

Teaching Resources

Letters to Use for Teaching

As with all job hunting paperwork, letters to prospective employers must be "perfect" - free from typographical errors, misspelled words, etc. Obviously there can be many different types of letters used in your job search. Here, three types are described along with suggestions on what to include in each type. However, you may find you want to combine the "letter of inquiry" with the "cover letter to a resume". Another possibility is a phone call or e-mail in place of a "letter of inquiry", followed by a cover letter and resume once you know exactly what the employer is seeking.

General Tips for Letters

- Try to send to a name of a person (especially the Letter of Application)
- Always individually address and sign - never mass produce, but you can use a word processor
- Keep it to one page
- When including your resume, try to use the same paper for both the cover letter and resume. You should also use the same printer when possible to keep your material uniform. Laser printers are best - Dot-matrix printers are not acceptable.

Letters of Inquiry

Since it's sometimes difficult to determine the exact time when school districts know of vacancies, your main goal in the letter of inquiry is to gather as much information as possible so you can individually target your cover letter, and find out about application procedures and deadlines. Including your resume with a letter of inquiry is optional since you may not want to "show your hand" before you find out the information you need from them to best "sell" yourself. See sample for ideas (if you print a number of these out on a computer, always individually address and sign). Remember - these are ideas. Don't use this exact letter - you wouldn't want yours to sound like others the school district may receive!

Cover Letters to Go With Resumes (or Letter of Application)

The cover letter, which accompanies your resume, is one of the most important places to sell you in a professional but personalized way. It should always be tailored to a specific position and should be of a quality to help you stand out from other applicants. Other than interviews, your letters are the most important place to convey the personal qualities you possess and school districts look for in teachers: enthusiasm, confidence, professional know-how, dedication to children and the teaching profession.

Cover letters are usually 3-6 paragraphs with some of the information being interchangeable between paragraphs. Listed below are guidelines for a 4 paragraph letter, but you may want to combine or separate paragraphs.

Paragraph 1 - Opening. State as specifically as possible the position for which you are applying. If there's no vacancy announcement be as specific as you can. For example - for elementary teaching state preferred grades or whether you are interested in primary or intermediate grade level. If Junior High or High School is your interest you might state your primary subject area but mention that you have supplemental authorizations or an interest in working with students outside the classroom in coaching specific sports or advising extracurricular activities.

Paragraph 2 - Your Background. Your goal is to tell why you are very well qualified!, perhaps describing the experience you have in teaching and/or the excellent experience and feedback you're getting in student teaching, other related experience, workshops, teaching techniques, etc. Additional qualifications even if mentioned on your resume can be highlighted in your letter.

Paragraph 3 - Personal Qualifications. Based on your experience, course work and/or feedback from supervisors, decide which qualities you have that make you a really good teacher: enthusiasm, energy, commitment, dedication, diverse background, rapport with students, ability to motivate and inspire, willingness to put in extra effort, and many others. Describe these and give evidence where possible of having these qualities.

Paragraph 4 - Closing. Be as positive and action oriented as you can, perhaps even suggest a time you will follow-up with them or a good time for you to interview.

Sample Letter of Inquiry

143 Main St.
Arcata, CA 95521

February 1, 20XX
Superintendent of Schools
Alamosa School District
210 First Avenue
Anycity, CA 90001

Dear Superintendent:

I am currently completing my secondary Teaching Credential at Humboldt State University and am interested in returning to the Bay Area to pursue my teaching career. Could you please provide me with the following information.

- Literature on your school district and community - possibly brochures, a school "report card", school newspapers, etc.
- Any vacancies you anticipate
- Application forms, procedures and deadlines
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Thank you so much for your time and effort. The information you provide will help me better match my background with appropriate school districts. A self-addressed envelope is enclosed for your reply.

Sincerely,
Jane Goodteacher