

TESTING PROCEDURES FOR CLASSIFIED EMPLOYEES

The Merit System

The San Mateo County Office of Education uses a Merit (Civil Service) System to select classified employees. The Merit System is a type of personnel management system designed to ensure that employees are hired, promoted, and retained, on the basis of merit and fitness. The Merit System rules and procedures are administered by the Personnel Commission, an independent body composed of three persons appointed for three-year staggered terms.

The Personnel Commission staff is responsible for recruiting and evaluating prospective classified employees with a view to hiring the best qualified person for each position. All regular positions are filled through a competitive examination process. When you turn in an application, it is reviewed by the Personnel Commission staff to determine if you meet the minimum filing requirements. Applicants meeting the minimum requirements will be invited to participate in the examination process.

Examination Process

Examinations are determined according to their appropriateness for the job. They usually include written and oral examinations and may include a performance test. Written, oral, and performance tests are designed by the Personnel Commission staff to be "job relevant" in that the questions asked or the performance tests given will be directly related to the job for which you are applying. For instance, applicants for clerical/administrative jobs may take a performance test in keyboarding and software skills, and a written test in skills such as correct English usage, grammar, punctuation, spelling, and proofreading. Applicants for classified management positions may be given a task-oriented test to determine their management and leadership abilities, in addition to an oral interview. Custodians may be given written tests to demonstrate knowledge of basic custodial skills and ability to read and follow instructions, and a performance test to demonstrate abilities such as climbing a ladder, moving heavy objects, etc.

The job announcement used to advertise the job opening will normally state the types of examinations that will be given, and the examination dates. To help prepare for the testing process, look at the essential functions of the job, and the knowledge, skills and abilities required to do the job, as stated on the job announcement. These will give you an idea of what the written examination will cover, the types of questions that may be asked in an interview, or tasks you may be asked to demonstrate in a performance test.

Written Examinations

Written tests will generally be multiple choice. This means you will be asked to pick the right answer from a number of possible answers given for the question. Written tests will have a time limit. The tests are designed so the majority of applicants can complete all the questions prior to the time limit. Read the questions carefully and answer every question. If you are not sure of the answer, eliminate the choices you know are wrong. This will increase your chances of answering the question correctly. You will not lose points for guessing.

Oral Examinations

Oral interview panels will generally be comprised of at least three people. One panel member will be from the Personnel Department. The other panelists will be selected to participate on the basis of familiarity with the job and/or their technical expertise. They will ask you questions to help demonstrate your knowledge of the work you will be doing on the job and the skills needed to perform successfully on the job. If you don't understand a question, ask for it to be repeated. Don't give an answer just because you think the panelists want to hear it – express yourself honestly. State law requires that oral examinations be recorded, so a tape recorder will be in the room.

Special Testing Arrangements

If you are disabled and require special testing arrangements, notify the Personnel Department when you send in your application. Reasonable effort will be made to accommodate your needs.

Eligibility Lists

Candidates who pass all portions of the examination process will have their names placed on an eligibility list in rank order according to their test scores. These lists are used for up to one year to certify the top three ranks of available eligible candidates to fill vacant positions. The supervisor of the vacant position will conduct final interviews from among the top ranking candidates to make his/her selection.

We appreciate your interest in employment with the San Mateo County Office of Education. We hope this information will help you understand the application and testing procedures. If you have any questions or need further information, please call the Personnel Department at 650-802-5366 or 650-802-5368.

Personnel Commissioners

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San Mateo County Office of Education provides equal employment opportunity to all qualified persons. The recruitment, testing, and hiring of all personnel will be without regard to race, color, gender, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age or disability.