

Questions for teachers entering a 1:1 school

What computer platform are you most comfortable with, Mac, PC or Tablet?

I think this is an important question as schools become focused on a platform. It's not an indication of whether or not you are going to hire the person, but their answer to this question based on what your school is (Mac, PC, or Tablet) might lead you to ask other questions about their computer use. If they are most comfortable with a Mac for example you might ask them how they would feel working in a PC school? At this point in time I think it's a question that you have to get on the table early so you each know where the other is coming from.

Why do you want to work in a 1:1 school?

In my opinion the answer to this question is crucial! I'm looking for excitement in their response. I'm looking for them to be excited at the opportunity that they get to teach in a 1:1 school. I think the answers are going to be all over the board, but are they excited? At some point hopefully they talk about enhancing student learning.

What particular challenges and learning opportunities excites you about working in a 1:1 school like ours?

Can the candidate articulate why they are excited to work at your school? Why do they see 1:1 schools as being exciting places to work. I would be looking for an answer that talks about changing the classroom environment. Changing the way teaching happens and the way learners learn. I want to hear about the opportunities that the candidate sees for their classroom and their subject area.

Being able to look up information and resources on the web is an important skill. Explain how you go about looking up information on the web. How do you verify that the information you found is trustworthy and of use to you and your students?

This question is asked to see if candidates understand the importance of verifying information found on the Internet. Do they understand .edu sites? Do they know how to check a WHOIS? Listen to their response and see if they can tell you how they verify information on the web and do they sound confident enough that they could teach this to students in their class?

Knowing we are a 1:1 school and that we expect students to use their laptops for learning. What is something that you would start learning and thinking about today to prepare you for this new learning environment?

I want to know they are thinking about the change that happens to the classroom when you introduce a computer to every child. Are they thinking about classroom management, are they thinking about online resources, are they thinking about how their class can be student-centered, how when you put this tool in the hands of students that you no longer control the content in your classroom and you, the teacher have just become a facilitator of learning. I want to know they are thinking about the changes that happen to learning. If they say that teaching is teaching, I'd be worried.

At what times do you feel that it would be appropriate to have "lids down"? When do you believe a laptop is not a tool for appropriate use?

I think this would be telling. Many teachers stuck in the lecture/listen mode would tell you that when they want kids to "listen" or "work with others" an interviewer would have to pry. Those of us who have used the tool as collaborative note taker (think live blogging or back channel notes here!) know the power of this, but a traditional teacher may struggle with the giving away the power of the tools to the kids.

How comfortable are you with using online resources in your classroom? What are some resources you have used in the past? How have you found these resources?

Hopefully your candidate has used online resources in their class before and they can articulate what and how they use those resources. I would continue on this question asking probing questions that lead me to the next question on this list. Do they use Wikipedia? How do they use it? Do they only name online databases or paid sites? In part you might be able to learn about their ability to search and find information on the Internet through the answers to this question.

Tell me how you think the future you are preparing children for will be different?

I'd love to hear the answers to this one. Of course as an administrator, you too better understand the new connected digital world we are preparing students for.

How often to you/have you taken part in technology Professional Development opportunities?

We know that constant professional development in the use of technology is needed. Both before and during the implementation of a 1:1 program. I want to know that the teacher candidate has continued to seek out and find ways to learn about technology. If it has been years since they have been to any technology PD courses/conferences/sessions, then this is an indication that they will need some support.

On the other hand hopefully they answer with something like "I take part in Professional Development opportunities every day." This response would definitely be a notch up for an applicant. It would tell me two things. 1. That the teacher candidate is and believes in being a lifelong learner. 2. That they understand how to learn and take opportunities everyday to learn by connecting themselves into a network of professionals either locally or virtually.

Do you read any professional magazines or educational blogs as part of your own PD? If so, which ones?

With this question you are trying to find out if the candidate is comfortable with reading online resources. I believe this question also is a good lead question into the other questions below as they give the candidate a heads up that you are looking for a teacher that really understands how a 1:1 classroom is different, and that you expect your teachers do be reading online, researching online, and using the Internet as a resource in their classroom.

Do you have an RSS reader? If so, what do you subscribe to?

This is a huge hiring point for me. If candidates say they have an RSS reader and they understand what RSS is and what it means to "subscribe" to something, then they are on their way to understanding how teaching and learning changes in a networked digital environment. It also indicates a lifelong learner who has some understanding of how the web is changing.

Do you belong to any online communities?

What communities does the teacher belong to? Twitter? Any educational Ning sites? A Google or Yahoo group maybe? If a teacher answers he/she belongs to an educational community, then you have a lifelong learner on your hands who is open to learning and thinking in new ways.

Do you have a Personal Learning Network? If so can you tell me a story of how you learn from your network.

Now you're starting to separate the wheat from the chaff. If you can find a teacher that A. Knows what a PLN is and B. Can tell you a story of how they learn, you are looking at a teacher who might not know the platform that your 1:1 program is, but knows they have people that can help them learn it. A teacher that knows how to use a Personal Learning Network (PLN) is a teacher that will need little "official" professional development as they will be learning on their own, and most likely will be a leader in your school in helping others to learn.

How often do others come to you for guidance in using technology? Do you offer guidance when not asked? If so, describe how you did this recently?

Is this teacher viewed as a technology leader by others? Chances are you already knew that based on questions above. In a 1:1 teaching environment you can never have to many technology and learning experts in your grasp.