



Job Search for Teachers

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*Paperwork

*The Job Search

*Interviewing

*First Year Tips

Application Packet

- School Application
- Resumes
- Cover Letters
- Credentials,
- Writing Samples
- Portfolios

School Applications

Teacher candidates will be required to fill out an application for each school district that they apply to. Many school districts have their applications on-line. Educators in the state of Wisconsin are designing an on-line application that all schools districts can choose to use. This application will be up and running in 2003 and will make it much easier for candidates as they will only have to fill out one application that can be used at most of the in-state school districts. Fill out the applications completely and truthfully.

Resumes

Even though applications are required, your first impression will probably be through your resume and cover letter. Develop a professional, reader-friendly format, be complete and truthful and PROOF, PROOF, PROOF.

A teacher resume should contain the following information:

- **Heading**
 - Name (use 16 or so font size)
 - Address (where you can be reached; use two if you will moving at a critical time)
 - Phone, e-mail
- **Objective**
 - Samples:
 - Seeking a position as a high school English teacher. Interested in both school newspaper and school yearbook as extra curriculars.
 - Seeking 5th grade position. Willing to coach volleyball.
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- **Education**
 - State all of your degrees starting with the latest first followed by date of graduation.
 - After your first full-time teaching job, "Education" will drop to the bottom of your resume as
 - Experience becomes more important.
 - Samples:
 - Bachelor of Science Degree in Chemistry, May 20xx
 - Or
 - Bachelor of Arts Degree, December 20xx
Major: History Minor: Political Science
 - GPA State the overall GPA. If the GPA in your major is 2-3 points higher, you can state it also.
 - State teaching certification you have or will apply for. If you know the exact number of the certification for your state, include that also.
 - Add additional academic-related experience like Study Abroad experience or special programs etc.

- **Previous Experience**
 - State in reverse chronological order.

- **Related Experience**
 - This can include student teaching, volunteer work in education, (like tutoring or religious education) or any other related experience
 - Put bullet statements after each position explaining what you did beginning with strong action verbs. State your tasks and accomplishments
 - Sample:
 - Taught general math including one accelerated class
 - Developed daily lesson and unit plans

- **Other Experience**
 - All the jobs you had in college

- **Awards/Activities**
 - Among other things, state activities that would support your extracurricular interest in your teaching position.
 - Samples:
 - Honors Program; Dean's List three semesters
 - Pi Mu Epsilon: Math honor fraternity
 - Marquette University Student Education Association
 - Intramural volleyball team

Cover Letters

Cover letters should not be exceedingly long—not more than three or four paragraphs are good. In the first paragraph, state the position for which you are applying and how you learned of the opening. If a person working for the school district informed you of the opening, you can mention the person by name.

In the second paragraph, market yourself for the position and convey energy and enthusiasm. The letter should point out highlights of your resume and explain why you are a good match for that particular position and that particular school district. This includes discussing your degree and academic background, talking about your skills and accomplishments, and, very importantly, giving specific examples. The letter should also point out something about you that is not on the resume, something that would help reveal you to the reader.

The letter should be impeccable in its grammar, usage, mechanics and format. No typos. Have several people critique it. PROOF, PROOF, PROOF!

Send the cover letter to a specific person (not “to whom it may concern”). If applying to an elementary position, send the resume to the principal. If sending an application to a high school, address it to the HR Administrator or directly to a department chairperson (after you ascertain their names, spelled correctly!)

Ten Rules of Cover Letter Writing (from the Job Search Handbook for Educators by the American Association for Employment in Education)

1. Don't draft generic letters; make each letter unique to a specific school district.
2. Address your letter to a specific person at the school district with the correct spelling of that person's name and title.
3. Communicate something unique to that person.
4. Show how you can meet the needs of the school, rather than what you hope they will do for you.
5. Use the body of the letter to highlight your education and experiences that are relevant to the job.
6. Qualify and quantify your experiences and achievements using examples.
7. Ask for a meeting to discuss your qualifications in more details.
8. Keep to a minimum sentences that begin with “I.”
9. Write a one-page letter; spell check, proofread, and laser print it so you don't produce a “sloppy copy.”
10. Sign the letter (make a copy for your files) and paperclip it on top of your resume. Send your letter and resume in a 9x12 manila envelope.

The Job Search

Finding teaching positions that are opened in your field is the next goal after your paperwork has been completed. There are two ways to approach a job search: by being reactive or proactive.

Reactive Approach – applying for positions found through the following:

- Print lists from your college career office, newspapers, educational journals or professional organizations
- Teacher job fairs
- School district sites (More and more school districts are putting their applications on-line. This is a good way to apply if you are applying to many districts.)
- Word of mouth from friends, family and acquaintances

On-line vacancy lists (following is a partial list of educational job sites.)

- Wisconsin - www.wisconsin.gov/state/home
- Project Connect - <http://careers.education.wisc.edu/projectconnect/teacher/>
- Marquette Career Services put all elementary, secondary, counseling and speech pathology jobs on this site that it receives from school districts.
- Illinois Education Job Bank – <http://www.iasaedu.org/Jobbank>
- Cook County (IL) Suburban Regional Office of Education - www.cook.k12.il.us
- Illinois Association of School Administrators - www.iasaedu.org
- Education Week on the Web - www.edweek.org
- Illinois High School Association - www.ihsa.org
- Jobs. Com - www.jobs.com - Lists many job websites.
- Minnesota Educational Vacancies - www.mnasa.org
- Inner City Teaching Corps - www.ictc-chicago.org/
- The Edison Project - <http://edisonproject.com/>
- The Education America Network - <http://educationamerica.net/>
- Teaching and Projects Abroad - www.shrivercenter.org/
- Teachers-Teachers.com - www.teachers-teachers.com/
- Urban Catholic Teaching Corps – <http://www.bc.edu/schools/lsoe/academics/urban/uctc/>

Proactive Approach – Researching and applying directly to schools districts, not knowing if there are openings

Determine your top school districts that you would like to work for and a “second tier” list. Research these schools districts, try to talk to someone who works there, and try to meet a principal or department chair, all of which can be done whether there is an opening at the moment or not. Many elementary school districts do not even publish elementary vacancies as they do not wish to be bombarded with resumes. Many school districts will accept resumes even if they don't have an opening in that field at the moment.

Students sometimes inquiry about headhunters but headhunters are useful mostly for administrator positions.

Interviewing

- Prepare, Prepare, Prepare
- Research district you will interview with
 - Try to find articles in the local newspapers about them during the past year
- Find people to talk with people who teach in that district or who know people who teach in the district that they can introduce you to
- Prepare questions and answers that you might be asked (see below); do a mock interview with a friend
- Arrive 10-15 minutes early, confident, but not cocky
- Have questions ready to ask during or at the end of the interview. Questions can make you appear intelligent, curious, astute and “with it”
- Interviewers want to learn about the “real” you. Practice smiling and looking comfortable. They want to interview a real, live person, not someone putting on an act
- You can ask who will be on your interview team
- Be ready for “scenario questions”:
 - What would you do IF.....
- Be ready for some indirect questions like:
 - If you could read only one book, what would it be
 - What person would you most like to be like
- Do you come across as bettering yourself: good attitude, positive, collaborative, life-long learner, comfortable with who you are, a good match
- After the interview if you really want the position, write a thank you note. You can hand-write it to one person on the committee or to all the members
- Some schools will call you one way or the other as to whether you did or did not get the job. If you ask why you were not offered the position, most will not say much because of legal ramifications. However, you could ask if they can give you any hints as to how you can improve your interviewing.
 - How to ask Questions:
 - Not: Am I going to have low level classes?
 - But: What will my schedule look like?

 - Not: Do I have to teach _____?
 - But: Would art be included in my schedule?

 - Not: Do parents support the school?
 - But: How do you involve parents?

- At the end of the interview, is there anything that you'd like to tell them that they didn't ask
- It's okay to think about an answer before replying if you haven't thought about it or prepared a response in that area
 - Ex: What are misconceptions people have about you
- If asked to give a weakness, don't give the worse case scenario: "Oh, man, I really screwed up this particular discipline situation"

But

"I experienced a tough situation.....this is the way I handled it....I learned through this situation that this is the way I'd do it next time. It was a real learning experience.

- When you leave the interview, smile, shake hands, don't be discouraged! Recruiters are looking for confidence

Just because you are not hired at one school does not mean that you will not be a good "match" for another. Maybe you like more freedom with the curriculum and some schools will allow that whereby others won't etc. It is important that you find the atmosphere and culture that fits your style

Questions and answers span eight major interviewing categories

(See Employment Strategies for Prospective Teachers: A Guide in your packet which contains the following questions and explains how to answer these questions.)

1. General Character Assessment
2. Academic and Co-curricular Background
3. Teaching Ability and Educational Philosophy
4. Learning Styles and Student Achievement
5. Planning and Organization
6. Student and Parent Rapport
7. Student Management
8. Classroom Environment

- What influenced you the most to become a teacher
- Provide a brief biographical sketch of yourself. Start with high school
- Pick our your favorite teacher (high school or college) and describe what impressed you the most about this person
- What do you perceive as the three most important strengths you possess as a teacher.
- Name one or two areas that you discovered, while student teaching, that you would like to improve
- Why do you think you will make a good teacher at this school

- How are you able to show both an interest in and an enthusiasm for teaching
- Describe how you might dress for the first day of school
- What class or classes did you take in college that prepared you the most for a teaching career
- Explain why you feel you are ready to be a teacher
- Describe your student teaching assignment. How would you rate your general performance? What went especially well for you while student teaching
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- What student activities, if any, were you involved in during high school and/or college? How might your involvement have helped you to be a better teacher
- What sports or student activities do you feel qualified to coach or direct? Why
- Name two or three teaching skills essential in helping students learn
- Talk about your ability to introduce or begin a lesson
- What have you found to be a good way to motivate students toward active participation in the learning process
- How do you reinforce major concepts or ideas that you want students to learn
- Students need teacher feedback regarding their efforts. Name several ways that you provide students with such validation
- In what ways are you able to change your teaching methods to meet the wide range of academic needs that will be present in your classroom
- Describe one or two good questioning techniques that you use with students
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- How can a teacher get students actively engaged in a classroom discussion
- How do you draw a lesson to a conclusion
- In your opinion, what abilities are common to good teaching
- How would you go about deciding what teaching materials to use in one of your classes
- Describe your ability to listen and be responsive
- Not all students learn best in the same way. For instance, some may need more visual cues than auditory ones. How might you accommodate some different learning styles in your class
- What are some ways that teachers can be helpful to the slow learner
- How are you able to stimulate creative expression by your students

- What type of testing information might be helpful in assessing a student's ability
- If most of the students in your class were achieving below average at the end of a grading period, what might you think? What would you do
- What would you do if you were to receive a new student in your class who had a learning disability
- What makes up a good lesson plan for you
- How might a teacher's goals or objectives affect learner outcomes
- Almost every school has a prescribed curriculum for each grade level or subject area. How would you use this information in planning your own classroom curriculum
- Most lesson planning results in the modification of ideas and approaches. When you student taught, how and when did you deviate from your lesson plans
- Describe how you determine academic needs and then decide upon the proper learning materials
- How do you help to ensure student time on task
- How do you organize students for effective instruction
- What techniques do you use to display an interest in your students
- Would students view you as a reasonable person to know and a fair person with whom they can work. Why
- How are you able to make students feel at ease around you, while still respecting you
- Why might students view you as fair and impartial
- In what ways do teachers need to show a willingness to help students who have difficulties
- How would you handle a parent-teacher conference where the parents blamed you for his or her son's lack of progress
- In what ways can you have a positive impact on the parents' view of you as a teacher
- Good teaching can usually prevent discipline problems. Explain what this means
- Why is good classroom control a prerequisite to teaching and learning
- How would you handle a student who refuses to work in your class

- In what type of situation would you turn to the principal or dean of students for assistance
- In what ways would you be able to convey to the students that you are in charge of the class
- How would you go about making your room attractive and inviting to the learner
- Describe a student seating arrangement that would be in concert with our teaching style
- What is the teacher's responsibility for maintaining a clean and functional room
- Procedure for Interviewing at MPS and the Teacher Perceiver
- MPS has four staffing specialist who do initial screening interviews
- All applicants must complete the MPS application
- After your initial screening interview, if MPS is interested in you, you will receive a letter and must take a physical exam
- All candidates must have a background check before any school interview
- After a positive screening interview, MPS will refer you to open schools
- Let MPS know what schools you are and are not interested in
- Schools have teams to interview: 3 teachers, 1 administrator, 1 parent
- If you are asked to take the teacher perceiver at MPS or any school district, be prepared for a loose format where there are no right answers.
 - The questions enable you to talk about yourself and your beliefs
 - There are 55 questions to determine compatibility with the teaching environment
 - The interview is taped in case it is ever challenged
 - The perceiver has proven to be effective; candidates often don't like this form of an interview where there are "no right answers."
 - The perceiver looks for 12 qualities and in the city, a 13th, diversity.
 - The open-ended questions may ask about mission, creativity, what you believe about children, why you want to be a teacher, what does it take to be a good teacher etc.

First Year Teaching Tips

- Growth and Development
 - When interviewing, always ask what support you, as a new teacher, will be getting from that school district
- In Wisconsin, under the new state certification plan, all new teachers will be assigned a mentor. Mentoring programs provide great support from veteran teachers.

New teachers will have five years to complete outcomes that they choose for themselves, and then will be evaluated as to whether they fulfilled the outcomes (not whether they have learned and improved!) Outcomes can be fulfilled by activities, workshops, university courses, travel, special projects, etc.

Accountability

- An appraisal is growth oriented with a plan for improvement
- An evaluation makes a judgment as to how good a teacher you are (every state has its own method of evaluation)
- An evaluation is:
 - For the purpose of improving instruction
 - Is a condition of your employment
 - May be bargained for through an association
 - Should be taken seriously

If the worse case scenario occurs and you are not asked back to your position, learn to market your skills and leave the school with a letter of reference

Reasons you may not be rehired:

- Position no longer there
- Budget constraints
- Program changes (elem. school no longer has a music program)
- Performance issues: These can be overcome. You just need to work on developing in these areas.
- Classroom management
- Not good at working in a team

Mentoring Program

A teacher protégé in one school district described as: Non-tenured certified professional new to school who has sincere and active interest in his/or continued development

Purpose

- Acclimate new teachers to a particular school setting and culture
- Provide support to new teachers
- May provide workshops

Goals

- Facilitate personal and professional growth
- Foster a sense of readiness
- Provide opportunity for effective teaching practices and experience
- Accurate information about school
- Provide forum for discussion

Sample mentoring Timeline and Topics

- First year teacher
 - Begin a week before school starts
 - Hold quarterly meetings
 - Checklist with mentor
- Two-four year teacher
 - Discuss professional plans
 - Workshops, observation, peer coaching
 - Mentoring Topics
 - Student Discipline
 - Classroom management.
 - School rules
 - Parent communication
 - Positive aspects of the teacher

Teachers' Contracts

- Salary schedule
- Tuition, reimbursement
- Child care
- Stipend positions (coaching or clubs)
- Sick Days
- Personal days
- Maternity
- Bus duty
- School Advancements
- Expectations of new teachers for growth
- Technology expectations

Hiring Timeline

- Schools start becoming interested in March
- Begin your application process in February and March
- Mid-year grads—there can be openings as some teachers might have to leave mid-year.

In Demand Fields

- Chemistry
- Math
- Spanish
- Special Education
- Reading
- Industrial Tech
- Home Economics
- Elementary Special Education