



SPECIAL TOPIC Teacher Candidates

PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION FOR TEACHER CANDIDATES

JOB MARKET

CREDIBILITY

Teacher candidates should enter their job market with a clear sense of focus, a thorough knowledge and understanding of the teaching profession, a solid foundation of teaching experience, and an arsenal of relevant teaching skills.

Relevant teaching experience comes from a variety of sources. Don't underestimate the value of experiences and activities that allowed you to develop and utilize your teaching skills. Teacher candidates are likely to have gained meaningful experience as a babysitter, as a Sunday School teacher, as a daycare worker, as a tutor, as a camp counselor, or in any setting where you were able



to work with students (children) and utilize your instructional skills. You may have also served as a teacher in any number of paid, unpaid, fulltime, part time, freelance, or volunteer situations. They all count as experience. And, of course, teacher candidates gain direct experience through their practicum and internship assignments.

IN THE FIELD

Teacher candidates must have a good understanding of their job market. They must understand the hierarchy, structure, and functions of their industry.

Public school systems are managed by boards of education that are supervised by superintendents. At this level, the employment process is almost entirely administrative and task-oriented. In consideration of employment, teacher

candidates are asked to submit detailed application packets to the school system. At this level, applicants are screened for professional eligibility and technical qualifications.

Under each school system are a collection of high schools, middle schools, and elementary schools. Each school is supervised by a principal. At this level, the employment process is almost entirely relationship-oriented. The principal is the "hiring manager" for his or her school. Teacher candidates should focus their attention on establishing rapport with the principal. At this level, applicants are assessed as to their personality and attitude and whether or not they are a good fit for that school.

OPPORTUNITIES

Schools and school systems rarely advertise job openings. And their recruiting efforts tend to be general. Teacher candidates are advised to not wait for posted job openings, but to initiate contact with individual principals.

Teacher candidates should understand that the superintendent's office screens applicants, while the school principal interviews and hires candidates.

Teacher candidates should be aware that the hiring season for teachers is fluid. It generally runs from March, through the summer months, to the beginning of the school year.

INTERVIEWING

THE JOB INTERVIEW

A job interview is a presentation, a performance, and an audition. If you are granted an interview, it means you have successfully grabbed the attention of an employer who has decided to meet with you in person, face-to-face. The employer has some idea that you might be qualified for the job, otherwise he would not be committing valuable time to seeing you.

EMPLOYER'S NEEDS

Approach your interview from the employer's perspective. It is important that you focus only on relevant traits and attributes. You should tailor your presentation so as to emphasize your specific qualifications as they relate to the requirements of the job in question. Target all of your comments and remarks to the employer's concerns. Put yourself in the employer's shoes.

Keep focused on what you can do for the employer rather than what the employer can do for you. Keep in mind the specific needs, interests, values, and biases of the employer. Address the issues that you know the employer cares about. Match your qualifications to their needs. Make your comments employer-centered rather than self-centered. Speak the employer's language. Be sure all your statements answer the underlying most important underlying question: "What can you do for me?"



PREPARATION

Do your homework. Prepare in advance for your job interview by doing some in-depth research. Gather useful information about the employer. Be informed and knowledgeable about the school and the job. Know the values and philosophies of the school system you are interviewing with.

Plan ahead. Organize and outline your main ideas in advance. Determine your key qualifications. Spell out specific details of your background and credentials and commit to memory the major points of your presentation. Rehearse your presentation by conducting a mock interview. Practice formulating and expressing your responses.

PRESENTATION

Dress appropriately. Arrive on time. Maintain good eye contact. Observe proper protocol and good etiquette. Use proper grammar. Offer a solid handshake. Be alert. Listen carefully. Bring along a portfolio containing a collection of impressive examples of your work, letters of reference, and awards. Bring extra copies of your resume.

PERFORMANCE

Relate a few relevant stories, testimonials, or anecdotal examples as a way of providing supportive evidence of your skills and abilities. Telling good classroom stories also allows you the opportunity to communicate positive feelings and emotions, a sense of enthusiasm, pride, and dedication. Ask appropriate questions. Prepare a few good solid questions in advance. Don't ask about salary and benefits. Ask questions that reflect your professional attitude and motivation. Express an interest in wanting to learn more about the school and its students.

The goal of an interview is to get a job offer. The purpose of the interview is to determine whether you are the right fit for the job. Your interview, then, will be as much about your personality and attitude as it will be about your qualifications and credentials.

To be successful in a job interview means putting your "best self" forward. Preparing for an interview involves sharpening your communication skills, anticipating certain questions, projecting confidence, maintaining a positive attitude, displaying enthusiasm, emphasizing your best attributes, expressing your personality, and creating a good first impression. It is important to stress your skills, abilities, and strengths. You must clearly and confidently communicate your accomplishments and achievements.

WRAP UP

At the end of the interview, make a closing statement. In that statement, you can express gratitude for the interview and summarize your main points. Indicate how your qualifications match the needs of the company. State confidently your assertion that you can make a worthwhile contribution to the school. And then, finally, ask for the job. Always send a follow-up letter immediately after the interview as a way of thanking the employer and reiterating your interest in the job.

PLAN AHEAD

It is vital to your presentation that you prepare in advance. Being prepared for a job interview will help you to feel more comfortable with the process and more confident in yourself. It is important that you project a sense of confidence that arises from good solid advanced planning and thorough preparation.

RESEARCH

Prepare for your job interview by conducting in-depth research. Gather useful background information and data about the school you intend to interview with. Learn as much as you can about the school. Be informed about the job requirements. Be aware of the school's expectations of teachers. You must present yourself as knowledgeable of their values, their philosophy, their students, and their community. Do your homework. Visit the school's website.

MAIN IDEAS

Know who you are and what you have to offer. Know the qualifications for the job. Know your sales pitch by heart. Plan your spiel in advance. Determine your key qualifications as they relate to teaching. Identify your unique strengths, abilities, and skills. Write them down. Learn them. Organize and outline your main ideas in advance. Commit to memory the major points of your presentation. Compose a list your traits accordingly:

- Your knowledge, including education, training, degrees, and certifications
- Your relevant experience, including all teacher-related employment and internship activities
- Your relevant or transferable skills
- Your personality traits or soft skills
- Your goals and motivations

SHOW & TELL

It is recommended that candidates carry a portfolio-type folder to the interview. In it you can store extra copies of your resume, your reference list (or reference letters), and perhaps a copy of your college transcript. In the teaching field it is also appropriate to prepare a presentation portfolio containing a collection of impressive examples of your work, your resume, letters of reference, and awards. A presentation portfolio is a tangible collection of artifacts and samples (lesson plans, units, bulletin boards) that will help your interview come alive. You should refer to it (using it like a prop) during the interview, flipping to specific pages and pointing out specific examples. Web-based portfolios are also appropriate.

ATTITUDE

Throughout the job interview, the successful candidate will seek to project an acceptable image to the interviewer. Additionally, it is critical to exhibit the right attitude and personality. Since the interview process tends to be subjective and personal, all preparation in this regard involves five simple attitudinal principles... Be respectful... Be relevant... Be confident... Be positive... Be genuine.

STORYTIME

Recall a few relevant stories you can tell during the interview and compile a list of these stories beforehand. These well-chosen stories or anecdotal examples should reflect your classroom experience and your teaching skills. They should set you in a positive light and provide supportive evidence of your skills and abilities. Many interviews will ask content-based or scenario-based questions so as to solicit stories from you. They may say, "Tell about a time when..." or "Give me an example of..." Also, telling a story allows you the opportunity to communicate positive emotions and feelings, a sense of enthusiasm, pride, and dedication about your work. Talk about your classroom experiences and relate specific success stories about your students. Let your feelings and emotions shine through. Telling stories makes you more memorable to the interviewer.

REHEARSAL

To alleviate any stress and to achieve some level of personal comfort, it is suggested that you practice your presentation. Physically rehearse what you will say in the interview. Conduct a mock interview. Anticipate questions you will be asked. Practice formulating and expressing your responses.

BAD INTERVIEWS

Employers have indicated many possible reasons why job interviews fail... Poor personal appearance, bad grooming, weak handshake, no eye contact, bad grammar, lack of energy, arriving late, poor social skills, being sarcastic, being too familiar, negative attitude, too talkative, quirky mannerisms, unprepared, unfocused, disorganized, too casual, lack of courtesy or protocol, too nervous or shy, excuse-making, too conceited, too aggressive or overbearing, lack of maturity, lack of confidence, self-centered.



PREPARATION

Preparing for a job interview involves anticipating the questions employers are likely to ask. It also involves rehearsing what you will say by practicing the manner in which you formulate and express your responses. A big part of your success in the interview will be based on how well you answered the questions. Consider the following list of possible interview questions and think about how you might answer them.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

- Tell me about yourself?
- How would you describe yourself?
- Why should I hire you?
- Why do you want to be a teacher at our school?
- What do you know about our school?
- What do you think it takes to be successful as a teacher in our school?
- What do you see yourself doing in five years?
- What are your long-range career plans?
- Why did you choose to be a teacher?
- What do you consider to be your major strengths?
- Name one of your greatest accomplishments?
- What did you learn from your student teacher internship?
- How have your past experiences prepared you for future success?
- What have you learned from your participation in extra-curricular activities?
- In what ways do you think you can make a worthwhile contribution to our school?
- How have other people described you?
- What are you looking for in the ideal school setting?
- What really motivates you to perform?

CONTENT QUESTIONS

Be prepared to answer content questions related to your field of expertise. You may be asked about your philosophy or theoretical methodology. You may be asked your opinion of critical issues in your field. You may be given a scenario and asked what you would do in a particular situation. You may be presented with a problem and asked to solve it. You may be asked to tell a story. Tell me about a time when you... Give me an example of... What would you do if...

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

What is your philosophy of education?

Tell us about your classroom management policies and discipline process.

What kind of classroom rules would you post in your classroom?

Tell us about your teaching style?

Describe the ideal classroom.

What are the qualities of a good teacher?

Describe your student teaching experiences.

What were the most important things you learned in your student teaching experience?

How would your students describe you?

What techniques do you use to keep students actively involved and motivated during a lesson?

If a student is having difficulty learning a particular skill or concept, what would you do?

How do you manage diverse learning styles?

How do you individualize your teaching?

How would you work with students who are performing below grade level?

How would you handle a student who continually "acts up" in class?

If a visitor walked into your classroom, what would they see?

How do you conduct parent-teacher conferences?

How do you deal with an irate parent?

What do you expect from your principal?

Why do you want to work for our school system?

BE CAREFUL

Be cautious in answering questions that call for discussion of potentially negative subjects....

What do you consider to be your major weaknesses or areas for improvement?

Why did you leave your last employer?

How do you handle yourself in a conflict?

How do you deal with criticism?

How well do you work under pressure?

What have you learned from your mistakes?

Tell me about the worst supervisor you ever worked for.

Have you ever been fired from a job?

Have you ever been arrested?

QUESTIONS TO ASK

When it's your turn to ask questions in the interview, you should be prepared with a few good solid ones. Your questions should indicate your interest in the company and the job. Ask job-related questions or questions related to your functions and performance. Ask questions that reflect your professional attitude and motivation. Don't ask self-centered or self-serving questions. Don't ask about salary or benefits. Don't ask questions that might tend to challenge or embarrass the interviewer. Your interviewer is not your sparring partner.

What will my responsibilities be?

What will I be doing in a typical school day?

What role will I play in helping the school achieve its goals?

How do you see me complementing your current teacher staff?

What are the most important qualifications for this position?

What will my priorities be?

What are the first projects to be addressed?

What are the major problems to be tackled?

What kind of leadership responsibilities will I have?

What kind of feedback will I receive from my principal?

How will my performance be evaluated?

What kind of training/mentoring will I receive?
What professional development programs are available?
What are the prospects for advancement?
What are the school's mission and goals?
What is unique about the way your school operates?

RESUME WRITING

TAILOR-MADE

Resume writing is a fine art. It is not an exact science. There is no one right way to write a resume. There are no rigid rules for designing or composing a resume. Resume writers have a lot of flexibility regarding layout, format and content. A good resume is the one that is tailor-made to meet your current job-seeking needs, one that fits your specific background, your unique contributions and your personal and professional goals. Moreover, your resume should be targeted to the needs of the employer. It should be written from the employer's perspective. It must speak the language of the employer.

SELLING YOURSELF

Your resume functions as an advertisement of yourself. It is one of your key sales tools. You are the product and your resume is the advertisement that sells that product. It is meant to be an effective way of marketing and packaging your product. Your resume presents, promotes and publicizes you to the job market. Your resume must spark interest and grab attention. It must arouse the curiosity of the reader. It must make the reader want to meet you. It must clearly differentiate you from your competition. It must make you stand out.

PURPOSE OF A RESUME

Your resume does not get you a job. Your resume gets you an interview. Your resume is not a job application. A job application form is an official document that demands specific clerical data. Your resume, on the other hand, is an unofficial document that includes only relevant and positive information presented on your terms. A resume writer has the option of leaving off any item or piece of information that might not put the candidate in the best light. Your resume is not some obligatory piece of paperwork or some kind of administrative chore. It should be written with intention and a great amount of strategy.



EVIDENCE

A good resume will enable you to affirm in writing your positive and relevant qualities, skills and characteristics. A good resume presents supportive information that justifies your job objective. By stating your work-related accomplishments, duties, responsibilities, experience and qualifications, you effectively document your capabilities and provide evidence of your suitability to the job.

CONTENT

Your resume generally includes highlights and information drawn from your professional work experience, educational background, extracurricular activities and community service. It may also mention memberships, internships, awards, honors and distinctions. Experience and activities may be official or unofficial employment, fulltime or part time, paid or unpaid.

CHOICE CUTS

The information on your resume should be positive, selective and relevant. Keep your presentation short and full of spark. Your resume should be a concise statement of what you've learned from past experiences and how they will help a future employer. Your resume must project a positive image. It must fit both you and the circumstances.

FIRST IMPRESSION

Your resume represents you. It acts as an ambassador in your behalf. It is a calling card. It is used to initiate contact. In many cases, the employer will meet your resume before he or she meets you. Your resume, therefore, is oftentimes the first impression an employer has of you. It is up to you to make this first impression count. Your resume is also a reminder. After an initial meeting or after an interview, your resume serves as a record, and provides positive support for your personal impression. It helps the interviewer remember you.

CONCISE

Your resume is not a lengthy, detailed, official, historical document of every area of your life. It is not your life story or your job history. It should be brief, concise and full of spark. It should be targeted to a specific job or career field. The information on your resume should be positive, selective and relevant. A resume is an individually designed document that summarizes your background. It is intended to demonstrate your fitness for a particular position. It focuses on the most attractive and applicable aspects of your background. Every element of your resume must present you as a perfect match for the job you are seeking. Keep the reader in mind. Make sure your resume conveys what you have to offer. Tell what contributions you can make. Emphasize transferable skills. Write clearly and simply. Use active, positive language. Use short, direct, succinct phrases.

SPECIAL & UNIQUE

Your resume should present information that clearly differentiates you from everyone else. What makes you special and unique? What makes you stand out? What separates you from the rest? What are your distinct attributes? In what ways are you better than your competition?

RESUME DETAILS

Resumes generally should be only one page in length. Resumes should not be detailed. It is not necessary to list every job. Resumes need not include a complete job history. Do not tell everything, only what is relevant to the job being sought.

The resume header should indicate your name in large, bold type. Use the name by which you are commonly addressed. Include only one mailing address. Include telephone number with area code (home and/or cellphone). You may also include your e-mail address (Be sure your address doesn't contain immature or unprofessional language).

Do not devote undue space to company's address (city and state only). Do not devote undue space to dates of employment (years only). Keep company name and job title simple. Do not include supervisor's name. Do not include company's telephone number or zip code. Do not include references on your resume. Emphasize your job description, functions, responsibilities, and skills instead of the company's logistical information.



RESUME RULES

Every entry on your resume should include a description of the duties, responsibilities, activities and skills associated with the experience. There is no need to differentiate between paid and non-paid experiences. All descriptions should be stated in terms of their transferability and relevance to the job being sought. Avoid technical or job-specific jargon unless it is related to the job you are seeking. Otherwise, use generic or general terms.

Arrange information on resume so that the most current (reverse chronological order), most important, most impressive or most relevant information is presented first. Information should be presented in list format, not paragraph format. Do not use narrative language. Avoid using full sentences or excessive wordiness. Don't use any personal pronouns (I, me, my, his, her, their). Short phrases, beginning with action verbs, stated in single lines, work best. Language patterns, information groupings, verb usage and tense should be consistent.

RESUME ADVICE

Format, layout and organization should be consistent, easy-to-read and appropriate to the specific occupational field. Make your resume visually appealing. Presentation should be clean and clear. Balance blocks of text with white space. Margins should be wide and even. Avoid using font or type style that is too fancy or exotic. Utilize emphasizing techniques for impact and easy reading: bold letters, capital letters, italics, bullets, dashes, indenting and font size variations. Do not use underlining. Use indenting sparingly and consistently.

Do not include personal data that is irrelevant or meaningless: age, gender, weight, height, health, marital status, social security number and hobbies. Be careful with references to race, ethnicity, nationality, politics, religion and lifestyle. Do not include a photograph unless requested. Do not include grade point average unless it is very good. Do not include any details that are negative or that might otherwise minimize your experience (Avoid words like parttime, temporary, seasonal, pending, expected).



RESUME FOCUS

You can typically arrange and organize the information on your resume into three categories: Profile (General qualifications, knowledge, experience, skills, and personality traits), Education (Schools you attended and related degrees, courses, awards, honors, memberships, and extracurricular activities), Experience (Jobs and employment, including fulltime or part time, paid or unpaid, temporary or long term, along with descriptions of responsibilities and accomplishments).

The tone of your resume should be about what you have to offer, not about what you are trying to obtain.

Your resume should not be about the companies you have worked for or the schools you have attended. Instead, your resume should be about you. It should be about what you did for these companies and what you accomplished at these schools. You are the star and central focus of your resume.

Your job descriptions should include accomplishments as well as responsibilities. Indicate achievements, awards, and results. Use numbers and statistics whenever possible. Emphasize your skills whenever possible. Describe what skills you used to perform certain tasks. Describe the manner in which you performed your tasks.

FINAL DETAILS

Proofread for typographical errors, misspelled words and poor grammar. Be sure your language reflects a candidate that is mature and professional.

Resumes should be printed on high-quality paper stock. The envelope (business size) should match. The cover letter paper should also match. Tri-fold both documents together, with cover letter on top.

A cover letter should always accompany the resume (but do not staple it to the resume). It should be personal, and directed to a specific company with a specific job in mind. Form letters are considered too impersonal. The cover letter is a good place to state your professional objective (instead of on the resume). Don't forget to put your signature on the cover letter.

SAMPLE RESUME

Tammy G. Favor

123 Main Street, Birmingham, Alabama 35123
(205) 123-4567 tgfavor@gmail.com

PROFILE

- Thorough knowledge and understanding of education and teaching concepts
- Extensive teaching, tutoring, and childcare experience
- Strong teaching and instructional skills - Excellent interpersonal and facilitative abilities
- Excellent presentation skills - Strong leadership and motivational abilities
- Responsible - Team player - Personable - Trustworthy - Strong work ethic

EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF MONTEVALLO - Montevallo, AL / 2019

- Bachelor of Science Degree in Elementary/Collaborative Education
- Teacher Certification: Kindergarten through Fifth Grade
- Dean's List - Scholarship - Mortar Board - Kappa Delta Epsilon Education Honorary
- Chi Omega Sorority (Active Member) - Students Offering Support (Peer Advisor)

EXPERIENCE

GREEN VALLEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - Hoover, AL / 2019

- Student Teacher Intern
- Conducted classroom teaching - Practiced classroom management
- Devised and implemented daily lesson plans - Facilitated various classroom activities
- Created and used variety of instructional materials - Conferred with parents
- Utilized effective leadership, administrative, organizational and interpersonal skills

UM FALCON SUCCESS CENTER – Montevallo, AL / 2018-19

- Tutor
- Provided tutoring and academic support - Assisted students with study skills
- Helped students understand difficult concepts - Critiqued writing assignments
- Utilized effective teaching, instructional, and motivational skills

TAMMY'S BABYSITTING SERVICE - Birmingham, AL / 2015-18

- Babysitter
- Provided care and supervision for children - Ensured safety and security of children
- Facilitated various recreational activities - Read books and played games with children

FIRST METHODIST CHURCH - Birmingham, AL / 2014-17

- Sunday School Teacher
- Conducted classroom teaching - Devised and implemented weekly lesson plans
- Facilitated various classroom activities - Used variety of instructional materials
- Led discussion groups - Utilized effective teaching skills

SAMPLE COVER LETTER

Tammy G. Favor

123 Main Street, Birmingham, Alabama 35123
(205) 123-4567 tgfavor@gmail.com

March 15, 2019

Bobby K. Jones
Principal
Happy Valley Elementary School
123 Downtown Avenue
Birmingham, Alabama 35555

Dear Dr. Jones:

I am writing to express my interest in exploring career opportunities in teaching with Happy Valley Elementary School.

I will be graduating in May 2012 from the University of Montevallo with a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary/Collaborative Education. I will also have my teacher certification for kindergarten through fifth grade. I have comprehensive training in and a thorough academic knowledge of educational and teaching concepts. I have extensive teaching, tutoring and childcare experience. I possess strong leadership and teaching abilities and excellent planning and organizational skills.

I would like to meet with you at your convenience to learn more about Happy Valley Elementary School and opportunities in teaching. I will contact you next week. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Tammy G. Favor