Teacher Interview Questions

Purpose & Overview. As soon as possible, you are to interview your cooperating teacher in order to understand her/his perspectives on how social studies should be taught to children, and what is expected of you. This assignment is meant to help you get a real world picture of social studies instruction in elementary schools, and to avoid the miscommunication that can happen when you do not take the time to understand the other person’s perspective. The interview should be brief (20-30 minutes) and the questions you ask are up to you. You may select sample ones from the next page or create your own.

Suggestion for Arranging & Conducting the Interview

- On the first day of your M301 field experience, schedule an interview with your cooperating teacher. Find out the most convenient time and place for her/him to meet.
- Prepare a list of questions – practice asking the questions on a friend or relative.
- Take notes and/or record the interview. Hint: Batteries have a way of acting up.
- Start on a positive note. Thank your cooperating teacher for taking the extra time to talk to you.
- LISTEN CAREFULLY! Do not interrupt, but do follow up interesting responses with “Tell me more about . . .” or “Can you elaborate on that?”
- Do not feel compelled to ask all the questions from your list. Go with the flow.
- End on a positive note (e.g., “What do you find most rewarding about teaching social studies to ___ graders?”), and thank her/his for their time and ideas about social studies teaching.
- Immediately after the interview, add details to your notes so that you will remember what your cooperating teacher said. Also, jot down your initial reaction to what your cooperating teacher said about social studies teaching.
- Follow-up the interview with a written “thank you” note.

Narrative Reflection. Your word-processed summary (no more than two pages please) is due as soon as possible after the interview.

- Begin with an introduction of your cooperating teacher (name, grade level, etc.) and the setting (school name and location, socio-economic make-up of the community, number of students in your classroom and number who receive special services, classroom resources, etc.).
Next explain how you think the information you obtained during the interview could help you plan social studies instruction this semester. Focus especially on how might you work within the context of your cooperating teacher’s ideas about social studies teaching and learning, AND teach minds-on, hands-on, hearts-on social studies lesson(s).
Sample Interview Questions

- How long have you been a teacher?
- What grades have you taught?
- How did your teacher education program prepare you to teach social studies?
- Do you think social studies instruction is a priority at this school? Why/Why not?
- What is the focus of your social studies curriculum?
- How comfortable are you teaching social studies?
- How often do you teach social studies?
- How do you select social studies topics? How do you prepare the unit/lessons?
- How do you typically teach a social studies lesson?
- Do you integrate social studies with other subject areas? If yes, which subjects and how?
- Is there a social studies topic you would like me to teach?
- Are there any restrictions on things I may do?
- What resources are available for me to use?
- How do you think your children feel about social studies?
- How many children in your classroom have disabilities? Are there any English Language Learners in your classroom? What do you do differently for these children?
- What is the most difficult thing about teaching social studies in your classroom?
- Have you noticed changes in how social studies is taught since you became a teacher? If yes, what are they? What are your thoughts/feelings about these changes?
Teacher Relationships With Students

1. What kind of students do you like to work with? What type of students could you teach most effectively?
2. You give an assignment. A student ridicules the assignment, saying it doesn’t make sense. What would you do?
3. How do you help students experience success?
4. How would you individualize instruction for students?
5. What procedures do you use to evaluate student progress besides using tests?
6. How would you challenge the slow learner and the advanced learner within the same class?

Teacher Relationships With Colleagues

1. What kind of teachers would you prefer to work with? Why?
2. What activities would you like to work with in our school?
3. What quality or qualities do you have that would enhance our teaching staff?
4. What are some personality characteristics you find undesirable in people?
5. Who should be responsible for discipline in a school? Why?
6. What needs and/or expectations do you have of the school administration?

Teacher Relationships With Parents

1. What do you feel is the most effective way to communicate with parents? Describe how you have used this/these technique(s).
2. Describe the reasons why you would contact parents.
3. What would you include in your Open House presentations to parents?
4. What community activities would you like to be associated with? Why?

Instructional Techniques

1. Describe any school experience you have had, particularly in student teaching (or in another teaching position) that has prepared you for a full-time position at our school.
2. How would you integrate technology into the curriculum you would teach?
3. Describe any innovative projects you have been involved in developing.
4. Give an example of how you have used cooperative learning in your classroom.
5. What four words would students use to describe your teaching strategies?
6. What rules do you have for your classroom?
7. Describe your teaching style and how you accommodate the different learning styles of the students in your classes.
8. What do you consider to be your strengths and how will you use them in your teaching?

A Potpourri of Topics and Background Information

1. Why did you choose to become a teacher?
2. What are your hobbies and interests?
3. What are your plans for continuing your professional growth?
4. Tell me about an interesting article you have read recently in a professional journal.
5. What contributions can you make to our school?
6. What current trends in public education please you? Displease you?
7. Tell me about the three people who have most influenced your own education and educational career.
Teacher Interview Questions

1. What is the ideal number of children for one activity at a time?
2. Have you done anything with weather in the past? If so, what? Are there any topics we should avoid?
3. How often do you see the children using the weather station? Daily? How often would you like to use the weather station? Will it be used as part of a weather theme? If so, how long would the theme be? Weeks?
4. If the different seasons are the overall themes of the activities, could you use the weather station seasonally?
5. Would you prefer all activities to be able to have the children do them without a teacher, i.e. free play? Or only with a teacher? Perhaps a mix? If so, what would be ideal ratio?
6. Do you foresee any limits to the types of activities? Should they be contained within the station? Or could they branch out and be used else where within the room? Ex. Dress-Up.
7. Do you have a preferred set number of activities? We’re thinking between 3-7 activities per season?
8. Could there be possible storage else where within the center? We might have the station be set up for one season of activities at a time. Is this possible? Do you have any thoughts about this?
9. We have an idea for a Weather Dress-Up game. Could that be separate and remain with the hub? Or could these be added to already existing Dress-Up Equipment? Movability?
10. When you create lessons or activities to do with the children, is there a set format that you follow? Would it be beneficial for us to follow a similar format? Do you know if the other teachers use a format/ a similar format?
11. An idea of a worksheet/ lesson bin was proposed, do you see this being helpful or desirable?
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4. Give an example of how you have used cooperative learning in your classroom.

5. What four words would students use to describe your teaching strategies?

6. What rules do you have for your classroom?

7. Describe your teaching style and how you accommodate the different learning styles of the students in your classes.
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Interview Questions
Sample Interview Questions by Field

General
1. What makes you a good fit for this position?
2. What do you see as your strengths? Weaknesses? What are you doing to improve the areas that you feel need improvement?
3. What is the one word that you would use to describe yourself?
4. What attracted you to our organization?
5. How do you prioritize your time and workload?
6. Please describe your ideal job; work environment; day at work.
7. What specific goals have you established for your career? What are your plans to make these things happen?
8. What is your definition of success? How do you know when you are successful? Please give an example of a recent success.
9. How would you describe your abilities to work as a member of a team? What do you think makes someone a successful team player?
10. How would you rate your ability to deal with stress? How would you describe your ability to handle high pressure situations?
11. How would you rate your ability to deal with conflict? Please give an example of a time when you had a conflict; how did you resolve it?
12. What job has been your favorite? What did you like best about it?
13. What are your long term career goals?
14. What is your greatest professional accomplishment to date?
15. How much supervision have you received in previous positions? Was that a good fit? Would you prefer more or less supervision?
16. Please describe a situation that you were unable to resolve. What did you learn from this? In retrospect, would you have done anything differently?
17. What is the quality that sets you apart from other candidates?
18. What motivates you? If you were tasked with motivating a team, how would you do so?
19. What does the term diversity mean to you? Do you think having a diverse workforce is important? Why?
20. Please give an example of a time that you were forced to comply with a policy with which you did not agree?
21. Please describe an example of a time that you delivered “world class” customer service.
22. What steps do you take in making a decision or solving a problem?
23. Please give an example of a time that you were able to identify a small problem and correct it before it became a major problem?
24. What is the best piece of advice you ever received?
25. What do you do when you begin to feel overwhelmed with your workload or responsibilities?
26. How comfortable do you feel in giving presentations to a group?
27. How comfortable do you feel training others? How can you tell if someone is “getting” what you are trying to teach them? What would you do if they weren’t?
28. How good of a listener would you say you are? Have you ever found yourself in a situation that you found it hard to be a good listener?
29. How comfortable are you with multi-tasking? Do you handle interruptions well?
30. Please describe a situation that you found yourself working with someone that didn’t like you? How did you handle this? What did you learn from the experience?
31. What kind of people do you find it most difficult to work with? How do you handle dealing with difficult people?
32. What is the most significant contribution that you have made in your career thus far?
33. Please describe a time that you failed to meet a deadline. What did you fail to do? What were the repercussions? What did you learn?
34. How well do you handle criticism? What would you do if you disagreed with the criticism? What is the most helpful criticism you have ever received?
35. What was the last argument that you won and how did you do so?
36. What is the management style that you most prefer from a supervisor?
37. What do you like to do in your spare time?
38. What aspect of your last position gave you the most satisfaction?
39. Are you involved in your community?
40. Are you a member of any professional organizations?

For Positions in the Field of Education

1. What motivated you to become an educator?
2. Define what you believe to be the ideal teacher?
3. How do you motivate students? What would you do if you realized that your approach wasn’t working or wasn’t as effective as you wanted it to be?
4. How comfortable are you managing a classroom? What is your classroom management philosophy? What have you found to be the toughest aspect of classroom management?
5. What do you believe are the most important recent developments within the industry?
6. How do you develop curriculum? What would you do if you realized that your curriculum wasn’t effective?
7. How do you evaluate students’ performance? How can you tell if a student is “getting” the material? How can you tell if they are not? How would you deal with this situation?
8. How do you individualize learning in a classroom of students with different learning styles and needs?
9. What teacher had the greatest influence on you?
10. How do you handle students with consistent behavior problems?
11. How would you work with parents who disagree with your teaching style or assessment of their child?
12. How do you involve parents in the learning process?
13. Please describe a time that you deviated from your lesson plan for a “teachable moment?”
14. Please describe a lesson plan that you have developed. What were the objectives, the format of the lesson and how you evaluated whether or not the objectives were achieved?

For Environmental/Non-Profit Positions

1. What attracts you to this position? From what you know about the position, what job duties are most exciting to you?
2. What do you know about our organization?
3. How does the mission of our organization fit with your goals and objectives?
4. What is the skill or quality that you possess that would be of most value to our organization?
5. How well do you handle controversy? Please give an example of a time that you had to deal with a controversial situation.
6. How do you evaluate an agency when you are looking for a job?
7. What do you think this job requires and how do you match those requirements?
8. What makes you think you could be successful here?
9. How do you feel about working with a Board to determine organizational goals and implement new plans/programs?
10. What is your experience with fundraising? How comfortable are you with approaching donors?
11. From what you know about our organization, what opportunities or concerns can you identify as you think about joining us?
For Social Service Positions

1. In your opinion, what are the greatest challenges/barriers to the population that this organization serves?

2. Why have you selected a career in social work?

3. What do you hope to accomplish as a social worker?

4. What is your philosophy of social work?

5. What do you think of the recent changes in the welfare system?

6. What do you think is going to happen in the field in five years?

7. What are the different kinds of diversity that you would expect to encounter in this position/working with this clientele?

8. What computer programs are you comfortable with? How do you track and manage data?

9. How familiar are you with various community resources? How do you handle working with individuals from other agencies? How do you develop relationships with partner agencies?

10. How do you motivate clients? How do you handle clients that are not motivated?

11. How do you maintain professional boundaries while still developing appropriate relationships with your clients?

12. Please give an example of how you would deal with a difficult or angry client.

13. Please describe how you assess client needs. What steps would you take in developing a case plan for each client?

14. How do you stay current on trends within the field?

15. Social service work can sometimes be very intense; how do you relieve everyday tensions?

16. What have you learned in school that will help you do this job?

17. How do you feel about home visits
**Librarian Interview Questions**

The following is a list of suggested questions and possible responses to use when interviewing potential Library Media Specialists

1. **How do your background, education, and work experiences qualify you for the position of Library Media Specialist?**
   - Librarian working with grade 7 and above must have a School Librarian Certification (e.g., Teacher of Library – Elementary, Teacher of Library – Secondary, Library Media Specialist)
   - Librarian should be comfortable using and integrating technology throughout his/her work with students and teachers
   - Librarian should be capable of differentiating learning for all students
   - Librarian should have an understanding of the library’s role in reading motivation and school-wide programming
   - Librarian should have an understanding of inquiry-based learning and teaching information fluency skills

2. **What is your philosophy of education? How does your vision of the school library fall within this philosophy?** The answers to these questions reflect individual beliefs; nonetheless, their vision for the school library should incorporate the following ideas:
   - The school library fosters a community of learning, literacy, and inquiry that leads to high academic achievement
   - The school library is an integral part of the school and serves as a hub for learning and student success
   - The school library has an important role in fostering independent reading

3. **How would you integrate technology and information literacy skills into your work with students and teachers?**
   - Librarian should be comfortable using technology on a consistent basis
   - Librarian teaches technology and information literacy skills from the Information Fluency Continuum (IFC)
• Librarian understands the inquiry process and how to infuse information literacy skills in collaboration with teachers across the curriculum
• Librarian expresses knowledge of a particular research methodology (e.g., Independent Investigation Method, Big 6)
• Librarian should stay up-to-date on the latest technologies and their use for teaching and learning
• Librarian should provide access to online databases and electronic resources
• Librarian should ensure the library is integrated into the school’s technology plan
• Librarian should communicate to students and faculty the ethical and safe use of technology
• Librarian should offer professional development to teachers on the use of technology and electronic resources for content-area learning

4. How do you connect what you do in the library with the classroom curriculum?
• Librarian should collaborate with classroom teachers to design inquiry based units that integrate the teaching and application of information fluency skills
• Librarian should collaborate with classroom teachers to co-teach whenever possible

5. What do you see as the role of the librarian in the school setting and what do you hope to bring to the library?
• Librarian should be an instructional leader in the school
• Librarian should provide professional development for teachers
• Librarian should communicate regularly with staff, students, and parents about library resources and programs in various forms (e.g., print and electronic newsletters, displays, Web page)
• Librarians should assist the school in integrating the library program into the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)

6. What kind of library attracts students, staff and parents?
• Library should be a central hub for student achievement and independent learning
• Library should be a bright, warm and inviting space that welcomes students, staff and parents
• Library should be a well-maintained space that incorporates comfortable reading areas, an instructional area (for whole groups, small groups and individuals), clear signage, creative displays and technology
7. What is library automation? How do you use and maintain a library automation system?

- Automation is a software package used to assist building level librarians with the management of the library catalog (OPAC-Online Public Access Catalog), circulation, material and patron activity, as well as the production of a variety of reports and statistics.
- There are many automation programs, some of which are Web-based and others of which are only accessible at the library.
- Librarian should have a basic understanding of the automation process, maintenance of a library automation program, importation and deletion of material records, preserving the integrity of catalog records, the regular backup of data, the use of the system to monitor and prepare reports of library circulation and usage.

8. How would you promote reading?

- Librarian should provide a wide variety of programming (e.g., author visits, author chats, displays, book talks, summer reading) to promote reading throughout the school.
- Librarian should use technology to promote reading (e.g., Web-based catalog, author Websites, wikis, blogs).
- Librarian should collaborate with public library for book talks and community outreach activities.

9. How do you develop and maintain a library collection that will meet the needs of our students, parents, and staff?

- Librarian should survey the needs and interests of students, teachers and parents in the school.
- Librarian should use professional review sources (e.g., School Library Journal, Booklist, Horn Book) and collection development/selection tools (e.g., Titlewave) to develop material orders.
- Librarian should regularly read a wide variety of material for school-aged children and young adults.
- Librarian should provide materials in a variety of formats including print, e-books, software, electronic databases, audio/visual, etc.
- Librarian should continually discard (weed) old, damaged, and out-dated materials to maintain a collection that meets the needs and interests of students, teachers, staff and the curriculum.

10. What type of schedule would you set up for library classes?
- Librarian should be able to schedule the library space for maximum and most effective use of the space using a flexible schedule and open access
- A public version of the library’s master schedule should be clearly posted
- Librarian should schedule classes as a result of planned library use and instruction in order to integrate with classroom learning experiences
- The library schedule should provide access to resources, opportunities for independent and group learning, and instruction in information fluency skills

Sample Teacher Interview Questions:

1. How do you plan for and teach a typical lesson?
2. How do you differentiate your instruction to meet the needs of all learners?
3. Describe how you integrate technology into your lessons.
4. How do you stimulate ACTIVE, ENGAGED participation in your classroom?
5. What are some ways you give students/parents feedback?
6. What are some characteristics of a well-managed classroom?
7. What types of rewards and consequences do you use in your classroom?
8. How will you focus on the School Improvement Plan and student achievement?
9. You are having a difficult time establishing a positive rapport with a student in your class. The relationship continues to fail over time. The student does not complete homework assignments or participate in class, isolates herself from other students, and will not speak to you privately. What is your next step?
10. You are in the middle of a lesson and a parent of one of your students abruptly enters your classroom unannounced. He/she is visibly upset, demands your immediate attention, and is using inappropriate language. How do you react?
Sample Counselor Interview Questions:

1. What is the counseling theory that you most closely follow?

2. How would you divide your time between meeting the immediate needs of the students and keeping up with the paperwork?

3. How will you evaluate your programs to meet (a) current state standards; (b) standards of best practice for a comprehensive guidance and counseling program; and (c) the national standards?

4. What do you see as the role of a counselor in a school this size?

5. What is something new you could add to the program?

6. What technology applications do you see being useful in your work?

7. What do you think the role of the counselor is in preventing school violence?

8. What experiences have you had in working with special education students?

9. How would you handle an irate parent?

10. What can you contribute that is different from a social worker, school psychologist, or mental health counselor?
Sample Paraprofessional Interview Questions:

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself.

2. Please share with me a brief summary of your previous and current work experience?

3. What do you know about our district/school/worksite? Why do you want to work for our system?

4. How do you see your role as a paraprofessional in the classroom?

5. How would you handle conflict with the teacher you are working with? Give an example of how you handled a workplace conflict in the past?

6. What is your experience with technology in the classroom?

7. What are your thoughts on continuing to update your skills through professional learning specifically designed for paraprofessionals?

8. You are having a very busy day with lots on your plate. However, the teacher asks you to drop everything and handle a small group activity for her. How do you respond?

9. How do you feel about constructive criticism?

10. You just finished a small group reading activity, but the teacher indicated she didn’t think it met the needs of the students. She offered many suggestions for improvement. How would you respond?
Sample Custodial Interview Questions:

1. Tell me a little about yourself.

2. What do you know about our district/school/worksite? Why do you want to work for our district?

3. What interests you about this job and what skills and strengths can you bring to it?

4. Please share a brief summary of your previous and current work experiences?

5. What would you do if you observed a student smoking in the restroom?

6. How do you see your role impacting the daily operations of the school?

7. How do you see your role relating to student success?

8. How do you see your position effecting the teachers’ daily operations?

9. A teacher brings to your attention that you did not clean her room well enough. How would you respond?

10. As you are cleaning the restroom one morning and a student confides in you that his mom is smoking marijuana. What would you do?
Sample Secretarial Interview Questions:

1. Tell me a little about yourself.

2. What do you know about our district/school/worksite? Why do you want to work for our district?

3. What interests you about this job and what skills and strengths can you bring to it?

4. Please share a brief summary of your previous and current work experiences?

5. How would your rate your software skills in MS Word, Excel and PowerPoint? How have you used these programs in the past?

6. How are your typing skills?

7. How do you respond when you overhear a group of teachers complaining about a new policy the principal just implemented?

8. An angry parent enters the front office and demands to see the principal. However, the principal is off-campus. How do you respond?

9. A teacher responds angrily to you after you’ve emailed her for not turning in a form needed by the front office. How do you respond?

10. The principal requests a report from you by the end of the day. It’s 12:30 and you feel it’s impossible to meet the deadline. How do you respond?
A typical interview will last approximately 30 minutes. During that brief time, you may be asked as few as 8-10 questions. Therefore, your responses to those questions are crucial. You have 30 minutes to sell your services! Since it is impossible to know exactly which questions will be asked, prepare for a variety of questions. Consider participating in a mock interview with your College Career Consultant or in Mock Interview Day sponsored each semester by OSU Career Services. These are excellent ways to improve your skills and network with professionals in the area.

Five Practical Interviewing Tips
1. Speak in specifics rather than in generalities. Think of the interview as a process of storytelling in which your role is to clearly illustrate your personal qualities and life experiences.
2. If you don’t understand a question, ask for clarification or paraphrase the question back to the interviewer.
3. Stress important skills that all employers seek, including initiative, honesty, reliability, teamwork, and communication skills. Use personal examples to reinforce these qualities.
4. Be honest at all times. Integrity is a highly valued quality in today’s world.
5. Be yourself. Beyond the professional skills and education you bring to the interview, the decision is also based on whether your personality fits with the culture of the organization. Refer to Ready Reference G-13 Reducing Employer Fears.

50 Questions for a Teaching Candidate
1. Why do you want to teach?
2. What is your philosophy of education?
3. When students are having difficulty learning a skill or concept, what do you do?
4. Describe your style of teaching.
5. Would you like to be involved in community or school-related activities?
6. What do you plan to be doing in five years? What are your career goals?
7. Describe your student teaching and/or other experiences working with children.
8. What was your biggest problem in student teaching? How did you resolve it?
9. How would your instructors describe you? The students in your class? Your cooperating teacher(s)?
10. How do you personalize your teaching?
11. What techniques would you use to keep students actively involved and motivated during a lesson?
12. What methods do you use for classroom management?
13. When students finish assignments early, how do you encourage them to utilize free time?
14. How would you work with students who perform below grade level, especially those from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds or who have little family support?
15. What coursework has contributed most to your being a competent teacher?
16. How would you utilize teacher aides and parent volunteers?
17. Are parent-teacher conferences important? Why?
18. Why do you want to work in our district?
19. What materials have you used that you find most effective for students with special needs?
20. Why should our school district hire you over another candidate?
22. Describe the types of quizzes and tests that you give.
23. A student is consistently late to your class. How do you handle the situation?
24. What would you do if a student refused to do the work you assigned?
25. How would you handle a student who continually exhibited “inappropriate” behavior in your classroom?
26. How do you engage a parent in the education of his or her child?

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27. How should a student’s educational achievement and progress be measured?
28. You are informed that a staff member has been talking behind your back about what he or she sees as your ineffective teaching methods. What would you do?
29. What do you expect from your principal?
30. What is one of your development areas? How are you working to overcome this area?
31. If I walked into your classroom on a typical day, what would I see?
32. What are some trends, issues, and methodologies in education that relate to your specific curriculum area or grade level?
33. What books are you currently reading or have recently read?
34. What special skills or talents will you bring to your classroom?
35. Would you be willing to teach at a different grade level (elementary) or teach a different subject (math vs. history)? Why or why not?
36. Would you be willing to pursue an extra certificate or credential?
37. What is your philosophy of team teaching?
38. What were you hoping we would ask you today, but didn’t?
39. At what point do you involve the principal in a discipline matter?
40. What are your plans for professional growth?
41. What experience do you have with this age group?
42. What would you do if you walked into the teacher’s lounge and heard a group of teachers speaking unprofessionally about a student?
43. Who are some people who have had a great impact on your life?
44. What kind of principal would you appreciate most?
45. What do you know about our school district?
46. What provides you the greatest pleasure in teaching?
47. How do you feel about integrating students with special needs into your classroom?
48. Are there any undesirable aspects you can think of about teaching?
49. Do you feel your job as a teacher goes beyond 3 p.m.?
50. Do you have any questions that we could answer about the position, school, or district? Refer to Ready Reference G-11 Questions to Ask Employers of Teachers.
Interview Questions- Assistant Principal

1. Parent
   A. Why do you want to work for this district?
   B. While our school district is usually calm, occasionally we do have a parent or community member who becomes upset over something. Describe your approach in dealing with individuals in situations like this.

2. Classified
   A. You will be supervising the custodial staff. What steps will you take to establish credibility with this group of employees?
   B. If you were to describe any professional shortcomings, what would they be? Describe what steps you are taking to improve.

3. Personnel
   A. What process would you employ to help a teacher who is struggling with his or her classroom management?
   B. What steps would you take in observing and evaluating a first year teacher?

4. Teacher
   A. How would you implement a school-wide discipline plan
   B. How would you like the teachers in our school describe you as an assistant principal?

5. Superintendent
   A. What would you do if you saw a student writing graffiti on the gymnasium wall during school?
   B. Where do you see yourself five years from now?