

# **Resume and Cover Letter Guide**

## **For**

# **Public School Positions**

## Crafting a Tailor-made Resume

### **Some Things to Consider Before Getting Started:**

- Writing one single, all-purpose resume for multiple schools or other employers will do little to get you noticed.
- Crafting a resume that is customized to the qualifications an employer is seeking and focused on the positive impact you made during your experiences will help make it stand out among others.
- Employers typically spend about 4-6 seconds or less to scan resumes during the initial screening phase. Your resume is your personal marketing tool and how you present yourself is key.

### **Tips:**

- ✓ Throughout your experiences, set some performance goals for yourself so that you have some results or accomplishments to showcase.

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- ✓ Keep a journal of your experiences & accomplishments to keep details fresh as you prepare for interviews.

### **Great Resumes Have Three Important Features:**

- ✓ *Attractive Style*
  - Make a great first impression. Your resume should be visually appealing and easy to read. Keep it clean and legible. Avoid fancy fonts, text colors, graphics, and large blocks of text. Use adequate white space. The following sections & sample resume can give you some good tips on attractive style features.
- ✓ *Relevance*
  - More than just provide a history of where you have been, each resume you write should, as clearly as possible, demonstrate how your background a good “fit” for a given school or district. Capture immediate interest by studying the job announcement and researching the district/school first and reflecting back how your background is a match.
- ✓ *Results*
  - Include the results of your efforts as you write your experience descriptions. School districts not only want to know that you have a degree in education and have completed student teaching. They also want to know how you added value and made an impact.

## **Planning Your Resume**

### **1. Target Opportunities**

What do you want to do? If you are uncertain about the kinds of educational (or non-educational) opportunities you would like to pursue, you will most likely find it difficult to write any kind of resume. If you find yourself in need of direction, work with The Center for Career & Professional Development and engage in our model of career exploration. Call 610-758-3710 to schedule an individual appointment.

### **2. Generate a List of Your Experiences and Accomplishments**

Create an inventory of your teaching experiences, other experiences working with kids, volunteer work, student club and organization activities, and full and part-time jobs. No matter how large or small, think about the contributions you made. What can you say about your involvement that demonstrates you did more than just go through the motions?

### **3. Determine the Employer's Needs**

Study position announcements and school web sites. Your resume content should be written with strategic use of key words and qualifications.

## **Guidelines**

### **What is the appropriate length of my resume?**

- A completed education resume is generally one or two pages in length.

### **What information should be contained in my resume?**

- Your name and contact information
- Summary of your background (optional)
- Special and technical skills and foreign languages
- Educational background and training/certifications/professional development activities
- Honors
- Teaching Related experience
- Additional experience
- Activities and awards

**Note** – this is not an exhaustive list. Make the resume work for you. Include categories that showcase your qualities, skills, and attributes.

### **Name and Contact Information**

- Use your legal name and list your residential address (not Lehigh University address), phone, and email address. Your email address should be professional.

- The name you use should be consistent with the one that will appear on supporting documentation such as your teaching certificate, transcripts, etc.
- If your current address is temporary, also list a permanent address and phone number so that potential employers will know where to contact you.
- Be sure to have a professional-sounding voice mail greeting. Principals and administrators will be put off by offensive, irritating, or immature-sounding greeting messages.
- Do not include personal information such as a photo, marital status, age, religion, social security number, etc.

### **Summary (optional)**

- A summary is optional, but serves as a roadmap for the rest of your resume as well as a key area for self-promotion. Think about it as a 20 second commercial about yourself. Draw conclusions about your greatest strengths and competencies, relative to each position of interest.
- Be sure the body of your resume supports your summary.
- A list of your specific skills/competencies can be incorporated into the summary section.
- Refer to the exercises above – incorporate that content into your summary.

### **Objective**

- Include the content area(s) or grade(s) you are certified to teach (“Seeking a position as a secondary math teacher”).
- Mention other ways you would like to be a part of the school community (Interested in advising the French club and year-book staff).

### **Special and Technical Skills and Foreign Languages**

- Highlight the skills you possess that are integral for today’s classroom. Think about computer programs applicable to the classroom and your knowledge of foreign languages.

### **Educational Background, Trainings, Professional Development, Certifications**

- List your most recent degree, first.
- Include school name, location (city and state or city and country), dates of graduation, and degree(s) earned.
- List your certification(s) here.
- Include any special trainings or professional development initiatives, such as conferences attended or presentations that are relevant to the position you are seeking.
- Create a subheading “**Honors**” and list academic honors here.

### **Teaching Related Experience**

- Include your student teaching experience, substitute teaching experience, practica, internships, previous professional teaching experience, whether full-time, part-time, or volunteer.
- Also include any teaching or instruction experience outside the traditional classroom (with community groups, summer camps, museums, nature centers, etc.)
- In addition to describing your general tasks in these experiences, be sure to describe what you did beyond routine responsibilities and note any accomplishments or unique, positive contributions you brought to the position. Refer to the exercises you completed, above.
- Infuse your descriptions with teaching “**key words.**”

### Additional Experience

- List other experiences you have had which are not directly related to teaching but give an indication of important “transferrable skills” you have acquired, relative to the position you are seeking, such as public speaking, leadership, collaborating, first aide, flexibility/adaptability, etc. These traits are also desirable to school administrators.

### Tips

**Follow application instructions.** Schools want to see if you can follow directions.

Resumes should be **tailored** to each specific position to which you apply. Do not use one, generic resume.

Use **descriptive** phrases and a “bullet point” format.

Include education **key words**, such as “classroom management, IEP’s, manipulatives, differentiated instruction, standards-based,” etc.

List **successes and accomplishments**. Describe how your skills can help schools or districts advance their goals and objectives and increase student achievement.

It is a good idea to add your **high school** information if applying to that same district or local area.

Include all experiences that helped **form your identity** as a teacher.

Don’t include every last detail about yourself in your resume – **save some** content for the interview.

**Font size** should be 12-14 point.

Include your name at the **top of page 2**.

Add **additional** classes or credits you took – in addition to your degree.

Do not write “References available upon request”

**PROOF READ!** Don’t rely on your computer’s spell checker. Have someone else review for errors – especially someone who is not familiar with teaching – ask if it makes sense.

Is your resume **visually appealing**? Did you use formatting and white space to make the document easy to read or is the document so visually stimulating (overuse of underline, boldface, italics) that it is cumbersome to read?

Does it present your skills in the **best possible light**?

Does it note the **value** you brought to your experiences or any **accomplishments**?

Does it contain education **key words** necessary to get past the scanning process?

## Cover Letters

Your resume should be accompanied by a **cover letter** unless you are instructed otherwise.

If submitting your resume and cover letter on paper, **sign your cover letter** with your best Palmer-method signature. If schools officials can't read your signature, they will think you can't write properly.

Cover letters should give new and **additional information** about you...this is your opportunity to show your personality and passion for choosing a career in education.

**Be brief and to the point.** The cover letter should be three or four paragraphs and take up no more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a page.

**Opening paragraph** should identify the position for which you are applying and indicate how you learned about the position. This paragraph should also contain a bridge statement referring to your qualifications.

The **second paragraph** is the key area for promoting yourself. Outline previous experiences and show how they make you a qualified candidate for the position. Find something out about the district or school (special program, mission, value) with which you have a commonality (match your bells and whistles).

An **optional paragraph** may include other qualifications which may enhance your professional training and ability to be a successful teacher (bully prevention training, EMT, data collection experience).

The **closing paragraph** briefly reiterates why you think you are the best candidate and asks for an interview. Thank the reader for taking the time to review your documents. Remember, your signature on a paper cover letter must be readable.

## References

References are listed on a **separate document** and not as a part of the resume.

Do not submit a list of references along with your resume unless specifically asked to do so. Bring a list of references with you to interviews or submit them online when asked.

**Avail yourself** of 5 references but 3 are optimal.

List your best/strongest reference first. Rank them in terms of how well they will speak of you.

Best references:

1. Mentor teacher
2. Building principal if that person observed you because she will know where the openings are and, most likely, wired in to other openings in neighboring districts. She may refer you to colleagues if there are no openings in her own school.
3. Professors at Lehigh

Hiring officials are more inclined to call other teachers/principals than professors.