

## FROM CAMPUS TO CLASSROOM: A Job Search Guide for Educators (2022-23)

### JOB SEARCH: OPPORTUNITIES ABOUND BUT FLEXIBILITY IS CRITICAL FOR ALL TEACHER CANDIDATES

The demand for educators is strong across the country and it's an exciting time to be/become a teacher! According to the American Association for Employment in Education (AAEE), the job market for new educators has improved significantly over the past few years, and this trend is projected to continue. While supply and demand research paints a very positive picture for those pursuing K-12 teaching positions, the demand is not equal in all certification fields, nor geographic locations. As you begin the search for your first classroom position, you'll find the strongest demand in foreign language, math, science, and special education (nationwide), and/or in certain geographic states or locations (e.g. southwest, urban schools, etc.).

There are generally three reasons why employers hire new educators: 1) increasing student enrollment leading to the need for new teachers; 2) educators retiring, relocating, or leaving the profession; and 3) a shortage of qualified teachers in specific certification fields (AAEE, 2019). To increase the likelihood of finding a job, 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 candidates serious about beginning their professional teaching careers, keep these three strategies in mind: 1) be adventurous - expand the geographic range of your search; 2) add additional content areas or endorsements to your teaching certification; and 3) apply to a variety of employers including charter, cyber, private, and alternative education schools in addition to traditional public school districts (AAEE, 2019).

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 laborious 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, remain active in these efforts, and remember to keep a record of all activity.

### APPLYING FOR POSITIONS

Most school districts follow a formal application process and increasingly, this is done completely online via various applicant management systems. Candidates will be required to submit a variety of documents: a resume, transcript(s), student teaching evaluations, reference letters, copies of teaching certificates, fingerprinting/criminal background clearances, etc. Pay attention to individual school district requirements and deadlines!

- Resumes should be well written, attractively formatted, and free of errors. While many recruiters/administrators prefer concise, one-page resumes, it is usually acceptable to submit a two-page resume if your background and experiences warrant this.
- A well-written cover letter (also called a letter of introduction or letter of interest) is often required as part of the application process; the purpose of this communication is to express your interest in and qualifications for the position, articulating why you're the "best fit" for the job. Follow proper business letter formatting and use a proper salutation, addressing the letter to the administrator responsible for recruitment. If you cannot find the contact for this functional area, or if the school/school district does not have a human resources officer/HR department, address your cover letter to the superintendent of schools or lead administrator for the school/organization. It is imperative that you customize your letter to the specific job or school/school district to stand out (i.e. why are YOU the best fit for this position?). No generic letters!
- Employment applications should be completed carefully and completely. Respond to all questions fully and never indicate "see resume" when asked for specific information. Increasingly, applicant management systems are being used by schools/districts (e.g. JoinDelawareSchools, Frontline/Applitrack, OLAS, REAP, SchoolSpring, etc.). Become familiar with how each system functions, how jobs are posted, and what the process is to activate your application for open positions. Be sure that your information and uploaded documents are up-to-date at all times.
- Upload/submit all requested items *following the school's/school district's specific instructions*. You do not want to be overlooked simply because you did not follow directions or failed to provide required documents. If in doubt, contact the school/district directly for clarification.
- While not usually required, many schools/districts are impressed by additional resources that help to create a positive impression of the applicant (e.g. LinkedIn, ePortfolio). Monitor your "professional brand" or online presence, with special attention to demonstrating your potential to be a highly effective new educator.

## 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 that school district administrators may review weekly/monthly. 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 candidates' resumes, a reader may spend as little as 20-30 seconds skimming each document at first (not reading). Increasingly, a computer is scanning your resume to search for job specific information. Either way, it is imperative that pertinent information stands 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 (i.e. your personal brand). While each candidate is unique and may choose to use a different format, certain basic categories are important to include:

### **Heading**

Name and contact information is at the top (phone/email; address is not necessary as this is usually requested in the online application). Be sure to use a professional email address as first impressions (both in person and online/paper) are always important (i.e. mjones@udel.edu vs. sexydiva@gmail.com).

### **Objective**

An optional section. If included, keep it concise. Identify the content area(s) or grade(s) you are certified to teach. If interested, you may include mention of any extracurricular activities you are willing to direct or assist (e.g. coaching, 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 (if used); it is the first section if no objective is included (the education section will come at the end of your resume once you've been working in the field for a few years). List college information with the most recent degree first. Include degree earned, institution, major/minor, graduation date, GPA, and certification/s. 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. summer course work, 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 usually makes 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 experiences in specific terms and accomplishments (e.g. What were some of the unique challenges? What is the most important element from each placement or experience that an administrator should know?). Try to make your experiences unique and stand out; avoid repetition. Share any extra assignments or responsibilities you handled as well as noteworthy information you want the reader(s) to know. Use action verbs that will capture your skills and accomplishments. Always qualify and quantify information when possible.

### **Other**

You may want to include other non-classroom experience. Summer work, volunteer experiences, research, perhaps even nonrelated positions. Remember, school/district administrators 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, technology expertise, 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 assessment, technology, communications, interpersonal interaction protocol, 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/technology skills, first aid training, musical or athletic talents... brag!

## TIPS FOR CREATING/PRODUCING YOUR RESUME

- For paper resumes that will be shared in person (i.e. 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); be sure your name is on each page
- 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 INTEREST/LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Cover letters may be required or optional when you submit your resume and/or other application materials to an employer (paper or online). This correspondence has several important functions: it serves as your introduction and informs the reader why you are applying; 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/application 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 important) as it reflects a candidate’s style and personality, is a good example of their written communication skills, and demonstrates whether or not they have “done their homework” (i.e. customizing the letter to their particular job or school/district).

### What to include:

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

- |                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <b>First paragraph/introduction-</b> | An introduction to you (catch their attention). Inform the reader why you are submitting your resume and/or application materials. What position are you applying for and/or why do you wish to work for their school or district? Share how you learned of the position/district, if appropriate.  |
| <b>Middle paragraph(s)/body-</b>     | Contains your primary selling points and demonstrates to the reader how you will add value to their organization. Highlight your most important qualifications and experiences. Expand on points that may be of particular interest (i.e. <u>customize the letter</u> ). 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.). Try to answer the question: <i>How can you help meet their needs?</i> |
| <b>Final paragraph/closing-</b>      | Re-state/re-affirm your interest in the position and/or district and express your availability for an interview. Specific contact information may be shared here.   |

An attractive layout is important. If preparing a cover letter to be sent by U.S. Mail (rare), fax, email attachment, or uploaded as a document in an online system, use ½ to 1-inch margins and center the letter on the page vertically. Address the letter to a specific individual (usually an HR/Personnel Administrator) and use proper salutation (e.g. Dear Dr. Jones:). If the letter will be sent “in” the text message box of an email message (i.e. e-letter), the content will likely be shorter and you may have to re-format a bit to make the message visually attractive.

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) 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 ONE PAGE RESUME FOR TEACHERS

Teaching resumes may be two pages with more entries and/or greater detail, if warranted.

### Jennifer L. Mayfield

302.588.3986; [jlmayfield@udel.edu](mailto:jlmayfield@udel.edu)

#### EDUCATION

##### **University of Delaware, Newark, DE**

Bachelor of Science in Education

May 2019

Major: Elementary Teacher Education; Second licensure: Middle School English

Major GPA 3.6/4.0; Overall 3.34/4.0

Study Abroad: Budapest, Hungary

Winter 2017

##### Certification

- Eligible for certification (Grades K-6 and Middle School English, 6-8) upon graduation.
- Have successfully completed PRAXIS testing requirements and edTPA.

#### TEACHING EXPERIENCE

##### Student Teacher

Warner Elementary School, Red Clay Consolidated School District, Wilmington, DE

Spring 2019

- Developed and implemented lessons in all subject areas for a diverse class of 25 third grade students in an urban setting; engaged students via whole group, small group, and individualized instruction. Differentiated lessons and activities for all types of learners including English Language Learners and Special Needs students.
- Collected and analyzed data from SRI, SPI, Smarter Balanced, and DIEBELS to guide instruction.
- Integrated technology (SMART Board, PowerPoint/Prezi, Excel, Webcams) into lessons to foster student engagement and learning; developed and created interactive bulletin boards and displays to challenge students' thinking.

Talley Middle School, Brandywine School District, Wilmington, DE

Fall 2018

- Prepared lessons of instruction and learning opportunities for five ELA classes: one seventh grade, three eighth grade, and one gifted and talented Public Speaking class; class size ranged from 18 to 32 students.
- Became knowledgeable of Common Core State Standards, curriculum, and assessments.
- Actively participated in parent-teacher conferences, standardized testing, PLCs, IEP meetings, extracurricular/after-school clubs and activities, and rotating teacher duties such as lunch monitoring, resource room support, and dismissal.

Kenmore Elementary School, Cecil County Public Schools, Elkton, MD

Spring 2018

- Worked collaboratively with teachers and paraprofessionals to design and teach lessons in all content areas for a heterogeneous fourth grade class of 26 students; created pre/post assessment data and a variety of formative assessments to chart students' growth.

Britannica International School, Kakukk, Budapest, Hungary

January 2017

- Planned and taught lessons for a second-grade class of Hungarian students; observed and contrasted instructional strategies to those utilized in U.S. public schools.

#### ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE

Substitute Teacher, Grades K-8; Kelly Educational Staffing (New Castle County Schools, DE)

December 2017-Present

Day Care Assistant/After School Aide, Holy Angels After-School Program, Newark, DE

2017-2018

Summer Camp Counselor, YMCA, Columbia, MD

Summers 2017-2018

Reading Volunteer, Latin American Community Center, Wilmington, DE

2016-2017

#### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Seminars and pre-service workshops attended in 2018-19 include: *Discipline and Classroom Management; Non-Violent Crisis Intervention; ADD/ADHD; Writing an Individualized Education Plan; Bullying Prevention; School Safety.*

#### HONORS AND ACTIVITIES

Dean's List (all semesters); Kappa Delta Pi Education Honor Society (Vice President, 2018-19; Recruitment Chair, 2017-18); Alpha Phi Omega Service Fraternity; UDance (annual dance marathon participant/fundraiser helping fight childhood cancer; four years).

## SAMPLE COVER LETTER FOR TEACHERS

58 Elkton Road, Apt. 211  
Newark, DE 19711  
March 11, 2019

Ms. Nicole Carter  
Executive Director of Human Resources  
Howard County Public Schools  
10910 Route 108  
Ellicott City, MD 21042

Dear Ms. Carter:

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 English. I have successfully completed all Praxis testing requirements, as well as the edTPA, and would appreciate consideration for Fall 2019 teaching positions in these areas, especially those in English, grades 6-8.

According to the Maryland Department of Education website, Howard County Public School System is ranked as one of the state's top districts 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 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 all classrooms, 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 educator, I would welcome the opportunity to join your professional staff.

I enjoy every aspect of teaching and working with students. During my two semester-long teaching placements, I gained experience working in both elementary and middle school English settings. In addition to developing and implementing lesson plans, I have also designed behavior modification plans and academic remediation strategies for individual students. Recognizing the importance of ongoing communication with parents/guardians, I prepared and posted weekly classroom newsletters, completed and shared regular student progress reports, and communicated with parents/guardians by phone or e-mail. With the support of my clinical educators/cooperating teachers, I became knowledgeable of National Common Core Standards and collected meaningful pre/post assessment data to help chart students' growth. I worked diligently to build and maintain positive relationships with my students, as well as parents/families, and the greater school communities.

For the past four years, I've gained considerable experience working with children and youth. At the University of Delaware, not only have I learned from outstanding faculty and mentors, but the Elementary Teacher Education program provided me with numerous opportunities to work with students from the minute I arrived on campus as a freshman. My tutoring and introductory 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 and that you will be pleased with my commitment to your students and the HCPSS community.

I have uploaded a resume, completed the online employment application, and provided all documents that were requested. Should you wish to review my professional portfolio before I have the opportunity to meet you, this is available at: <http://docs.google.com/View?docid=jm63m5s2>.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to the opportunity to meet with you to further discuss my qualifications and experiences, and how I can help meet the needs of your students.

Sincerely,

## INTERVIEW PREPARATION

After submitting and/or uploading 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 very good that the hard work you've put into your job search/documents so far has paid off... but don't think your work is done and assume that an interview guarantees a job 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/education 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 and study as much as you can find on the district/school (e.g. web sites, online media, printed information, DOE sources, employees/parents/students) 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 to express your appreciation for the interview opportunity. While not required, a thank you correspondence is a professional courtesy that may give you the edge over other candidates considered equal. Don't delay; send thank you correspondence within 24 hours of the interview (via email is recommended).

### Types of Interviews

1) Screening interviews

Initial interviews are commonly called "screening" interviews. These may be conducted at the school district, job fair settings, or by telephone/video-teleconferencing/Skype/Zoom. 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/scored) or they may use standardized selection instruments (e.g. Gallup). 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 the address/location/directions for in-person interviews, or the access/instructions for online interviews -- review and/or test these as needed (getting lost/arriving late and/or poor audio/video quality on computer screen 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? Multiple locations?)

What additional items should you bring with you that day? (Extra resumes? Sample lesson plan? A portfolio? )

Once at the interview, do your best. Greet all individuals with a smile and pleasant demeanor; maintain good eye contact. Be enthusiastic, self-confident, and polite. First impressions are extremely important, so pay attention to attire, accessories, hairstyle, gestures, and body language. Dress appropriately (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 instruction?
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:

<b>Situation or Task</b>	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.
<b>Action You Took</b>	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.
<b>Results You Achieved</b>	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.

## STANDARDIZED SELECTION INSTRUMENTS

Nationally, over 1,500 school districts utilize the **TeacherInsight** Survey as a screening interview tool. This survey was developed by the Education Division of the Gallup opinion polling organization; it is based on questions from two teacher surveys that are over 20 years old (**Teacher Perceiver**, **Urban Teacher Perceiver**).

### How TeacherInsight Works

1. In the job interview, candidates answer multiple-choice and open-ended questions online using a 5-point Likert scale. Questions focus on three areas: Teaching Philosophy (To what extent is there a mission to teach? To what extent is teaching not a job, but a mission, a calling?); Relationships (How does the candidate create relationships with colleagues, students, and parents?); and Instructional Approaches (Does the candidate see a class or a group of individuals?)
2. Candidates' answers are compared to Gallup's pool of 400 high-quality teachers (identified nationally by teachers, principals, and parents) and a percentile ranking (0-99) is calculated based on his/her predicted potential for teaching success.

Gallup standardized interviews (which help screen the potential of teacher candidates) include the **Teacher Perceiver** Interview, the **Urban Teacher Perceiver** Interview, and the **Automated Teacher Screener**. Teacher Perceiver/Urban Teacher Perceiver interviews are administered one-on-one involving a school administrator and a candidate in an office/conference room setting and last between 20-45 minutes. The Automated Teacher Screener requires candidates to dial a toll-free number and respond to questions using the telephone keypad; the process takes appx. 10 minutes. Copyright laws prohibit public disclosure of Gallup survey questions.

### How Teacher Perceiver Works

1. In the job interview, candidates answer 63 open-ended questions. Sixty of them are related to the twelve teacher perceiver themes and three questions are related to how the candidate felt about taking the job interview.
2. The trained interviewer scores the candidate's responses based on "listen-for's" (specific phrases or concepts that reflect the themes), e.g. a question might ask the interviewee what is most rewarding about teaching and only a response that stresses student growth or success would earn a point.

### 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 pupil enrollment trend in your district?
- ◆ How has the financial status of your school district changed in recent years?

### Philosophy of Education:

- ◆ What is/are the mission major goals of your school district?
- ◆ What are some of the challenges and opportunities 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 support teachers to improve classroom instruction?
- ◆ How does your district involve parents in the education process?

### Anticipated Responsibilities:

- ◆ What special skills/expertise are you looking for in the candidate you hire for this position?
- ◆ Are there additional expectations for your teachers, beyond classroom responsibilities?
- ◆ Do you allow building administrators sufficient flexibility to implement innovative programs?
- ◆ Do you encourage site-based management?

### Assistance for New Teachers:

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

### Work Environment:

- ◆ What technology is available 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 and/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/videos of you presenting a lesson, working with a small group of students, or engaged in special activities with your class (e.g. field trip, musical performance, coaching) - keep student confidentiality in mind
- ✓ Hands-on materials or manipulatives
- ✓ Samples of your students' work
- ✓ A well-designed unit and/or lesson plan
- ✓ Community related items
- ✓ Evidence 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 create online portfolios (as their only format or in addition to a hard copy tool). An advantage of electronic portfolios is the capacity for efficient storage and retrieval of data, as well as 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/artifacts 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 (in-person or virtual) is not the best venue to share a portfolio, simply because of the volume of candidates and the limited amount of interview/meeting time available per candidate. Most interviewers strongly recommend that teacher candidates bring their portfolio (hard-copy or on a laptop) to any on-site meeting (i.e. interviews conducted in human resource offices, in school buildings, etc.). It

is also recommended to have your e-portfolio available and ready for possible use during online/virtual interviews. Interviewers stress that it is most important that candidates are 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 scrolls screen-by-screen if using an online portfolio) to showcase their 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 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 scores, awards, memberships, philosophy of Education, personal statement, writing sample, etc. Take care to understand what is being requested and provide these documents when, how, and in the format(s) requested.

Most school district administrators will accept copies of these items coming directly from the applicant, usually as scanned images uploaded into their applicant management system. Some may have specific instructions regarding the format of scanned or copied (non-original) letters or documents (e.g. email and/or phone number of reference writer or source required in lieu of signature); be sure to follow specific directions, which may vary by district or type of applicant management system utilized.

## 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:

- ✓ UD Career Center (check for vacancies posted to **Handshake** as well as web resources found on the CC website ([www.udel.edu/cc](http://www.udel.edu/cc)); search for these under the “Education & Helping Professions” Career Community)
- ✓ Job Fairs, in-person and virtual (sponsored by colleges/universities, professional associations, Dept. of Education offices, individual school districts/counties)
- ✓ Networking (family, friends, alumni, etc.); LinkedIn
- ✓ School district websites
- ✓ State Dept. of Education websites
- ✓ Your state's NEA affiliate's website
- ✓ ListSrvs/social media tools
- ✓ General job-listing websites for educators (e.g. SchoolSpring, REAP, AAEE)

## RECRUITMENT EVENTS

The Career Center will host multiple opportunities for students and alumni to meet recruiters from Delaware schools, as well as those from several other states. Use your Handshake account to view upcoming events (<https://udel.joinhandshake.com/stu/events/home>).

Several other recruitment fairs are held annually, many hosted by colleges and universities across the country and open to all candidates (some free; some with costs). The **AAEE (American Association for Employment in Education)** maintains a list of many of these events, and also hosts a number of national VIRTUAL job fairs itself: [www.aeee.org](http://www.aeee.org).

The University of Delaware is a member of **DVEC (Delaware Valley Education Consortium)**, which typically hosts an annual job fair each spring. Check for career fair updates and information at [www.dvec.net](http://www.dvec.net).

Sources: *Job Search Handbook for Educators*, American Association for Employment in Education (AAEE)  
*Job Hunt: In the Market*, National Education Association  
*Inside Secrets of Finding a Teaching Job*, Jack Warner & Clyde Bryan