



Teacher Employment Fairs

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Teacher employment fairs can be confusing and a waste of time unless you know in advance what to expect and what to do. To be successful at a fair, you need to develop a plan of action which gives you confidence and sets you apart from the crowd.

A teacher employment fair is a screening process which can be a win-win experience for teacher candidates. If you are offered a position, great; if not, at the minimum you have acquainted yourself with school personnel and the needs of various schools systems. These resources will be valuable as you continue your job search, and your interviewing skills will improve with each opportunity you have to practice.

Remember, winning starts in your head. You are capable, qualified, and ready to go out and conquer the job market. Now, armed with just a few simple tips, your visit to a teacher employment fair can be a positive job search experience. Making a good first impression could result in a second interview and an employment offer.

Tip 1: Finding a Fair

- ▲ Check the directories in your college placement office (A useful directory is the *AAEE Guide to Services and Activities for Teacher Employment*.)
- ▲ Contact your college placement office or colleges in the geographic area where you wish to relocate.

🍏 *Helpful Hint*

Be sure to inquire about open and closed fairs, fees, deadlines, specialty focuses, and pre-selection procedures.

Tip 2: Preparing for the Fair

- ▲ Obtain a list of school systems attending the teacher fair.
- ▲ Review standard questions asked in education interviews (see the practice questions on page 30).
- ▲ Participate in mock interviews.
- ▲ Plan exactly what professional attire you will wear.

- ▲ Review the names of school officials with whom you have had previous contact.
- ▲ Gather essential items to take to the fair:
 - A letter-sized portfolio with notepad and pen.
 - More than enough copies of your résumé.
 - Your research notes on schools participating in the fair.
 - Money for food and telephone calls.
 - Grooming care items, and
 - A compact professional portfolio of your work samples (see the article on page 18).

🍏 *Helpful Hint*

Keep yourself and your materials neat and streamlined; don't overload yourself with too much to carry.

Tip 3: Arriving at the Fair

- ▲ Check in at the registration/information table to locate name tags, school listings, vacancy announcements, and other posted information.
- ▲ Orient yourself to the facility by locating interviewing areas, restrooms, the refreshments area, and telephones.
- ▲ Sit in a quiet area to review the information which you have received, and organize a list of schools, in your order of priority, which you plan to visit (note schools which are of general interest to you and those which have actual job openings in your area of certification).
- ▲ Observe how people approach the interview tables, and watch the traffic flow in the room.
- ▲ Develop an interview plan which includes taking a break to assure that you will look and feel your best throughout the day.
- ▲ Select the school for your first contact from your priority list (not your first or second choice).
- ▲ Approach the first interviewer. Check your appearance.

Organize all of your materials. Have your résumé readily available. Review the information about the school you are approaching.

🍏 *Helpful Hint*

If the interview line seems too long, it may be more efficient to select another school.

Tip 4: Approaching the Interviewer

- ▲ As you approach the interview table, respect other people's privacy as they complete their interviews.
- ▲ Conduct yourself professionally at all times, remembering that you are on stage even as you stand in line or move about the interview area.
- ▲ As you approach the interview table, establish eye contact, present a firm handshake, introduce yourself, and explain why you have chosen this school system.
- ▲ When the interviewer invites you to sit down, put your materials in your lap or beside your chair on the floor, not on the interview table.

🍏 *Helpful Hint*

Avoid being one of the candidates who offers a limp handshake and waits to be grilled; be confident and take an active part in your interview.

Tip 5: Interviewing For a Position

- ▲ Have a three-point agenda: know what you are looking for, what you have to offer, and what questions you will ask about the school system.
- ▲ Listen carefully and take conversational cues from the interviewer (e.g., when to end a response; when the interview is over).
- ▲ Try to generate and maintain interest by smiling, responding to questions with specific and concise examples, keeping your voice lively, maintaining a pleasant vocal tone, using a slightly forward body posture.

ture, using humor appropriately, and avoiding pat answers or clichés.

- ▲ Use transition statements to share information about yourself that the interviewer may not have addressed (e.g., "That's interesting, I had an experience which relates . . ." or "May I tell you about . . .").
- ▲ Respond truthfully, while always painting a positive picture of yourself (e.g., "I have not yet had an opportunity to . . . but in a similar situation, I . . .").
- ▲ Ask for school system information, application materials, and the interviewer's business card.
- ▲ Ask about the hiring process and its time lines, and determine actual and potential openings.
- ▲ At the end of the interview, offer a firm handshake and express your appreciation, using the interviewer's name.

▲ Walk away with confidence, remembering that you are still on stage.

& Helpful Hint

Immediately following the interview, go to a quiet area and make notes on topics of conversation, contact names, and follow-up procedures. Then prepare for your next interview.

Tip 6: Following Up After the Fair

- ▲ Within three days, send typewritten, professional thank-you letters, addressed to the specific interviewers (include typed application materials if you have them).
- ▲ Request that your placement office send your credentials to the school systems with which you interviewed.
- ▲ Within ten days, make telephone calls to determine if the schools have

received your application materials, to check on the status of the vacant positions, and to express your continued interest.

- ▲ Plan for the next teacher employment fair you will attend.

& Helpful Hint

Keep an accurate record of your contact with school systems, including dates of your letters or telephone calls, and copies of all application materials which you send. The worksheet in the back of this booklet provides a convenient place to keep these notes.

Program yourself for success. As you plan for a teacher employment fair, create your image of the ideal interview and position, and take action to reach your goal. Your plan will ease your nervous jitters, give you confidence, and help ensure success in your job search.

Interactive Video Interviews

Dr. John W. Schaerer, Special Assistant to the Chancellor
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Historically, the employment process for teachers has been a rather local one. Candidates seek positions, and schools seek teachers within a narrow geographic area. But the expanding job market and emerging technologies provide an opportunity for school districts and candidates to extend their reach. Interactive televideo interviews can virtually erase the contingencies of place, time, and cost.

Unlike telephone interviews, a color video monitor provides the link for face-to-face interaction between candidate and interviewer, allowing each to use gestures and facial expressions, as well as words.

Planning Is Key

The lack of a physical handshake between candidate and employer is the primary distinction between interactive and in-person interviews. Advance planning can, in large measure, compensate for this drawback.

Just as you would for any other interview, review as much information as you can find about the institution and the position in which you are interested. Ask if the school system has a promotional videotape which you might acquire and check the World Wide Web for information about the school system in general.

Some interactive interviewing systems include data-sharing capabilities, so you should be prepared to forward additional copies of your job application, cover letter, and résumé during the interview, if the need arises. You will also want to have with you other pertinent documents—letters of recommendation or information about awards you have received—that you might want to share during the interview.

AAEE Interview Network

Colleges, universities, and corporations have united to form an interview network stretching from coast to coast, and internationally. The American Association for Employment in Education Interview Net-

work (AIN) was established for the express purpose of "placing the right teacher or administrator in the right position."

School personnel use AIN to recruit and select teachers and administrators. Career services officers use AIN to help candidates facilitate their job searches. Corporate personnel support AIN as a commitment to "staffing America's schools with quality teachers and administrators." For a current list of participating organizations, please visit AAEE on the Web at <www.aaee.org>.

If interactive video interviewing is part of your job search plans, make that fact known to prospective employers. Include a statement in your cover letter that you would welcome an interactive video interview.

The technology is changing rapidly, and is becoming a viable alternative for cost-conscious candidates and districts. You may be able to distinguish yourself as a candidate by taking the lead in using this technology.

Pre-Employment Inquiry Guidelines

SUBJECT	ACCEPTABLE	UNACCEPTABLE
NAME	Name "To enable us to check on your work and education record, is any additional information necessary relative to change of name, use of an assumed name or a nickname? If yes, please explain."	Maiden name.
RESIDENCE	Place of residence	"Do you own or rent your home?"
AGE	Statement that hiring is subject to verification that applicant meets legal age requirements. "If hired can you show proof of age?" "Are you over eighteen years of age?" "If under eighteen, can you, after employment, submit a work permit?"	Age. Birthdate. Dates of attendance or completion of elementary or high school. Questions which tend to identify applicants over age 40.
BIRTHPLACE, CITIZENSHIP	"Can you, after employment, submit verification of your legal right to work in the United States?" Or, statement that such proof may be required after employment.	Birthplace of applicant's parents, spouse, or other relatives. "Are you a U.S. citizen?" Or, citizenship of applicant, applicant's parents, spouse, or other relatives. Requirements that applicant first produce naturalization papers, or alien card prior to employment.
NATIONAL ORIGIN	"This position requires multi-lingual skills. What languages do you read, speak, or write?"	Questions as to nationality, lineage, ancestry, national origin, descent, or parentage of applicant, applicant's parents, or spouse. "What is your mother's tongue?" Or, "Language commonly used by applicant." How applicant acquired ability to read, write, or speak a foreign language.
SEX, MARITAL STATUS, FAMILY	Name and address of parent or guardian if applicant is a minor. Statement of company policy regarding work assignment of employees who are related.	Questions which indicate applicant's sex. Questions which indicate applicant's marital status. Number and/or ages of children or dependents. Provisions for child care. Questions regarding pregnancy, child bearing, or birth control. Name or address of relative, spouse, or children of adult applicant. "With whom do you reside?" Or, "Do you live with your parents?"
RACE, COLOR		Questions as to applicant's race or color. Questions regarding applicant's complexion or color of skin, eyes, hair.

SUBJECT	ACCEPTABLE	UNACCEPTABLE
PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION, PHOTOGRAPH	Statement that photograph may be required after employment.	Questions as to applicant's height and weight. Require applicant to affix a photograph to application. Request applicant, at his or her option, to submit a photograph. Require a photograph after interview but before employment.
PHYSICAL CONDITION, HANDICAP	Statement by employer that offer may be made contingent on applicant passing a job-related physical examination.	Questions regarding applicant's general medical condition, state of health. Questions regarding receipt of Workers' Compensation. "Do you have any physical disabilities or handicaps?"
RELIGION	Statement by employer of regular days, hours, or shifts to be worked.	Questions regarding applicant's religion. Religious days observed or "Does your religion prevent you from working weekends or holidays?"
ARREST, CRIMINAL RECORD	"Have you ever been convicted of a felony, (specified time period) or a misdemeanor which resulted in imprisonment?" (Such a question must be accompanied by a statement that a conviction will not necessarily disqualify applicant from the job applied for).	Arrest record. Or, "Have you ever been arrested?"
BONDING	Statement that bonding is a condition of hire.	Questions regarding refusal or cancellation of bonding.
MILITARY SERVICE	Questions regarding relevant skills acquired during applicant's U.S. military service.	General questions regarding military services such as dates and type of discharge. Questions regarding service in a foreign military.
ECONOMIC STATUS		Questions regarding applicant's current or past assets, liabilities, or credit rating, including bankruptcy or garnishment.
ORGANIZATIONS, ACTIVITIES	"Please list job-related organizations, clubs, professional societies, or other associations to which you belong—you may omit those which indicate your race, religious creed, color, national origin, ancestry, sex, or age."	"List all organizations, clubs, societies, and lodges to which you belong."
REFERENCES	"By whom were you referred for a position here?" Names of persons willing to provide professional and/or character references for applicant.	Detailed questions about applicant's former employers, or questions which elicit information specifying the applicant's race, color, names, creed, national origin, ancestry, physical handicap, medical condition, marital status, age, or sex.
EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION	A request for the name and address of a person to be notified in an emergency is proper after you have been hired.	



Interview Questions from Both Sides of the Desk

Interviewers are paid to ask questions! The following questions are representative of those that you are likely to encounter in your interviews. Use these to practice and you will be prepared to communicate your teaching skills.

1. Why do you want to teach?
2. What is your philosophy of education?
3. With what kind of student do you most (least) like to work?
4. Describe your style of teaching.
5. Would you like to be involved in school (community) activities?
6. What do you plan to be doing in five years? What are your career goals?
7. Describe your student teaching experiences.
8. What was your biggest problem in student teaching? How did you resolve it?
9. What three words would your students use to describe you as a teacher?
10. How do you individualize your teaching?
11. How do you feel that the "rapid learner" should be provided for in your area of teaching?
12. What is the greatest attribute you can bring to a class of students?
13. What are the qualities of an excellent teacher? Which of these qualities do you have?
14. Some of your students always finish their assignments early. How would you deal with the free time that they have?
15. How would you work with students who perform below grade level, especially those from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds?
16. What grade level do you prefer? Why?
17. How would you use teacher aides and parent volunteers?
18. Are parent/teacher conferences important? Why or why not.
19. Why do you want to work in our district?
20. What do you know about our school district?
21. Why should our school district hire you?
22. Describe an ideal classroom.
23. How do you relate with minority students in the classroom?
24. A student is consistently late to your class. How do you handle the situation?
25. What would you do, or how would you treat a student who refused to do the work you assigned?
26. How would you handle a student who continually "acted up" in your class?
27. How and when do you discipline a student?
28. How should a student's educational achievement and progress be measured?
29. You know 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?
30. What do you expect from your supervisor?

Candidates Must Ask Questions, Too

If you are serious about teaching in the district where you are interviewing, there are many questions to which you need to know the answers before you accept an offer. Your interviewer will surely cover some of your questions, but by asking pertinent questions you will show your interviewer that you do understand fundamental issues relating to teaching. You

should have several questions in mind before you arrive for your interview. The following 17 questions should give you a good start.

1. What is the teacher/student ratio in your district?
2. Do you encourage teachers to earn advanced degrees?
3. How many classes a day will I be expected to teach?
4. Do you have teachers serving in areas for which they do not have full certification?
5. Tell me about the students who attend this school.
6. What textbooks does the district use in this subject area?
7. Do teachers participate in curriculum review and change?
8. What support staff members are available to help students and teachers?
9. How does the teaching staff feel about new teachers?
10. What discipline procedures does the district use?
11. Do parents support the schools? Does the community?
12. Do your schools use teacher aides or parent volunteers?
13. What allowances are provided for supplies and materials?
14. Does the administration encourage field trips for students?
15. How are teachers assigned to extra-curricular activities? Is compensation provided?
16. Does the district have a statement of educational philosophy or mission?
17. What are prospects for future growth in this community and its schools?



Fascinating Facts for First-Time Teachers

Dr. Judy McEnany, Assistant Professor of Education
Patricia Reuss, Director of the Career Services Office
Montana State University - Billings

Franksly, we were curious. Of all the data and impressions that school hiring officials collect about first-time teachers they are considering for employment, which ones carry the most weight?

So we asked them. With grant funding from the Montana State University - Billings Foundation and Northwest AEE, we surveyed 255 Montana hiring officials about the hiring procedures they use when employing first-time teachers. Our response rate of 65 percent makes us confident about sharing our results.

Although the survey was conducted in Montana, we think these "fascinating facts" are worth your consideration as you pursue your first teaching job. The responses we received are listed from most to least frequent.

Employers evaluate first-time teachers' job applications for:

- 1** a. letters of recommendation from public school personnel;
- b. a mentoring teacher's evaluation;
- c. examples of teaching skill and classroom management skill;
- d. experience with specific programs used in the school district;
- e. number of certifications which the candidate holds (e.g., elementary *and* special education).

Employers evaluate first-time teachers' academic preparation for:

- 2** a. knowledge of subject matter;
- b. success in student teaching;
- c. computer knowledge and skill.

Important factors about candidates' work experience in paid employment not related to teaching include:

- 3** a. a positive work ethic;
- b. punctuality;
- c. good quality work;
- d. low absenteeism.

The following factors influence the decision to invite an applicant for an interview:

- 4** a. correct spelling, punctuation, and English usage of the candidate's application;
- b. letters of recommendation from those who have seen the candidate work with students;
- c. neatness of the applicant's materials;
- d. evaluation from the mentoring teacher.

Employers use interview questions to assess the ways in which first-time teachers respond to:

- 5** a. "real life" and "what if" situations;
- b. classroom management issues;
- c. enthusiasm about teaching;
- d. demonstrating their knowledge of subject matter;
- e. describing and evaluating their own strengths;
- f. structured questions that range from impersonal to personal.

In evaluating interviews, employers look for the following:

- 6** a. the candidate's commitment to teaching;
- b. knowledge of the teaching field;
- c. interpersonal skills;
- d. the candidate's understanding of the role of a teacher;
- e. professional judgment.

Individuals who participate actively in interviews and selection of new teachers are:

- 7** a. the superintendent;
- b. the principal or program director;
- c. teachers, department heads, or curriculum directors.

Professional traits which employers use as criteria in hiring first-time teachers include:

- 8** a. interpersonal skills (enthusiasm, likes working with students, caring, outgoing);
- b. the ability to motivate students;
- c. the ability to provide a positive emotional climate in the classroom;
- d. professional integrity.

Personal traits which employers use as criteria in hiring first-time teachers include:

- 9** a. enthusiasm;
- b. dependability;
- c. the ability to work well with others;
- d. emotional maturity;
- e. self-motivation.

Evaluate Yourself First

Before you put yourself in the position of having someone else (a potential employer) evaluate you, you can use these "fascinating facts" to evaluate yourself.

There is also plenty of advice between the covers of this booklet to help you put your best foot forward, both on paper and in person, as you seek your first teaching position.

If you plan your job search with the same attention to detail that you put into your lesson plans, you will take an important step in moving from "candidate" to "teacher."

AEE expresses its thanks to Montana State University - Billings for permission to publish this adaptation of a brochure which was prepared for their first-time teacher candidates.



Letters of Recommendation Supporting Your Job Search

Elaine Stover, Associate Director of Career Services
Arizona State University

As you conduct your job search for a position in education, it is important to assemble a group of people who agree to serve as references, either to provide written references, or to be available for phone recommendations. Educators continue to use recommendations to verify your experiences and expertise to a greater extent than do other professionals. Starting early to collect these letters, or to prepare individuals to receive reference requests, will facilitate your job search and maximize your opportunity to obtain the position you really want.

What types of references should I prepare?

Your references may take several different forms:

Written references are commonly requested from individuals who can provide pertinent information about your experience. These references may be on letterhead of the institution or organization represented, or they may be on a recommendation form provided by your career services office.

Application forms (either paper or online) may contain areas requesting names, positions, and contact information for individuals who may be contacted by letter or phone to provide references.

Résumés may contain the statement "References available upon request," or may contain a listing of persons who can provide recommendations about you.

Telephone references may occur during the job search, even after a reference has submitted a letter on your behalf. Often, an employer will call that individual to ask more in-depth questions about the contents of the letter.

Where should my references be stored?

Career services offices at some universities maintain credential or placement files, collections of materials, including your job search information and references from

supervisors, cooperating teachers, and others, as you request. These credential files may be stored in the career services office in paper files to be photocopied and mailed or faxed to schools districts. Other colleges may maintain credentials online

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for e-mailing or faxing to school districts. Career services Web sites may allow employers, using a password provided by your career services office, to access your information online.

If your college requires or suggests a credential file as part of the registration process, you will need to follow those policies and procedures. They may provide forms for individuals to use in writing your references. Evaluations from student teaching supervisors or cooperating teachers may be obtained as a matter of routine. Reference forms may ask you to select between confidential and non-confidential references, or between "open" or "closed" files. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) gives you the

right to read references placed in such files. You also have the right to "waive your right" to read your references.

There continues to be debate about the value of confidential versus non-confidential references. When employers are surveyed, some indicate that they prefer "confidential" references, feeling that these will be more "honest." Other research has concluded that there are no differences between the content of confidential and non-confidential references. If you are establishing a credential file, you will need to make your own decision about these options. Just remember that it is your legal right to maintain open references if you wish.

There is a trend in some universities and some regions of the country to discontinue the storage of credential files. If this is the case at your college, the career services office can provide information about developing a self-managed file of references. Some students create a "package" of references and other support materials to provide with applications to school districts. You may also decide to place copies in your paper portfolio, your online portfolio, or your personal Web site.

Some reference writers will prefer to prepare a personalized letter each time you apply for a position. They store the letter on their computer and update it with the correct employer information, personalizing the letter to each prospective employer. If one of your reference writers prefers to do this, it is still a good idea to request a "generic" reference for your own file or portfolio, in the event the person is not available when you need the reference.

Whom should I ask for a letter of recommendation?

As mentioned above, some colleges require certain documents in a credential file. Beyond those, you can add references from others who can speak of your experience. The following individuals are commonly represented in a group of references for a new educator:

- University supervisor of student teaching or internship experience,

- Cooperating teacher(s) from your student teaching or internship,
- Team teachers, department chairs, or principals from your student teaching, internship, or previous field experiences,
- Faculty members,
- Previous employers,
- Current employer (unless your job search would be detrimental to your current position), and
- Others who can speak of your expertise or experience.

Generally, one should not ask personal or family friends to serve as references.

"It is important to begin this [reference selection] process early, in order to give your references plenty of time to get the letters written and sent by your required deadlines."

How should I ask for a reference?

First, ask the individuals if they are willing to serve as references, unless they are "automatic" references at your university

(e.g., the cooperating teachers or university supervisors of student teaching and internships).

It is important to begin this process early, in order to give your references plenty of time to get the letters written and sent by your required deadlines.

Assuming they agree to be references, there are ways to assist them in providing recommendations.

Give them information and guidance. That may sound like "stacking the deck," but reference writers will usually be grateful. If your résumé is prepared and up-to-date, give each person a copy so that he or she can see how you are representing your experiences. Mark the résumé with areas in which you and reference writer interacted. Add comments about skills and experiences you would like to have reinforced.

If your résumé is not ready, provide your references with documentation of the same kinds of information: dates, places, projects, teaching experiences, lesson planning, volunteer work—whatever you did in conjunction with that person. You will eliminate the responsibility of their researching these details for themselves. Provide a timetable of your job search plans and when you need the reference to be written. If it needs to be sent to a particular location, provide the complete address, an envelope, and postage. Be prepared to keep your reference writers up-to-date. Let them know in which schools you are seriously under consideration for employment. If they receive follow-up phone calls, they will be knowledgeable and ready to talk further about you.

Thank your references, both during and after the job search. They are providing an extremely valuable service to you.

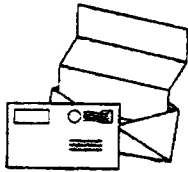
What should I do after I accept a position?

First, celebrate your success! And then, once again, update your reference writers and thank them for helping you.

"Be prepared to keep your reference writers up-to-date. Let them know in which schools you are seriously under consideration for employment. If they receive follow-up phone calls, they will be knowledgeable and ready to talk further about you."

Begin keeping a collection of your references, either through your career services office or in your own files and portfolios.

As an educator, it will be important to continue this process throughout your career. Keeping an ongoing group of references will serve you well as you change positions and advance in the profession.



Cover Letters from Start to Finish

Elizabeth Wallencheck, Assistant Director
of Career Planning and Placement
Ohio University

College students write often, but many feel intimidated by the thought of writing their first cover letters. However, with a bit of planning, you can successfully (and relatively easily) write effective cover letters that will gain the attention of employers and get you that interview!

Here is a step-by-step plan to prepare, write and polish your cover letters.

Why Cover Letters?

Cover letters are absolutely necessary any time you send your résumé and/or application forms to an employer. In order for your cover letter to be effective, you need to understand what the letter should accomplish.

A cover letter has several important functions. First, it introduces you and informs the reader why you are forwarding your résumé. It also identifies the positions for which you want to be considered. A school may have many current vacancies; your cover letter will help direct your application to the appropriate opening.

Perhaps most importantly, the cover letter is an excellent vehicle with which to sell yourself. Because it is less structured than a résumé, it can promote your talents in more direct and creative ways. Also, because most people use the same résumé for many different employers, a cover letter can help focus your application toward a specific job opening.

Getting Started

Before you even consider committing pen to paper or fingers to keyboard, you need to take a few minutes to prepare. Jumping into the letter without advance preparation is often a big mistake. One of the most common problems with cover letters is that they are poorly organized, confusing, unclear, and choppy. Don't set yourself up for failure by neglecting to plan your letter properly. A well organized letter will flow much more smoothly.

Ideally, the cover letter acts as a bridge between the job posting or school information and your résumé. You want to give

employers the idea that you have the skills they are seeking. The first step is to review whatever information you have about the opening and/or the district itself. Even a small classified ad can tell you a lot of important information. Use a highlighter to mark all the key words and phrases in the ad: certification or degree needed, desired experience, skills, or personality characteristics. These are the key points you will attempt to "sell" in your letter.

Next you need to review your own qualifications and select those that most closely fulfill the requirements in the ad.

**"The cover letter acts as a
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posting or school information and your résumé."**

Luckily, by this time in the job search, you should already have constructed a wonderful tool to help you with this step: your résumé! Try to look at your résumé objectively—as though you've never seen it before. Use a highlighter to indicate the items that will be of most interest to this particular school system for this particular job. Keep in mind the key points from your source of information about this job.

You may want to include additional information not mentioned in your résumé. Take a scrap of paper and brainstorm any additional pieces of information about yourself that you feel might be pertinent. Remember, brainstorming means no editing or censoring at this point. List any and all points that might possibly be of interest.

You are now ready to begin organizing

your letter. Similar to the résumé, the most important items should appear first in your cover letter. On a fresh sheet of paper, begin to assign priorities to all of the items you have generated. What are your strongest selling points? Which items fit most closely with those listed in the job posting? Try to put yourself in the employer's shoes. What would you want to know about someone you were considering hiring? What is unique about your background?

If you are having difficulty with this step, you may want to try the old index card method you use with research papers. (You do use them, don't you?) Write each item on a separate index card. You may find your ideas easier to organize by physically sorting the cards.

As you assemble your list, you may discover that some items can be combined into a single, comprehensive phrase. Others may no longer appear very important, and you can leave them out of the letter altogether.

The final list represents the outline of your letter. If you have done a good job at organizing the information, the letter will almost write itself. Don't be concerned about having the perfect opening sentence. Just start writing. You can polish and edit later. Your opening line can be simple and direct ("I am writing to inquire about possible elementary openings for the next school year."). While it can be more creative, it need not be flashy.

What to Include

As in any business letter, the cover letter usually contains three main parts: the introduction, the body, and the closing. It typically includes at least three paragraphs which correspond to these parts. You may, of course, have more paragraphs which add additional information or break the main parts into more readable pieces. A cover letter should not exceed one page. If your letter is longer than one page, you are probably saying too much!

The first paragraph is the introduction for both you and the letter. You need to mention why you are submitting your résumé or application. In other words, tell

the reader for which opening you are applying or what type of teaching position you are seeking. It also helps to let the reader know how you heard of the opening or the district.

The body of the letter contains the main selling points. The cover letter should highlight your résumé by drawing the reader's attention to your most important qualifications, ensuring that these points are not overlooked.

A well-written cover letter acts as an advertisement for your résumé: it captures the reader's interest. It can also expand on points that might be of special interest to this particular reader. Typical items for the body of the cover letter include information on your degree, major and certification area; other academic highlights and honors; experience and personal strengths.

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should highlight your

résumé by drawing the

reader's attention to

your most important

qualifications ..."

It is a good idea to mention why you are interested in a particular opening or school district. Does it represent a chance to learn something new? An opportunity to continue your work in a certain area? A type of school or community of special interest to you? You might add this to the end of the second paragraph, but it is probably best described in an additional section.

The closing paragraph is a relatively standard wrap-up. Mention your interest in an interview or whatever next step you would like to have occur (for example, you might request that further information or an application be sent to you). Mention that your résumé is enclosed, if you have not already done so.

Polish Your Prose

To keep your letter flowing smoothly, watch your transitions. Summarizing phrases are good ways to start new paragraphs or introduce new topics ("I believe my work experience has added significantly to my teacher preparation. For example, ..."). Words and phrases such as "in addition," "also," and "furthermore" help provide smooth changes between thoughts.

Armed with your outline and the techniques just described, you should be able to produce a letter that is well-organized, logical, focused and smoothly written. However, it is highly unlikely that your first draft will be ready to mail. Good writing requires good editing. Try to get objective feedback from others. The career planning and placement office on your campus will probably be able to critique your letters and provide advice on improving them. Professors or student teaching supervisors may also be happy to read your letters with a critical eye. It may take several revisions to get the letters just the way you want them.

The Medium is the Message

Once your letter presents your qualifications clearly and convincingly, it is time to get into the nuts and bolts of the finished product. Don't waste an excellent letter on poor quality paper or printing. The visual presentation of your letter will greatly affect how employers view your message.

Be sure your layout is well done. Side margins are usually about 3/4- to 1-inch in width. The letter should also be roughly in the center of the page, not concentrated at the top. While there are several types of business letter formats, be sure to be consistent. Your address is listed first, immediately followed by the date. Your name need not be at the top of the letter

as it will be included at the closing. Leave three blank lines before typing the employer's name and address. It is always best to use a person's name rather than a title such as "Human Resources Director."

Double space between the address, salutation and closing, as well as between paragraphs; the text itself should be single-spaced. The salutation ends with a

"... your cover letter is

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it be your last!"

colon, not a comma, in business letters. When addressing a woman, the safest choice is "Ms." unless you know for sure that a woman is married and prefers "Mrs." Leave three or four blank lines between your closing (e.g., "Sincerely,") and your typed name, and don't forget to sign the letter!

The best choice for printing is probably a laser printer. Do not use dot matrix printers; these do not look truly professional or polished. Typewriters that produce crisp, dark print are fine. If your résumé has been professionally typeset or word processed, don't be too concerned that your cover letter's typeface does not match the résumé. However, the stationery should be the same. You may want to get matching envelopes as well. An alternative is to use large manila envelopes so that your applications arrive crisp and uncreased.

Remember, your cover letter is often your first contact with an employer. Don't let it be your last. With a bit of planning your cover letters can be effective tools in your job search. Good luck!

Job Search Timetable Checklist

This checklist is designed to help graduating students who are seeking teaching positions make the best use of their time as they conduct job searches. We encourage you to use this checklist in conjunction with the services and resources available from your college or university career planning and placement office.

<p>August/September (12 months prior to employment)</p>	<p>_____ Attend any applicable orientations/workshops offered by your career services office.</p> <p>_____ Register with your college placement office and inquire about career services.</p> <p>_____ Begin to define career goals by determining the types, sizes and geographic locations of school systems in which you have an interest.</p>
<p>October (11 months prior to employment)</p>	<p>_____ Begin to identify references and ask them to prepare letters of recommendation.</p> <p>_____ See a counselor at your career services office to discuss your job-search plan.</p>
<p>November (10 months prior to employment)</p>	<p>_____ Check to see that you are properly registered at your career services office.</p> <p>_____ Begin developing a résumé and a basic cover letter.</p> <p>_____ Begin networking by contacting friends, faculty members, etc., to inform them of your career plans. If possible, give them a copy of your résumé.</p>
<p>December/January (8-9 months prior to employment)</p>	<p>_____ Finalize your résumé and make arrangements for it to be reproduced. You may want to get some tips on résumé reproduction from your career services office.</p> <p>_____ Attend any career planning and placement workshops designed for education majors.</p> <p>_____ Use the directories available at your career services office to develop a list of school systems in which you have an interest.</p> <p>_____ Contact school systems to request application materials or check their Web sites for online applications.</p> <p>_____ If relocating away from campus, contact a career services office in the area to which you are moving and inquire about available services.</p> <p>_____ If applying to out-of-state school systems, contact the appropriate State Departments of Education to determine testing requirements. Addresses are listed on pages 41-42.</p>
<p>February (7 months prior to employment)</p>	<p>_____ Send completed applications to school systems, with a résumé and cover letter.</p> <p>_____ Inquire about school systems which will be recruiting at your college or university, and about the procedures for interviewing with them.</p>
<p>March/April (5-6 months prior to employment)</p>	<p>_____ Research school systems with which you will be interviewing.</p> <p>_____ Interview on campus and follow up with thank you letters.</p> <p>_____ Continue to follow up by phone with school systems of interest.</p> <p>_____ Monitor the job vacancy listings available at your career services office and on the Web.</p>
<p>May/August (1-4 months prior to employment)</p>	<p>_____ Just before graduation, check to be sure you are completely registered with your career services office.</p> <p>_____ Maintain communication with your network of contacts.</p> <p>_____ Stay up to date with job openings through your career services office and on the Web.</p> <p>_____ Revise your résumé and cover letter if necessary.</p> <p>_____ Interview off campus and follow up with thank you letters.</p> <p>_____ Continue to monitor job vacancy listings and apply when qualified and interested.</p> <p>_____ Begin considering job offers. Ask for more time to consider offers, if necessary.</p> <p>_____ Accept the offer that is best for you. Inform those associated with your search, including other employers with whom you have active applications. Celebrate!</p>



ABC's of teachgeorgia.org

As the official teacher recruitment web site for the state of Georgia, teachgeorgia.org provides teachers, school systems, and college placement representatives with the most comprehensive interactive database of teaching, leadership, and service personnel job vacancies throughout Georgia's schools.

Because the mission of teachgeorgia.org is to recruit the highest quality professional teaching personnel for Georgia's schools, teachgeorgia.org is dedicated to providing prospective and experienced teachers a simple, effective, and free means of locating and applying for teaching vacancies throughout the state. Teachgeorgia.org is a collaborative partnership between the Georgia Department of Education and local public school systems.

Competition is the driving force in today's world. Parents and school administrators want the best teachers, and students deserve the best. Teachgeorgia.org enables school systems to compete for the best teachers. Teachers can conduct targeted job searches by school system, subject area, region, etc., and apply for job openings across the state.

Other proactive features include:

- **Teachgeorgia Application** - Apply for certified jobs across Georgia with a single application.
- **Browse Jobs** - View current statewide vacancy information.
- **Resume Expo** - Market yourself to school systems even before they have jobs posted by placing your information in this resume database.
- **G-mail** - Sign up to receive instant notification when a job matching your criteria is posted on the web site.
- **Job Fair Information** - Provides dates, times, and locations of job fairs across Georgia.
- **24-7** - Our office never closes! Apply for teaching positions in Georgia around the clock.
- **Free** - No cost to utilize teachgeorgia.org services!