

Drama Teacher interview questions

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What to expect

Drama teaching interviews are usually run by a panel rather than one person, and they mix curriculum and planning questions with behaviour management, child safety and the practical side of running performances. Because the subject is practical, many schools ask you to demonstrate something, so expect at least one task that is not a conversation.

- **Planning and curriculum:** How you sequence a term or unit, differentiate for mixed experience, and connect work to the Australian Curriculum: The Arts and the senior syllabus.
- **Behaviour management:** Practical classes are loud and physical, so panels probe how you set expectations, manage a group mid-exercise and handle escalation.
- **Child safety and duty of care:** Questions about physical contact in performance work, rehearsal supervision, intimacy and staged violence, and your obligations under child safe standards.
- **Technical and safety:** Stagecraft questions covering lighting, sound, set construction, working safely around electricity and equipment, and risk assessments.
- **Scenario and judgement:** Situations with a student who will not perform, a conflict in a cast, or a production problem on opening night.
- **Stakeholder and advocacy:** How you talk to parents, work with the faculty and leadership, and make the case for drama in a crowded curriculum.

Most schools start with a short phone or online screen, then bring you to a panel of two to four people, typically the head of faculty or head teacher, a deputy principal and sometimes a drama colleague or a parent representative. The panel asks a set list of questions and takes notes, so answers are scored rather than conversational. You will often be asked to present a unit outline, run a short workshop with a class, or talk through a work sample. Registration or accreditation, a current Working with Children Check and referee checks are verified before any offer, and reference checks usually include your most recent head of faculty.

1. Walk us through how you would plan a term of drama for a Year 10 class with a wide range of experience, from students who have performed before to students taking drama for the first time.

Why they ask

Panels want to see that you plan from the curriculum backwards, not around a single production, and that mixed ability is something you design for rather than manage around.

How to structure your answer

A walk-through answer: start with the achievement standards you are targeting, then assessment, then the sequence of learning, then how you differentiate. Finish with how you would adjust once you meet the class.

Example answer

"I start with the achievement standards for that year level and decide what evidence I need by the end of the term, which is usually a solo or duet performance plus a written reflection on their process. From there I map the term into three phases: six weeks of skill building, two weeks of devising in small groups, and the rest for rehearsing and performing. For mixed experience I use the same content at different entry points. Everyone works on improvisation, but experienced students get constraints that force them to listen rather than dominate, and new students start with structured games where the rules carry them. I check where the class actually sits in week one with a low-stakes practical task, because the profile a class arrives with is rarely what the timetable says."

2. Tell me about a time you managed a student whose behaviour escalated during a practical class.

Why they ask

Practical work is physical and public, so a panel needs to know you can de-escalate without losing the class or humiliating the student.

How to structure your answer

STAR: the situation and the student's pattern, the task you were running, the specific actions you took in the moment and afterwards, and the result over the following weeks.

Example answer

"I had a Year 9 student in a devising unit who would shut down whenever his group had to perform in front of another group, and one afternoon he shoved a chair and walked out. The task was peer feedback in small groups, so the audience was the trigger. In the moment I let him leave with a clear instruction about where to go, and I kept the class running because stopping everything would have made it a bigger event than it was. Afterwards I found out he had a history of being laughed at in a previous school. I changed his group's feedback format so they recorded their work and watched it back privately before sharing, and I gave him a role as a sound operator so he was contributing without being watched. He performed in the end of term showcase, which he had previously refused outright."

3. A Year 11 student freezes at the final dress rehearsal and says they cannot go on. What do you do?

Why they ask

This is the situation drama teachers actually face, and the panel is testing judgement under pressure rather than a tidy policy answer.

How to structure your answer

Judgement under pressure: immediate response first, then the options you would offer, then how you protect the student and the production, then what you do after.

Example answer

"First thing is to get them off the stage and somewhere quiet, because standing there in front of everyone makes it worse. I would not ask them to decide anything in that moment. Once they have settled I would lay out real options: they can perform with a script in hand, they can do a reduced version of the scene, they can take a backstage role for opening night and we reassess, or they can withdraw and we adjust the blocking. I would be honest that the show will go on either way, because that takes some pressure off them. Then I would contact their parents that evening so nobody is surprised, and follow up with the wellbeing team the next day. Long term, I would look at why the final rehearsal was the first time they had been pushed to full performance, because that is something I can structure better next time."

4. How would you teach stagecraft safely in a school setting, covering lighting, sound and set?

Why they ask

Schools carry real liability for equipment and construction, and panels want to hear that you know where your limits are.

How to structure your answer

A technical and safety answer: what students can do themselves, what is supervised, what is off limits, and how you document it.

Example answer

"Students can do a lot, but the boundaries need to be clear from the start. On lighting, I teach them to focus and gel a lantern and to build a cue stack, but anything involving rigging, ladders above a

certain height or working near mains power goes to the school's maintenance or a licensed contractor. On sound, they can run QLab, set levels and edit in Audacity, and I teach them to check levels before the audience arrives rather than during. On set, I do a risk assessment for every build, students use hand tools only and I supervise power tools if the school allows it at all, and we never paint or construct in a space without ventilation. I keep a written safety brief signed off for each production, and I brief the cast on staged violence and physical contact so nobody is improvising contact on stage."

5. How do you assess practical performance work fairly, and how do you report that to parents?

Why they ask

Assessment in drama is the part parents and leadership question most, so the panel is checking you can defend a mark with evidence.

How to structure your answer

A process answer with a worked example: criteria, how students know them, evidence collection, moderation, and how you translate it for a report or a parent conversation.

Example answer

"Students get the criteria before they start, written in plain language, and we unpack them together using past performances so they can see what a strong ensemble contribution looks like. I record performance tasks on video, which means I can watch a second time rather than relying on a first impression, and it gives the student something concrete to discuss. I assess against the achievement standards, not against who I like on stage, and I moderate with the other arts teachers so a mark in my class means the same as a mark in theirs. When I report, I write about the specific skill the student developed and name the evidence, and if a parent rings, I can pull up the recording and talk through what the student did and what the next step is. Grades in drama are defensible when the process is visible."

6. How would you make the case for drama to a school leadership team that is under pressure on timetabling and results?

Why they ask

Drama programs are often the first thing cut, so this question tests whether you can advocate without defensiveness.

How to structure your answer

A stakeholder-facing answer: acknowledge the pressure, then give concrete value, then offer something practical rather than a plea.

Example answer

"I would not argue that drama deserves special protection. I would show what it does for the school in terms leadership already cares about: attendance on production days, students who are disengaged in other subjects but turn up for rehearsals, the speaking and confidence skills that show up in English and in interviews, and a public event that parents and the local community actually attend. Then I would come with something practical, like offering to run the production as a co-curricular activity that brings in students from outside my classes, or aligning the senior drama assessment schedule with the rest of the faculty so it does not clash with exam periods. Drama earns its place by being well run and visible, not by asking to be exempt from the same scrutiny as everything else."