

# **Navigating the Job Application Process**

*~ Job Search Tips for Educators*



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## Tips for Navigating the Job Application Process

Applying for your first teaching position can be a little daunting. How are you supposed to know what to send, to whom, and when? And, if you're student teaching, you may think you don't have time to dedicate to job search right now. You would be wise to make time, though, as you want to be prepared to respond quickly when job openings are posted. Follow the suggestions in this packet to make a positive impression with your application materials.

Before you actually begin your job search, you should take time to develop three key documents:

- ◆ A **Master Application** – a document requiring – at the minimum – your Personal Information, Education History, Employment History, Activities/Skills, and References. Create a summary sheet with all this information compiled so you don't have to recreate and recall the dates, numbers, addresses, and all other details every time you complete an application.
- ◆ A **Résumé** – a professional document highlighting your most relevant education, experience, and skills.
- ◆ A 'model' **Cover Letter** – a document to introduce yourself – and your résumé – to a potential employer. This one-page letter will always be tailored to specific positions for which you are applying, but will essentially identify the position, display your personality, enthusiasm, and focus, and provide a bridge between the employer's needs and your abilities.

Recognize that there are generally two possible methods for managing your application materials:

- A. Establishing a **Credential File** with the office of Academic & Career Services (ACS); *and*
- B. Creating a **Self-Managed File**.

We recommend that you do **both**, so you are ready to respond to any job opening at any time!

### A. To Establish a Credential File with ACS, follow these steps:

Visit the office of Academic and Career Services, or access online, the **Education Credentials** materials: [http://www.unk.edu/offices/acs/education\\_credential\\_file.php](http://www.unk.edu/offices/acs/education_credential_file.php)

When you open this site, you will see three links: "Establish an Education Credential File," "Request Mailing of Credential File and Online Payment Link," and "Update Your Credential File." Follow the process found in "Establish an Education Credential File":

**Step 1** - Complete the **Education Credential Data Sheet** -1st page of your Credential File is required and must be **mailed, faxed or attached to an email** or delivered in person to MSAB #140.

**Step 2** - Sign and send us your **Release / Waiver form**

**Step 3** - References - References can type their letter and email it to ACS or they can print it and mail it to ACS. You have to have a minimum of three references for your credential file to be sent and you may have a maximum of six references.

**Step 4** - Request your **UNK Transcript** from the Registrar's Office (can be done through MyBlue.) Be sure to request other pertinent University/College transcripts, as well.

**Optional:** You *may* include a copy of your **Teaching Certificate**

## Next Steps:

- After submitting your paperwork, be sure to check periodically to see if references and transcripts have been received in our office. Once we have the **Data Sheet**, the **Release/Waiver Form**, the, **3 – 6 Letters of Reference**, and an official **Transcript(s)**, your file is complete. (Teaching Certificate is optional.)
- When your credential file is complete, you are ready to begin applying for jobs. When you learn of a job you are interested in, fill out a **Credential Request Form** (found in the “Request Mailing of Credential File and Online Payment Link” tab, telling us where to send your file).
  - ♦ While your Credential File is being processed, you may send your **résumé** and **cover letter** directly to the school. In your cover letter, note that you have requested that your credential file be sent. (*See the cover letter example at the end of this packet.*)
- When the Academic & Career Services office receives your **Request**, we will email (or mail hard copies if you specifically request that method) your file contents to the school address provided. During peak job search times, this may take 3-5 business days.
  - ♦ The **\$35 fee** you pay covers seven (7) mailings. After 7, if you haven’t yet been offered a job, you will want to renew, i.e., pay another \$35 for 7 more mailings.

## B. To create your self-managed file, follow the directions below:

1. Review your ‘model’ **cover letter** and **résumé** (see the attached examples, then create your own to present *your* best skills and experiences). Be sure to tailor your documents to **every** position for which you apply, and proofread carefully each time!
2. Collect your letters of recommendation from your reference writers. Request that they create them on letterhead, save them as pdfs, if possible, and send them to you electronically. That way, **(1)** a school district receiving the letters can be reasonably sure they have not been altered, and **(2)** they will look clean and professional, since you won’t be scanning or photocopying each one.
3. In your cover letter, be sure to refer to the **enclosed** or **attached** application materials, i.e., résumé, letters of reference, a copy of your transcripts, and (possibly) a copy of your teaching certificate.
  - a. If you are mailing the documents yourself, your materials will be *enclosed*;
  - b. If you are submitting application materials electronically, they will be *attached*.



When transmitting electronically, **Save** your documents with concise, descriptive titles. **Examples:** *TinaTeacher\_Resume* and *TinaTeacher\_Cover Letter*. Also, be consistent in your titles, so all your documents appear as a cohesive package (*TinaTeacher\_Reference1, TinaTeacher\_Reference2, etc.*)

If you name them something generic, like ‘resume2017,’ or ‘reference from Dr. T,’ the recipient has to open the document before placing it in the electronic filing system, and there is always a chance a document could get miss-filed. As a result, the employer may think your file is incomplete, which could affect the activation status of your application.

Finally, before sending electronically, **Save** your documents as **pdf** (portable document format) files. That way, the original format is retained no matter what software is used to open your documents.

4. Read employment ads / job postings thoroughly. When responding, follow the directions precisely. This will give potential employers their first look at you as a professional. *Not* following directions or having spelling or mechanical errors in your application documents are big “red flags,” and will definitely jeopardize your opportunities for success.



If you are asked to **mail** your application materials, be sure to print your résumé and cover letter on nice, bonded (ivory or white) résumé paper. Letters of reference and transcripts may be printed on quality copy paper. You should also print a mailing label, if possible, and mail all documents in a 9” x 12” envelope. That way it will look professional and will give the employer a positive first impression of you as an applicant!

5. Schools will also have an Application for Employment you will be asked to complete, which will usually be online. Again, create and have available a “Master Application,” so you have names, dates, phone numbers, and addresses readily available. Also, write out responses to commonly asked questions about your teaching philosophy, goals, and experiences. You will have well-thought-out responses that can be modified and tailored for each school.

## Requesting Letters of Recommendation



Securing Letters of Recommendation (or Reference) is an important part of the job search process. At first it may seem as simple as dropping off a form or firing off a quick email, but there are some basic steps to follow if you want to make a good impression and get the best references possible.

- Schedule face-to-face meetings whenever possible. During your conversation ask, “Do you know me well enough to write a favorable reference letter?” or “Would you be willing to write a recommendation for me regarding my skills / experiences with ....?” (Fill in with specific skills or experiences.)
  - Avoid asking people who don’t know you well, or with whom you have had limited interactions.
  - If someone turns you down, don’t be offended. They may not know you well enough, or they may not have time to write a thorough recommendation before the deadline.
- Provide the reference writer with a copy of your current résumé, as a reminder of some of your experiences and accomplishments.
- As a member of the UNK community, seek out references related to your current situation:
  - Sponsors of activities you have participated in, professors, advisors, and definitely your cooperating teacher and student teaching supervisor.
  - Current and former employers. They may not be able to talk about your teaching abilities, but they can shed light on your personal and professional qualities, such as integrity, creativity, reliability, leadership skills, problem-solving abilities, etc.)
- Allow reference writers at least one week (two is better) to complete the letter. Give a deadline ahead of your final deadline, just in case you need to call with a ‘gentle’ reminder. It is a large task,

and you want them to take the time they need to make sure the letter is detailed and well-constructed.

- Send thank-you notes to all of your reference writers . . . and be sure to let them know when you get a job!



### Key Words are Key!

Within your cover letter, résumé, application, and in the interview, relate and emphasize your experiences and skills most relevant to teaching. Let your future employer know that you learned and can apply the terms, theories, philosophies, etc. that are specific to this profession.

Key words vary by level and discipline, but following is a list of examples:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Multi-cultural instruction</li> <li>▪ Team teaching</li> <li>▪ Thematic unit</li> <li>▪ Critical thinking</li> <li>▪ Literacy (Literature) circles</li> <li>▪ Guided reading</li> <li>▪ Differentiated instruction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Manipulatives</li> <li>▪ Peer teaching</li> <li>▪ Response to Intervention (RtI)</li> <li>▪ Cooperative learning</li> <li>▪ Balanced literacy</li> <li>▪ IEP (Individual Education Plan)</li> <li>▪ Learning styles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Common Core</li> <li>▪ Modified instruction</li> <li>▪ Interactive exercises</li> <li>▪ Interdisciplinary learning</li> <li>▪ ESL/ELL students</li> <li>▪ Scaffolding</li> <li>▪ Teacher-parent relations</li> </ul>
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**Caution:** Be certain you can explain and apply any key words you use. It might be worse to use technical terms inaccurately than to not use them at all!

### Include Transferable / Employability Skills

Employers in almost every profession seek employees with some basic skills that will help them succeed. Integrate these into your job search documents, as well.

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Communication – Speaking, Writing, Listening</li> <li>2. Teamwork</li> <li>3. Time Management</li> <li>4. Decision Making and Problem Solving</li> <li>5. Organizational skills</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Learning – Obtaining &amp; Processing Information</li> <li>7. Computer / Technical</li> <li>8. Creativity</li> <li>9. Leadership</li> <li>10. Ability to ‘sell’ or motivate others</li> </ol>
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- ◆ Which of these skills can you demonstrate? Which are you proficient in? Which are you developing?
- ◆ Review the sample résumés at the end of this packet to see how those job seekers have integrated some of these skills.

## Final Hints for a Successful Job Search

- ◆ **Be Proactive:** Look ahead and begin planning now for the application process. Create drafts of all your documents and set up a file so all application materials are in one easy-to-find location. Take initiative – send letters of inquiry to schools you are interested in – even before they post openings.
- ◆ **Establish Relationships:** People hire people they like and want to work with. During your student teaching, take part in activities, attend meetings (even if they aren't required), initiate conversations, and make people aware of your enthusiasm and commitment to the profession. Avoid participating in gossip sessions or any other activities that could leave a negative impression.
- ◆ **Use Your Resources:** Networking is the #1 method by which people attain jobs, so the more connected you are, the greater your opportunities for employment success. Sometimes we think it's presumptuous to ask people for assistance, so we hesitate to do so. Change your thinking on that . . . now!

Begin contacting people you know and have known in the past ... professionals in schools you have attended, former employers and co-workers, friends of your family, professors and other personnel at UNK, people in your exercise class, people at your place of worship, and more. Let them know that you are beginning your job search, and that you will appreciate them passing on any job openings they might hear about. Also, when you hear of openings and are in the process of sending your application materials, be sure to call contacts who might have a connection to that system and ask them to 'put in a good word' for you.

- ◆ **Prepare for the Interview:** Talk to the educators you are working with. Ask them about their interview experiences, and ask for hints that will help you. Review lists of commonly asked questions and schedule a mock interview with advisors in the ACS office; practice interview questions with your cooperating teacher and other educators in your building, as well.
  - See **"Interview Questions for Teacher Candidates"** at the end of this packet. Prepare and practice responses.
  - Be sure to review **"Questions to Ask During the Interview,"** as well. It's crucial that you take an active role in the interview process by asking several questions of your own.
- ◆ **Monitor Your Online Presence:** Now more than ever, it is time to scrutinize your Facebook, Twitter, and other social media sites. Look at them through the eyes of an employer. What would they see? What impression will those pictures, or those comments, or those group memberships give? If you have 'friends' who continually post negative, offensive, or just plain 'stupid stuff,' unfriend them immediately. It may be wise to deactivate your accounts while applying for jobs.
- ◆ **Buy appropriate interview clothing:** You have spent a lot of money on your education; don't cheat yourself out of opportunities for success by skimping on your interview attire. It doesn't have to be expensive ... but it does need to show that you understand the level of professionalism required for this occupation. Acquire at least one outfit that looks nice and fits well. Make sure it is clean and pressed before each interview.

# Cover Letter - Example

Your Street Address  
City, State, Zip

Date

Person's Name  
Organization  
Address  
City, State, Zip

## Address and Salutation

- Address to a specific person
- If unsure of the gender of the addressee, use full name
- If you cannot obtain the name, address the letter to the position, e.g., Dear Personnel Director

Dear [Person's Title and Name]:

I am writing to apply for the elementary teaching position you advertised on *nebraskaeducationjobs.com*. Being aware of your excellent reputation and your firm commitment to providing quality education to all students in the district, I have a sincere interest in becoming a part of the [Sometown] Public Schools teaching staff.

## Introductory Paragraph

- State why you are writing and what position you are applying for
- Tell how you found out about the position
- Show your interest in the organization

In [month/year] I will be graduating from the University of Nebraska at Kearney with a Bachelor of Arts in Education degree, with Elementary Education and Special Education, K-6 as my endorsement areas. To gain

## Body Paragraph(s)

- Highlight your qualifications for the position
- Emphasize any special skills, education or experience that sets you apart from the competition
- Show the employer how your qualifications match the job description

experience, and as a means of financing my education, I worked part time as a paraprofessional at Kenwood Elementary School for two years. Additionally, I recently completed over 100 hours of community service, providing guidance and support to children involved in the "Friends" program. Currently, I am student teaching in a third grade classroom at Windy Hills Elementary. My dedication and enthusiasm for teaching extends beyond the classroom, as I

have also enjoyed volunteering in a summer enrichment program for elementary-aged students. As a result of my professional experience and commitment to the teaching field, I am confident that I will make an excellent role model and educator for your students, and an important contribution to your staff and your community.

Attached is my résumé which provides additional information about my education and experience. In addition, my credential file is being sent from UNK. Please contact me at 308-123-4567 or [teachertm@lopers.unk.edu](mailto:teachertm@lopers.unk.edu). I look forward to hearing from you and will be eager to discuss how my qualifications can benefit you and the [Sometown] Public School system. Thank you for your consideration.

## Closing Paragraph

- Refer to the enclosed or attached résumé
- Tell the employer how to reach you
- Ask for an interview
- Thank the reader for considering your application

Sincerely,

*Signature (first and last name)*

Your Name Typed

Enclosure: Résumé

# Chronological Résumé - Example

## Tina M. Teacher

1220 Grand Avenue  
Kearney, NE 68847

(308) 232-1101  
teachertm@lopers.unk.edu

### EDUCATION

#### Bachelor of Arts in Education

University of Nebraska at Kearney, May 2017

Endorsements: **Elementary Education, K - 6; Special Education, K - 6**

Cumulative GPA 3.2 / 4.0

- Dean's Academic Excellence Award, Fall 2015

### TEACHING EXPERIENCE

**Student Teaching**, Emerson Elementary, Kearney, NE

**Special Education**, March - May 2017

- Collaborated with supervising teacher and support team to develop and implement Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) for 12 students in grades 3 and 4 with various mental and behavioral disabilities
- Designed daily and weekly learning activities that corresponded with the IEPs
- Evaluated and recorded progress toward IEP goals
- Demonstrated competency in working with students with diverse needs

**Student Teaching**, Meadowlark Elementary, Kearney, NE

**Second Grade**, January - February 2017

- Created and implemented units in reading and writing for 32 students
- Adapted teaching methods and instructional materials to meet students' varying learning styles
- Utilized active learning techniques, such as competitive review games, to motivate students
- Participated in Parent-Teacher conferences, sharing learning achievements with parents
- Maintained accurate and complete student records, as required by district policy

**Paraprofessional**, Kenwood Elementary School, Kearney, NE

**Third Grade**, September 2015 – May 2016

- Assisted teacher with classroom management; accompanied students to lunchroom and playground, helping to enforce appropriate behavior and resolve conflict, when necessary
- Created and implemented activities for reading groups; practiced vocabulary and spelling words with students – in groups and individually

### OTHER WORK EXPERIENCE

**Sales Associate**, Herberger's Department Store, Kearney, NE 2014 – Present

- Used interpersonal skills to provide outstanding customer service
- Worked cooperatively with a diverse group of people

### COMMUNITY SERVICE

**Friends Program**, Kearney, NE 2015 - present

- Role model "big sister" support to two elementary school students

**Kearney Public Schools, KCLC**, Kearney, NE Summer 2017

- Volunteered with 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> grade reading program
- Worked with students individually and in small groups, using interactive activities to develop reading skills

### LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

**Treasurer**, UNK Student Education Association of Nebraska (SEAN), 2015 - 2016

- Collected dues and disbursed payments for bills owed by the organization

**Vice-President**, Resident Council, CTE Residence Hall, UNK, 2014 - 2016

- Organized three committees for Residence Hall Holiday celebrations

#### USE BOLD PRINT FOR...

- Your name
- Your degree
- Majors, minors, endorsements
- Section headings
- Job titles

#### EXPERIENCE

- Begin each phrase with an **action** verb
- Articulate transferable skills
- Emphasize results & accomplishments
- Use reverse chronological order

#### TO EMPHASIZE, USE...

- White space
- Bullets
- Bold print

#### OTHER TIPS:

- Include relevant volunteer experience
- Identify leadership, activities, awards, honors and other related accomplishments

# Functional Résumé - Example

Street Address • City, State, Zip • Phone Number • Email Address

## Thomas Teacher

\*You may choose to use this style of résumé if you have a lot of experience and your bullets would seem repetitive, *or* if you are changing careers.

### Profile

- **Elementary School Educator** with 12 years of professional experience
- Strengths in **literacy development** and **early language acquisition**
- Extensive background working with **multicultural** and **special needs** students and their families

### Professional Experience

<b>Kearney Public School District</b> Meadowlark Elementary, Third Grade Bryant Elementary, First Grade	<b>Kearney, NE</b> 2012 – present 2008 – 2012
<b>Amherst Public Schools</b> Amherst Elementary, Fourth & Fifth Grade Combined Classroom	<b>Amherst, NE</b> 2004 – 2008

### Professional Skills

#### Instructional Skills

- Develop interactive and engaging units of study and individual lesson plans for elementary students of varying grade levels
- Include differentiated instruction to meet the needs of students of all learning abilities
- Motivate and guide students to set and attain learning goals

#### Classroom Management Skills

- Apply district-approved behavior management strategies to minimize inappropriate behaviors among students in the classroom and on the playground
- Implement innovative behavior modification techniques to promote student self-management

#### Communication Skills

- Collaborate with Resource educators and parents of special needs students to develop and facilitate Individual Educational Plans (IEPs)
- Use exceptional oral and written communication skills to convey appropriate information to partners in education: parents/guardians, administrators, mentors, and peers
- Strategize with colleagues to integrate State Academic Standards into lesson plans

#### Technical Skills

- Proficient in Windows and Mac platforms
- Utilize a wide variety of technical applications to enhance delivery of instructional materials: Photoshop, iMovie, Dreamweaver, PowerPoint, and others

#### Leadership Skills

- Led committee of fourth-grade educators to implement the state-approved evaluation process
  - Compiled and analyzed assessment data
  - Developed timeline and delegated assignments, assuring the report was completed and submitted on time
- Mentored five first-year teachers over a three-year time span
  - Observed, on a weekly basis, offering constructive criticism and support
  - Accelerated new teachers' acclimation and adjustment period, resulting in 100% favorable evaluations from school administrators at the end of their first semester

### Education

University of Nebraska-Kearney, Kearney, NE  
**Bachelor of Arts in Education**, May 2004  
Endorsement: **Elementary Education, K-6**

# Interview Questions for Teacher Candidates

Interview questions will vary greatly, but following are some of the standards that teaching applicants are often asked.

- ◆ Tell me about yourself.
- ◆ Why do you want to become a teacher?
- ◆ What teaching approach or methods are most effective for you?
- ◆ What is your discipline plan or style?
- ◆ Tell me about your experience working with ELL and IEP students.
- ◆ What are your strengths as a teacher?
- ◆ Describe how you motivate students to learn. How do you evaluate student learning?
- ◆ How do you differentiate instruction?
- ◆ What are some reasons students are not successful?
- ◆ Tell me about a time you had to discipline a student who was not following school rules.
- ◆ Describe a creative / successful lesson (or unit) you developed and taught during your student teaching.
- ◆ Are you willing to relocate?
- ◆ Are you willing to teach special education?
- ◆ Are you willing to coach/sponsor extracurricular activities?
- ◆ What do you know about how children learn? How does this knowledge impact your teaching?
- ◆ Why do you want to teach in this school district?
- ◆ What has been your greatest accomplishment?
- ◆ What makes you stand out from other candidates? Why should we hire you?
- ◆ Where do you see yourself in five years, professionally?

## Questions to Ask

- ◆ What do you see as the best feature of this school / district?
- ◆ How does the district support first-year teachers?
- ◆ How many different classes would I be teaching?
- ◆ What is the principal's philosophy on discipline?
- ◆ How active are parents and the parent organization?
- ◆ What additional responsibilities are associated with this position?
- ◆ What opportunities are there for teachers to collaborate? Are educators encouraged to team teach or otherwise work together?
- ◆ How do you see the school (or district) changing over the next five years? Are there any major projects the school will be addressing in the near future?
- ◆ What is your timeline for hiring?