled?

D.5. We understand that roughly X out of X people who applied for eligibility in the first round made it into the candidate pool. Are you convinced that the right people made it through?

Probes: If so, why? [*probe for explanation as appropriate*]

If not, why not? [*probe for explanation as appropriate*]

D.6. How have prospective principals responded to the new eligibility process?

Probes: How do you know that prospective principals have responded that way?

E. Role in Principal Induction and Support. These questions focus on the interviewee's role in principal induction.

E.1. What is your role in new principal induction?

Probes: What does ____ involve?
What parts were/are you involved with?

E.2. How does induction help a new principal succeed in his/her work?

Probes: How do you view the purposes of induction? [*i.e., what induction is intended to provide/do for new principals*]
You mentioned that a good principal was/does ____ [*use responses from A2*], how does induction support new principals with this?
What do you hope new principals will learn/experience?
What do you expect new principals will learn/experience?
How do you intend for them to learn/experience it?

E.3. How were you involved in induction prior to this year?

Probes: What did ____ involve?
How would you compare induction this year to past years?

E.4. What is your role in ongoing support for new principals?

Probes: What does ____ involve?
What parts are you involved with?

E.5. What kind of ongoing support do new principals need to become good principals?

Probes: You mentioned that a good principal was ____ [*use responses from A2*], how does the district support new principals with this?
How else does the district support new principals?
Who provides support? How?
What needs does the district meet well? [*probe in relation to stated definition of good*]
What needs does the district struggle to meet? [*probe in relation to stated definition of good*]
Can you provide some examples of how new principal support helps a new principal be successful in his/her work?

E.6. How were you involved in ongoing support for new principals prior to this year?

Probes: What did ____ involve?
How would you compare (projected) new principal support to past years?

E.7. How else does your work relate specifically to the preparation, selection, support and retention of principals? Especially new principals? [*probe as appropriate*]

Closing: Given the issues we're interested in studying and the topics that have come up in the course of our conversation, are there any other people that you would suggest we speak with?