

FROM CAMPUS TO CLASSROOM: A Job Search Guide for Educators (2009-10) www.udel.edu/CSC/CampustoClassroom.pdf

JOB SEARCH: FLEXIBILITY IS CRITICAL DURING TOUGH ECONOMIC TIMES

With the nation experiencing the worst financial crisis since the 1930s, it's a tough time to look for a job. With unemployment rates rising, new college graduates must compete for jobs with more experienced workers and the teaching job market is no different. According to the American Association for Employment in Education (AAEE), the overall demand for educators has decreased during the past year. Federal, state, and local budget cuts have forced many school districts to increase class sizes or eliminate some classes completely. At the same time, many veteran teachers are delaying their retirement, further reducing the demand for teachers. While opportunities will continue to be available to those willing/certified to teach in high-demand subjects or high-need areas, the demand for teachers in other subjects will vary widely by region. States like Virginia or Iowa tend to offer good job prospects in many certification fields whereas new teachers looking for employment in New York or California will likely need to pursue jobs out-of-state. Overall, students willing to relocate will have the most successful job searches.

To increase the likelihood of finding a job, new teacher candidates must remain flexible in the search. Those who have the most difficulty getting jobs are often new graduates who limit their search to hometown school districts or regions. For those serious about beginning their teaching career, it is important to keep all options open (e.g. relocation, expanded grade level or subject focus, substitute teaching) and to figure out how to stand out in a competitive market.

The job search for teachers has become a very structured, labor intensive process in recent years. It can be intimidating for those unaware of what will be asked or expected of them. Teacher candidates must be ready for a complicated application process, multiple interviews, role-playing, demonstration exercises, presenting their portfolio, and/or professional networking. Candidates should learn as much as they can about the job search process, begin early, and remember to keep a record of all activity.

APPLYING FOR POSITIONS

Most school districts follow a formal application process. Many will require that candidates submit a completed employment application, a resume, transcript(s), student teaching evaluations, reference letters, copies of teaching certificates, fingerprinting/criminal background clearances, etc. What will vary greatly, however, is when the various items are needed (timeline). Pay attention to individual school district requirements and deadlines!

- Resumes should be well written, attractively formatted, and free of errors. While many recruiters prefer concise, one page resumes, it is acceptable to submit a two-page resume if your background and experiences warrant this (don't forget your name at the top of page two).
- A cover letter should accompany your resume (and any other items that may be submitted at the same time); this correspondence should be addressed to the administrator responsible for recruitment. If you cannot find the contact for this functional area, or if the school district does not have a human resources officer/HR department, address your cover letter to the superintendent of schools.
- Employment applications should be completed neatly and completely. Increasingly, school systems are making their employment applications available online as interactive web forms or printable documents. When you complete any employment application, respond to all questions fully and never indicate "see resume" when asked for specific information. Before submitting (by U.S. mail, fax, or electronically), be sure to make a copy of each completed application (for personal records as well as helpful review before an interview).
- Submit items such as student teaching evaluations, references, and transcripts **only when instructed to do so by the school district and in the format they request**. Most school district recruitment offices prefer to receive these items from candidates in a certain way and on a specific timeline. Pay attention to the information you receive regarding application procedures (e.g. indicated on their web site, in a newspaper classified ad or a job posting, as verbal instruction from a recruiter at a teacher job fair, etc.).



WRITING YOUR RESUME

As you pursue teaching positions, you may be asked by hiring school district personnel to provide multiple items for their review. One very important document frequently requested is a resume. This document should be well written as it serves as your chief marketing tool. Think about the hundreds of resumes a school district may have on file. What is going to make your resume stand out? How can you sway school personnel to grant you an interview when there are often multiple candidates with comparable qualifications? This is your challenge.

When school district recruitment personnel begin to screen resumes for open positions, a reader may spend as little as 20-30 seconds skimming your resume (not reading) at first. Increasingly, a computer is scanning your resume to search for job specific “buzz words.” Either way, it is imperative that pertinent information stand out. Effective resumes adhere to simple guidelines such as: beginning with the most important material, starting phrases with action verbs and/or including important job specific jargon, being consistent in your job descriptions, and eliminating all spelling/grammatical errors. If you pass the “scan test” (by human eyes or computer), it is likely that someone will return to your resume for a more thorough review.

Your resume must present your skills and qualifications in a way that best “sells” you to the employer. While every candidate is unique and may choose to use different resume formats, most resumes contain certain basic categories:

Heading

Name, address, phone number(s), and e-mail address belong at the top. Include both temporary and permanent addresses (with indication of the date you will leave a temporary address, if applicable). If you primarily use a cell phone (and rarely a land line), list only the cellular number (but indicate that it is a cell/mobile phone number).

Objective

Keep it concise. Identify the content area(s) or grade(s) you are certified to teach. Include mention of any extracurricular activities you are willing to direct or assist, such as coaching or advising student organizations. Avoid flowery words or phrases such as “seek challenging teaching position” or “wish to work in a dynamic school district” as these are unnecessary and simply waste space.

Education

For the new educator/recent graduate, education follows the job objective on a resume (the education section will come at the end of your resume once you’ve been working in the field 3-5+ years). List college information with the most recent degree first. Include the degree earned, institution, major/minor, graduation date, and g.p.a., if desired. If you have unique educational experiences such as study abroad, you may want to include these here. It is not necessary that you list institutions attended for short periods of time (i.e. did not earn a degree). This information will be asked for on employment applications (and transcripts will reflect this).

Experience

Hiring school district administrators want to know if you can teach. What have you done? This part of the resume is by far the most important to those screening resumes. It may make sense to break your experiences into separate categories (e.g. student teaching experience, methods experience, practicum experience, tutoring, etc.). Use whatever format works best for you. For related work, list the school/district, location, and dates. Include basic facts of the assignments (e.g. grade levels, number of students, subjects taught) and describe your experience in specific terms (e.g. What did you prepare and present? What lessons, units, and learning centers did you design? Describe the students you taught.). Make your experience unique. Share any extra assignments or responsibilities you handled. Use action verbs that will capture your skills and accomplishments.

Other

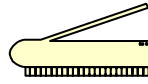
You may want to include other non-classroom experience. Summer work, volunteer experiences, research, perhaps even nonrelated positions. Remember, school district personnel want to hire the best teachers they can. If you possess other helpful qualifications and experiences, convey these in a way that skills transfer to the classroom (e.g. restaurant work demands interpersonal, communication, and management skills). Other sample categories may include leadership experience, campus activities, community service, committee work, professional affiliations or memberships, professional development and/or pre-service training, etc.

Skills

School district administrators not only need their teachers to be knowledgeable about their subject(s) but also about technology, communications, interaction, and the sociological and psychological differences of students, parents, and communities. If you have special skills that would be an asset in the classroom or as a member of their teaching staff, be sure to share these. Language fluency (ies), computer skills, first aid training, musical or athletic talents... brag!



TIPS FOR CREATING/PRODUCING YOUR RESUME



- For paper resumes that will be shared in person (e.g. brought to job fairs or interviews), use quality resume paper, white or ivory, printed on one side only (do not staple or paper clip two page resumes; let the recruiter/interviewer do this)
- Simple fonts such as Arial or Times New Roman are best (avoid fonts that are too “busy” or ornate); font size should be 10 to 12
- Create an attractive and inviting format; use consistent headings, indentations, tab settings, etc.
- Minimize the use of italics or underlining; do not use novelty graphics (e.g. borders, shadowed letters, teacher-themed clip art)
- Strive for a crisp, clean, professional look; produce an error-free document (school administrators expect perfection!)
- Make sure that each position description contains the same identifying information in the same order (e.g. position title, name of employer, city, state, dates)
- Describe more important positions/experiences more fully than less important positions/experiences
- Descriptions of experiences should begin with action/power verbs (see samples that follow); do not use the pronoun “I”
- Eliminate meaningless phrases such as “responsibilities included” and empty words such as “various,” “numerous,” and “several”
- Sample action/power verbs: *achieved; acquired; administered; advocated; analyzed; assessed; attained; communicated; completed; composed; conceived; conducted; coordinated; created; delegated; demonstrated; designed; developed; devised; directed; encouraged; enriched; established; evaluated; executed; facilitated; formulated; founded; generated; guided; handled; helped; implemented; improved; incorporated; increased; initiated; instructed; integrated; introduced; led; maintained; managed; mentored; moderated; motivated; negotiated; operated; organized; perfected; performed; persuaded; planned; prepared; presented; produced; proposed; provided; reorganized; researched; resolved; scheduled; selected; solved; supervised; taught; tutored; updated; utilized; wrote*

COVER LETTER/LETTER OF APPLICATION



Cover letters are required anytime you send your resume and/or other application materials to an employer (paper or online). This written correspondence has several important functions: it serves as your introduction and informs the reader why you are forwarding your resume; it identifies the position(s) for which you want to be considered; and perhaps most importantly, it allows you to sell yourself in more direct and creative ways than the resume alone. Many candidates put great effort into their resumes but neglect their cover letters – don’t make this mistake. Most school administrators believe the cover letter is just as important as the resume (sometimes more) as it reflects a candidate’s style and personality, and is a good example of their written communication skills.

What to include:

The cover letter, also called a letter of application, usually contains three main sections: the introduction, the body, and the closing. It should not exceed one page. Important to include are:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| First paragraph/introduction- | An introduction to you (catch their attention). Inform the reader why you are submitting your resume and/or application materials. What type of position are you seeking? Also, share how you learned of the position and/or district, if appropriate. |
| Middle paragraph(s)/body- | Contains your main selling points. Highlight your responsibilities drawing attention to your most important qualifications and experiences. Expand on the points that might be of particular interest. It is often wise to break the body of the letter into 2-3 shorter paragraphs, each with a particular focus (e.g. student teaching experience, extracurricular activities, leadership, etc.). |
| Final paragraph/closing- | State your interest in the position and/or district and your availability for an interview. Specific contact information may be shared here. |

An attractive layout is important. If preparing a hard copy (paper) cover letter to accompany a resume being sent by U.S. Mail or fax, use one-inch margins (if possible) and center the letter on the page. Any business letter format is acceptable. Don’t forget to list the administrator’s name and title in the address header, use proper salutation, and sign your letter above the typed signature line. If the cover letter will be sent by email as an attachment, follow the same content and formatting tips listed above (with the exception of a signature; simply type your name at the bottom). If the letter will be sent “in” the text message box of an email message, you may have to re-format a bit to make the message appear as a professional business correspondence.

A cover letter should be tailored to a specific job, grade level, instructional area, and/or school district whenever possible. Taking time to write a personal, targeted cover letter (vs. a generic letter of introduction) increases the odds of being selected for an interview. This demonstrates a candidate’s sincere interest, dedication and extra effort, setting them apart from the rest of the applicant pool. Make them want to meet you!

♠ SAMPLE RESUME FOR TEACHERS ♠

(-- This is a one-page sample; teaching resumes are often two pages with more entries and/or greater detail. --)

KATLYN M. CONNORS

Campus Address (until 5/31/09): 3304 Woolen Way, Newark, DE 19711; 973-919-0896 (cell); katyconn@udel.edu
Permanent Address: 593 Rockaway Valley Road, Boonton Township, NJ 07005
Electronic Portfolio: Available at <http://livetext.com/college/index.html> (Visitor's Pass: a94sd7; use Internet Explorer only)

JOB OBJECTIVE

Seek elementary or middle school mathematics teaching position.

EDUCATION

University of Delaware, Newark, DE

Bachelor of Science in Education – May 2009

Major: Elementary Teacher Education

Second licensure: Mathematics (30 credits)

Major GPA 3.6/4.0; Overall 3.34/4.0

Study Abroad: University of Granada (Summer 2008)

Certification

Eligible for certification, May 2009. Have successfully completed PRAXIS I and PRAXIS II. Meet highly qualified testing requirements for Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Student Teacher

▪ Leeds Elementary School, Cecil County Public Schools, Elkton, MD

Developed and implemented engaging, effective lessons in all subject areas for a heterogeneous group of second grade special and regular education students. Designed and implemented an interactive science unit on air and weather. Technology and hands-on activities were integrated to foster student engagement and learning. Worked collaboratively with other teachers and professionals to create effective lessons that met the learning needs and abilities of all students. Introduced a Writer's Workshop appropriate for second grade abilities. Organized and created learning centers and bulletin boards. Attended parent conferences, faculty and team meetings, IEP meetings, and county-wide professional development days. Actively participated in activities which included: assessing student progress, assigning grades, taking attendance, lunch/recess duty, keeping parents/guardians informed through newsletters, daily or weekly progress reports/behavior charts, phone calls and email. (November 2008 to January 2009)

▪ Perryville Middle School, Cecil County Public Schools, Perryville, MD

Worked with a culturally and socio-economically diverse, various ability-level group of eighth grade students using a middle school (Bridges to Algebra) and high school curriculum (Integrated Algebra, Statistics, Geometry), complemented with a computer based learning component. Incorporated an Inquiry Project to provide an opportunity for challenge and academic growth for students in the Bridges to Algebra class. Collected meaningful data including pre/post assessments and a variety of formative assessments to chart student growth. Incorporated motivational incentives to instill confidence and encourage student achievement through the Inquiry Project. Communicated with parents on a regular basis. (August to November 2008)

Methods Experience

▪ George V. Kirk Middle School, Christina School District, Newark, DE

Developed and taught lessons of instruction across the middle school mathematics curriculum for grade 7. (Spring 2008)

▪ Forest Oak Elementary School, Red Clay Consolidated School District, Newark, DE

Taught an integrated unit on Holidays to a class of 24 third grade students with a wide range of abilities. (Fall 2007)

▪ Brader Elementary School, Christina School District, Newark, DE

Tutored individual students and taught inquiry science lessons using Smithsonian Science Kits. (Fall 2006)

ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE

▪ Substitute Teacher, Grades K-8, Christina and Colonial School Districts, Newark/Wilmington, DE (Spring 2009)

▪ Laurel Hill School Summer Camp, East Setauket, NY (Summers 2007 and 2008)

▪ Reading Volunteer, Latin American Community Center, Wilmington, DE (2005-2008)

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Seminars and pre-service workshops attended in 2008-200 include: *Lesson Planning for Diverse Learners; Cooperative Learning; Discipline and Classroom Management; Flexible Grouping in Math; and Multicultural Education*

HONORS AND ACTIVITIES

Dean's List; Club Field Hockey (2006-08); Chi Omega Sorority (2007-present); Relay for Life participant (five years)

♠ SAMPLE COVER LETTER FOR TEACHERS ♠

3304 Woolen Way
Newark, DE 19711
March 11, 2009

Mr. Kirk Thompson
Director of Human Resources
Howard County Public Schools
10910 Route 108
Ellicott City, MD 21042

Dear Mr. Thompson:

In May, I will graduate from the University of Delaware with a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Teacher Education and a second licensure area of Middle School Mathematics (30 credit hours). I have successfully completed Praxis I and II testing requirements (Elementary; Middle Level Math) and would appreciate consideration for Fall 2009 teaching positions in these areas, especially those in middle school math.

According to the Maryland Department of Education website, Howard County Public School System is ranked as the state's top district regarding student performance on the Maryland School Assessment. This tells me that HCPSS truly believes in its mission statement to "ensure excellence in teaching and learning." In talking with University of Delaware alumni friends who relocated to Howard County to begin their teaching careers, I am very impressed and excited by what they tell me. From extensive use and support of technology in the classroom, to controlled class size, to thorough new teacher orientation and ongoing mentor and support teams - - it is clear that HCPSS really cares about its teachers. As a dedicated and enthusiastic new teacher, I would welcome the opportunity to join your staff.

I enjoy every aspect of teaching and working with elementary aged students. During my two student teaching placements in the Cecil County Public School System, I gained experience working in both elementary and middle school math settings. In addition to developing and implementing class lesson plans, I have also designed behavior modification plans and academic remediation plans for individual students. Recognizing the importance of ongoing communication with parents, I wrote and distributed weekly classroom newsletters, completed regular student progress reports, and contacted parents by phone or e-mail as needed. With the support of my cooperating teacher, I introduced a Writers Workshop, facilitated cooperative learning, and became knowledgeable of the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) program and the Maryland Content Standards.

Prior to student teaching, I've had the opportunity to gain considerable experience working with children and youth. At the University of Delaware, I've learned from top-notch faculty and have worked directly with students from the minute I arrived on campus as a freshman. My tutoring and methods placements have been in a variety of settings, from inner city schools to very rural locations. Additionally, I've pursued summer employment and volunteer opportunities that have allowed me to work with diverse student groups. I believe that I come well prepared to begin my teaching career in your school system and am confident that I will not only meet, but exceed your expectations for a first-year teacher.

I have enclosed a resume, a completed employment application, and an unofficial transcript. References, student teaching evaluations, and other helpful documents are managed by Interfolio.com and I am happy to provide these at your request. I hope that you will take time to review my electronic portfolio available at <http://livetext.com/college/index.html> (Visitor's Pass: a94sd7).

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to the opportunity to meet with you to discuss my qualifications and experiences more completely. I can be reached at the mail, phone, or e-mail address listed on my resume and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Katlyn M. Connors (use your real signature for cover letters sent by U.S. Mail)

Katlyn M. Connors

Enclosures

INTERVIEW PREPARATION



After submitting a multitude of items and waiting for what may seem like eternity, you are finally contacted by a school district representative asking you to come in for an employment interview. Excellent! You've passed what is commonly referred to as the "paper screen" -- meaning the school district administrators believe you possess the basic qualifications and experience for the job. Feel good that the hard work you've put into your job search so far has paid off... but don't think that your work is over and that an interview guarantees you an offer. You have yet to sell yourself and convince the interviewer(s) that you are the best candidate for the job.

Preparation

No matter how excellent a teacher you may be, you must still take time to prepare for interviews. Marginal interviewing skills will not make the best impression on those making the hiring decisions. Approach interview preparation seriously and never think you'll do just fine by "winging it" or "coasting" through these sessions.

1) Learn about the types of interviews school districts use and practice!

Review commonly asked teaching interview questions, prepare answers, and verbally practice responses. Mock interview practice helps to hone interviewing skills as well as increase comfort level with the process.

2) Research the district/school!

Show them you've "done your homework." Review as much as you can find (e.g. check web sites, review printed information, district CDs/DVDs, talk to employees/parents/students of the district) and convey this information appropriately during the interview process. Let them know that you are serious about wanting to join their staff and that this is not simply a casual application for you.

3) Follow-up!

After the interview(s), proper follow-up includes taking care of whatever may have been asked of you during the process (e.g. submit additional documents they may have requested) as well as writing and sending thank you correspondence. While not required, a thank you note or letter is a professional courtesy that may give you the edge over other candidates considered equal. Don't delay; send thank you correspondence within three days of the interview.

Types of Interviews

1) Screening interviews

Initial interviews are commonly called "screening" interviews. These may be conducted at the school district, in job fair settings, or by telephone/video-teleconferencing. Some districts may use graded or standardized interviews (similar to an oral examination where all candidates are asked the same questions and their responses are recorded and scored; finalists are selected based on highest scores) or they may use standardized selection instruments (e.g. Gallop, Teacher Perceiver). In any case, first interviews are usually designed to eliminate candidates who do not match the qualifications or profile sought by the school district and to identify candidates worthy of continued consideration.

2) Selection interviews

Any invitation to return to the district for continued interview activity is considered part of the "selection" interview process (which may include a second, third or fourth return visit). Selection interviews tend to be longer sessions where candidates meet with a variety of personnel including building principals, teachers, team leaders, curriculum supervisors, school board members, parent groups, and perhaps even the superintendent. The candidate may meet this variety of people individually or as part of a group interview (i.e. panel interview) process. Selection interview sessions may require the candidate to teach a class, demonstrate an activity, or participate in role-playing. Behavioral based questions tend to comprise much of the selection interview process.

For either type of interview, approach preparation seriously. When contacted and invited for an interview:

1 – Note the interview time (plan to arrive a few minutes early)

2 – Get directions, if needed (getting lost and arriving late does not make a good first impression)

3 – Inquire about the format and duration of the interview

e.g. Who will be conducting the interview? (get names and titles of interviewers, if known)

What is the format of the interview? (separate interviews? team interview? panel interview?)

What additional items should you bring with you that day? (extra resumes? a portfolio?)

Once at the interview, do your best. Greet all individuals with a smile and a firm handshake; maintain good eye contact. Be enthusiastic, self confident, and polite. First impressions are extremely important, so pay attention to clothes, accessories, hairstyle, gestures, and body language. Dress professionally (educators are conservative by nature). You not only want to demonstrate your competencies as a professional educator but also "look" like a candidate they'd like to hire.



SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS



Professional Experiences

1. What is your philosophy of education?
2. Describe your student teaching experience(s). What are some of the most significant things you learned from your cooperating teacher(s)? What did you like/dislike?
3. What is your knowledge of and experience with standards-based education?
4. What experience have you had with students from culturally diverse backgrounds?
5. When did you first become interested in teaching?
6. What opportunities have you had to bring multicultural education into your classroom?
7. Describe your experience(s) working in an urban setting.
8. How well has your college/university prepared you for the teaching profession?

Instructional Skills

1. Describe the teaching techniques or strategies that are most effective for you.
2. How would you include cooperative learning in your classroom?
3. How would you identify the special needs of your students?
4. What do you include when you write learning objectives?
5. What techniques do you use to keep students actively involved during a lesson?
6. What methods would you use to assess student learning?
7. Describe different student learning styles and how you adjust lessons to benefit those differing styles.
8. Do you feel that the teacher should be responsible for developing objectives or should they be provided in the curriculum?
9. How do you deal with the unmotivated student?
10. Is drill and practice important? How and when would you use it?
11. What would you do if 50% of your class did poorly on a test?
12. What do you see as the relative strengths and weaknesses of norm-referenced tests?
13. How would you use authentic assessment?

Technology/Computer Skills

1. How would you incorporate technology in your classroom?
2. What are your computer skills? What software have you used for instructional or classroom management purposes?
3. Assuming you have adequate equipment, how would students be allowed to use technology in your classroom?

Classroom Discipline

1. Describe your philosophy regarding discipline.
2. What techniques would you use to handle discipline problems that may arise in your classroom?
3. What was the most challenging discipline problem you've encountered and how did you handle it? Were you prepared to handle this situation? In hindsight, would you have handled this situation any differently?
4. What kind of rules do you have in your classroom? (Share an example.) How are they established?
5. How would you create and promote a safe atmosphere in your classroom?

Classroom Management

1. What is your classroom management plan/style? What are your goals?
2. Describe what you consider to be the model classroom. What would a typical day look like in this classroom?
3. Share three interesting classroom management techniques used in your classroom.
4. When students say they want their teacher to be fair, what do you think they mean?
5. A student tells his teacher that he forgot to bring his paper that he had written the night before. The teacher says, "I understand. I sometimes forget things like that too." How do you evaluate the way this teacher responded to the student?

Knowledge of Content/Materials

1. What kinds of materials have you used to assess student strengths and/or weaknesses?
2. What kinds of tests do you like to give?
3. Are there any materials you have used that you find are especially effective for slow learners or bright students?
4. What coursework have you taken that has made you especially suited for this position?
5. What kind of materials and supplies would you need to do your best job?
6. How do you stay current in your field?
7. What curricular changes do you hope to see over the next few years?



Planning Skills

1. What do you include in your daily lesson plans? How closely do you follow your plans?
2. Describe a good lesson you've planned and implemented. Explain why it was good.
3. Describe a time when a lesson was not going well. What did you do about it?
4. How would you integrate language arts across the curriculum?
5. How would you go about setting up your reading program?
6. How would you handle varied reading abilities in the content areas?
7. How much homework will you assign? How do you know how long it will take your students?
8. How do you feel when you do not meet a deadline? What do you do when students do not meet their deadlines?

Relationships with Administration, Staff, Parents, and Students

1. Describe an outstanding teacher. What makes this educator outstanding?
2. What does "teamwork" mean to you? Give an example.
3. What should a principal expect from teachers? What should teachers expect from their principal?
4. What kind of principal would you like to work for?
5. How would your students describe you as a teacher?
6. How do you approach parent/teacher conferences?
7. What do you feel is important to know about your students? How do you gather this information?
8. Describe your approach with a parent who is upset with you - - and you know you are right.
9. How can you get students to be excited about learning?
10. Describe your use of paraprofessional aides and/or parent volunteers in your classroom.
11. How do you develop self-esteem in your students?
12. How do you keep parents informed about the daily/weekly progress of their son/daughter? What vehicles do you use to communicate with parents?
13. What kind of people do you find it difficult to work with and why?
14. Do you want students to like you? Why or why not?
15. What do you value most in a child?

Personal Qualities

1. Why have you selected teaching as a profession?
2. What are your career goals, short term and long term?
3. What makes you an effective teacher?
4. Describe yourself with three adjectives and explain why they were chosen.
5. What distinguishes you from other candidates?
6. Describe your fears as you begin your first year teaching.
7. If I were to contact your references what do you think they would say about you?
8. Would you describe yourself as a team player or an individual achiever?
9. What is your most successful accomplishment?
10. Tell me whom you would like to emulate. Why?

Miscellaneous

1. What activities would you like to become involved in within our school, district, or community?
2. Why do you want to work in our school system? What would you bring to us?
3. Tell me about yourself.
4. How would your best friend describe you?
5. Describe your thoughts about student and teacher accountability.
6. What professional development topics interest you?
7. What are your plans for professional growth?
8. What community projects or organizations have you been involved with?
9. What gives you the greatest pleasure teaching?
10. What do you think is wrong with public education today?
11. At which grade level do you think you would do the best job?
12. Would you be willing to teach at a different grade level (elementary) or teach a different subject (secondary)?
13. What are your greatest weaknesses?
14. Why should we hire you over the two other finalists who have comparable qualifications?

BEHAVIOR BASED INTERVIEWS

Some employers believe that the best predictor of future success is past success. In behavior-based interviews, you will be asked to give examples or stories, to provide evidence that you have the skills required for the job. For most questions, the interviewer will not continue until you have provided a specific example. Success in behavior-based interviews requires thorough preparation and practice (this is where mock interviews can be quite helpful). You must be able to recall many experiences quickly, select the most appropriate one, and then describe it effectively. Create a list of 10-15 experiences that demonstrate a variety of skills and abilities. Draw upon your college experiences, academic and extracurricular; volunteer and work experiences; and when appropriate, personal experiences. Practice telling about these experiences.

When answering behavior based interview questions, be certain to answer each question completely. One way to do this is to follow the **STAR** acronym in planning and presenting your answers:

<u>S</u>ituation or <u>T</u>ask	Describe the situation that you were in or the task that you needed to accomplish. You must describe a specific event or situation, not a generalized description of what you have done in the past. Be sure to give enough detail for the interviewer to understand.
<u>A</u>ction You Took	Keep the focus on you. Even if you are discussing a group project or effort, describe what <u>you</u> did (not the results of the team). Don't tell what you might do; tell what you did.
<u>R</u>esults You Achieved	What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish?

Here is a list of sample behavior based interview questions that may help you practice:

- Describe a time when you faced a stressful situation that demonstrated your coping skills.
- Give me an example of a time when you set a goal and were able to meet or achieve it.
- Tell me about a time when you had to use your presentation skills to influence someone's opinion.
- Please discuss an important written document you were required to complete.
- Tell me about a time when you had too many things to do and you were required to prioritize your tasks.
- What is your typical way of dealing with conflict? Provide an example.
- Tell me about a difficult decision you've made in the last year.
- Give me an example of when you showed initiative and took the lead.
- Share an example of a time when you motivated others.
- What have you done in the past to contribute toward a teamwork environment?
- Give me an example of a time when you went beyond the call of duty in order to get the job done.
- Tell us about a situation when you used your fact-finding skills to solve a problem.
- Give me an example of a time when you had to keep from making a decision because you did not have enough information.



TEACHER PERCEIVER INTERVIEW FOR TEACHER CANDIDATES

The Teacher Perceiver Process is based on a twenty-year study of teachers who stimulate students' learning. The process begins with a person who is concerned about identifying teachers who will truly be helpful to students. This person is referred to as the Teacher Perceiver Specialist. All questions are used with each candidate and the questions are asked in a prescribed manner. The Teacher Perceiver Specialist is encouraged to audio- or videotape record the interview that takes approximately 45 minutes.

Teacher Perceiver Themes

MISSION.....	The teacher's goal is to make a significant contribution to student growth.
EMPATHY.....	The teacher deals with the individual student's feelings and thoughts.
RAPPORT DRIVE.....	The teacher likes students and promotes warm, accepting relationships.
INDIVIDUALIZED PERCEPTION.....	The teacher considers the interests and needs of each student.
LISTENING.....	The teacher listens to students' feelings with responsiveness and acceptance.
INVESTMENT.....	Teacher satisfaction comes from the learner's response, not teacher performance.
INPUT DRIVE.....	The teacher searches for new ideas and experiences to share with students.
ACTIVATION.....	The teacher motivates students to think, respond, and feel in order to learn.
INNOVATION.....	The teacher is determined to implement creative new ideas and techniques.
GESTALT.....	The teacher tends toward perfectionism, but works from individual to structure.
OBJECTIVITY.....	The teacher responds to the total situation rather than with impulsive reaction.
FOCUS.....	The teacher has models and goals and selects activities in terms of these goals.

Sample Teacher Perceiver Questions

- What do you want to accomplish as a teacher?
- How will (do) you go about finding out about your students' attitudes and feelings about your class?
- An experienced teacher offers you the following advice: "When you are teaching be sure to command the respect of your students immediately and all will go well." How do you feel about this?
- How do you go about deciding what it is that should be taught in your class?
- A parent comes to you and complains that what you are teaching his child is irrelevant to the child's needs. How would you respond?
- What do you think will provide you the greatest pleasure in teaching?
- How do you go about finding what students are good at?
- Would you rather try a lot of way-out teaching strategies or would you rather try to perfect the approaches that work best for you. Explain your position.
- Do you like to teach with an overall plan in mind for the year, or would you rather just teach some interesting things and let the process determine the results? Explain your position.
- A student is doing poorly in class. This student tells you that you are the poorest teacher he/she has ever had. What would you do?
- If there were absolutely no restrictions placed upon you, what would you most want to do in life?



QUESTIONS YOU MAY WANT TO ASK

Teaching interviews are not only an opportunity for school district administrators to learn more about particular candidates, but for candidates to gain additional information about organizations and the position itself. Listed below are sample questions you may want to ask:

General Topics:

- How would teachers and/or parents describe your school district?
- What is the general pupil enrollment trend in your district?
- What is the financial status of your school district?

Philosophy of Education:

- What is the mission (or are the major goals) of your school district?
- What major challenges and opportunities are facing your school district?

Students:

- How does your district meet individual student needs?
- What are the multicultural needs of your students?
- What is the teacher/pupil ratio in your school(s)?

Instructional Programs:

- What is your district doing to improve classroom instruction?
- How does your district involve parents in the education process?

Anticipated Responsibilities:

- What are you seeking in the candidate you hire for this position?
- What do you expect from a teacher in the classroom?
- Do you allow building administrators sufficient flexibility to implement innovative programs? Do you encourage site-based management?

Assistance for New Teachers:

- What support systems are available to a new teacher?
- What does your district do to insure that new teachers are successful?
- Does your district have a mentor program? If so, please describe.

Work Environment:

- What technology is used in your classrooms?
- How would you describe the classroom management/disciplining techniques used by teachers in your school district?
- Does your district encourage decision-making at the school/classroom level?
- What forms of communication exist within the school district?
- How much are teachers allowed to plan or work on projects together?
- How would you describe school morale?

Teachers/Professionals:

- What is the average tenure of teachers on your present staff?
- How much support can I expect from the principal and parents?
- Do you utilize team planning and teaching in the district?
- What skills do you think are important for your teachers to possess?
- If I do my job well, where should I be after 5 years with the district?

Extracurricular Activities:

- How may I become involved in extracurricular activities?
- What participation do you expect from a teacher in the community and in after-school activities?

Measures of Performance:

- How do you evaluate new teachers?
- On what competencies should I focus during my first six months on the job?
- If hired, I plan to be with your district for many years. What would you suggest I do to remain successful on the job?

Affirmative Action:

- What is the ethnic composition of teachers on your staff? Of students?

Professional Development:

- What in-service staff development opportunities does your district provide?
- Does your district pay tuition assistance for continued graduate study?

Closure:

- What additional preparation might I need to teach in your school district?
- When do you expect to make a hiring decision?
- How will you notify candidates if they have or have not been selected for the position?



USE OF PORTFOLIOS IN THE JOB SEARCH

Educators at all grade levels must demonstrate unique professional knowledge and effective teaching strategies. A professional portfolio, hard copy or electronic, is a valuable job search tool (it may give you the edge over other candidates). A well-prepared portfolio shows your achievements, documents the scope and quality of your experience, and highlights your skills and abilities.

What to Include:

Your portfolio should show off your best work. Choose items with care, paying particular attention to those which will highlight your talents, abilities, and accomplishments. Suggested contents may include:

General contents

- ✓ Recent achievements (perhaps a one page summary of what you've done recently)
- ✓ Resume
- ✓ Mission statement
- ✓ Letters of reference
- ✓ Letters from parents of students/children you've taught/worked with
- ✓ Student-teaching evaluations
- ✓ Teaching certificates; certificates acknowledging participation in workshops/seminars/special training
- ✓ Examples of ways you recognize students' achievements (e.g. Student of the Month Award)

Classroom specific items

- ✓ Photos of you presenting a lesson or working with a small group of students
- ✓ Photos of you engaged in special activities with your class/students (e.g. field trip; drama/musical performance; coaching)
- ✓ Hands-on materials or manipulatives
- ✓ Samples of your students' work
- ✓ Video/CD/DVD showing you in action (e.g. teaching a lesson, working with a small group, tutoring one-on-one)
- ✓ A well-designed unit and/or lesson plan
- ✓ Community related items
- ✓ Photos of you coaching a sports team or working with children in the community in some way (e.g. county fair, 5K fundraiser)
- ✓ Newspaper articles or other publicity that showcases an accomplishment, leadership, community involvement, etc.

Hard Copy vs. Electronic Portfolios

Teachers are no longer confined to maintaining portfolios in hard copy binders or notebooks. Today's educators often use computers as portfolio partners. Their capacity for efficient storage and retrieval of data provides a viable solution to organizing the volume of work samples that teachers often possess. An additional benefit is the ability to publish and/or make the contents available online.

In building your electronic or online portfolio, use technology as a communication tool by incorporating sound, animation, graphics, color, and video. Take time to present performances and relay information in a way to showcase your accomplishments and talents. Your electronic portfolio can include original writing, links to resources, documents created in Word or Publisher, spreadsheets, slide-presentation programs, photos, audio files and video files. Select items for inclusion with care and plan to keep the contents of your portfolio current to reflect your career growth and development.

Will Anyone Really Look at Your Portfolio?

Teacher portfolios have become hugely popular with hiring panels. A recent survey of education professionals (recruiters, principals, senior educators) reported that 66% reviewed both paper and electronic portfolios, most reviewing the paper/hard copy portfolio at the time of the interview. Many administrators admit that a job fair setting is not the best venue to share a portfolio, simply because of the volume of candidates that tend to participate in these events and the limited amount of interview/meeting time available per candidate. Most interviewers strongly recommend that teacher candidates bring their portfolio to any on-site meeting (i.e. interviews conducted in human resource offices, in school buildings, classrooms, etc.). Most important, however, interviewers stress that candidates should be very familiar with the contents of their portfolio and able to quickly highlight a couple significant items or pieces, especially those that would relate to or demonstrate relevance to a particular topic being discussed at the time. Rarely will administrators or other members of the interview committee wish to sit while a candidate flips through their portfolio page-by-page (or screen-by-screen if using an online or digital portfolio) to showcase the entire collection of items. Know what's in your portfolio and selectively share samples, if appropriate and welcomed. Do not be hurt or insulted if no one wishes to review the contents of your portfolio; sometimes interviewers or hiring panels have a set agenda they must keep and there simply is not enough time. If your portfolio is available online, you can always provide a url (or a CD/DVD) so that administrators can review this at their leisure.

MANAGING YOUR REFERENCES AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

At some point in the application process, school district administrators/hiring officers are likely to ask for a variety of supporting documents. These might include: reference letters or letters of recommendation from employers or faculty, student teaching evaluations, transcripts, criminal background clearances, teaching certification or Praxis results, awards, memberships, philosophy of Education, personal statement, writing sample, etc. Take care to understand what is being requested and provide these documents in a way that is acceptable to the employer.

Most school district administrators will accept copies of these items coming directly from the applicant (by U.S. Mail, fax, or electronically). In this case, be sure to submit the requested items in a timely, professional way (i.e. use good quality photocopies, do not fold documents that may be scanned). For those who wish to use an electronic portfolio to manage these documents online (for a fee), *Interfolio.com* provides an excellent service (most school districts are familiar with *Interfolio* and hold it in high regard). Applicants create an account and store valuable documents online where they have 24/7 access to manage their job search activity. For more information, visit www.interfolio.com.

WHERE TO LOOK FOR JOB POSTINGS

There are several ways to learn about current or anticipated job vacancies. Some take a bit of work while others are a matter of luck and/or coincidence (e.g. being in the right place at the right time). Don't limit yourself to only one or two sources – the more resources you use, the more you increase the odds in your favor.

Tools to use:

- ✓ Career Services (check for vacancies posted to **Blue Hen Jobs** as well as web tools: www.udel.edu/CSC/teachers.html)
- ✓ Job Fairs (sponsored by colleges/universities, professional associations, Dept. of Education offices, individual school districts/counties)
- ✓ Local and national newspaper advertisements (print and online)
- ✓ School surveys
- ✓ Networking
- ✓ Cold-calling schools/school districts
- ✓ School district web sites
- ✓ State Dept. of Education websites
- ✓ Your state's NEA affiliate's web site
- ✓ ListSrvs
- ✓ General job-listing websites for educators (e.g. Teachers-Teachers.com)

PROJECT SEARCH: CAREERS FOR TEACHERS

Each spring, the University Council on Teacher Education (UCTE) and the Career Services Center jointly sponsor Project Search: Careers for Teachers. This teacher job fair brings representatives from over 100 school districts to campus. Participants are primarily from the Mid-Atlantic region but some recruiters travel from states as far away as Florida, Georgia, Nevada, and California. This year, the 32nd Annual Project Search will be held on Wednesday, April 21, 2010 at the Bob Carpenter Center. As we get closer to this date, a list of attending school districts – all linked to their respective web sites – can be viewed at www.udel.edu/CSC/projsearch.html. Also of interest to candidates pursuing jobs in the Delaware public school districts, Teach in Delaware Day (an opportunity to meet with Delaware public and charter school personnel prior to Project Search) will be held on Tuesday afternoon, April 20, 2010 (also held at the Bob Carpenter Center).

Project Search is a wonderful opportunity to meet with school district administrators and participate in screening interviews. All students planning to participate must register for the event (call 302-832-8570 for instructions if you do not take care of registration in a seminar class).

Prepare! Dress professionally and bring ample copies of your resume. Job fair interviews are “screening” interviews; candidates who impress interviewers will likely be invited back to the district for continued interview sessions with other school officials. Most interviews at Project Search are 15 minutes long, however, some schools prefer to use 20-30 minute sessions or perhaps talk informally with candidates (not actually conducting an interview). Whatever the format, present yourself as best you can in the time allotted. Don't forget follow-up thank you correspondence.

NEED HELP?

- ❖ To make an appointment to see Cindy Holland, call 831-8570 or email her at clh@udel.edu.

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