

Cover Letter Handbook for Teachers

Table of Contents

Effective Cover Letters	1
Guidelines	1
Cover Letter Format for Teachers.....	2
Sample Cover Letters	3
Cover Letter Guidelines for Educational Leadership Students	5

EFFECTIVE COVER LETTERS

A well written business style cover letter should accompany every resume being sent to a prospective employer. Think of the cover letter as a promotional advertisement of your candidacy. The first impression of you as a candidate will be based on your ability to express yourself and stimulate interest in your background and qualifications. A cover letter's goal is to highlight your knowledge, skills and related experience and establish yourself as a viable candidate. Your cover letter should show how your qualifications meet the needs of the school and its students. This is your opportunity to distinguish yourself from the other candidates (background in the arts, ability to coach, fluency in a language, etc.)

There are two basic types of cover letters: application (responses to available openings) and broadcast (general inquiry about available openings). Letters should be addressed to a specific individual. Try to find the name and title of the school district contact before writing. Hiring officials are often listed in directories, available by phoning the school district, or by checking online information about the district. Make sure you have the correct spelling of the person's name. If you cannot obtain a name, address the letter "Dear Administrator".

The first tip in writing a cover letter is to review information about the job and the school and attempt to address key points relating specifically to that position, school and district. Next, consider your own qualification and select those that most closely fit the requirements of the position. What are your strongest selling points? What makes you especially qualified for that position?

Cover letters should never be more than one page and should not repeat your entire resume.

GUIDELINES

- Since most cover letters get only a minute or two of consideration, you must grab the reader's interest immediately!
- Always customize your letter for each position.
- Appearances count so pay attention to format. Proofread and have someone else proofread!
- Mistakes could cause your immediate rejection.
- Use the same contact information heading for resume and cover letter.
- Avoid beginning too many sentences with "I".
- Use professional language without too much jargon.
- Demonstrate your abilities with specific examples. Show how your qualifications meet the needs of the school. Highlight relevant experiences, appropriate training and specific qualifications.
- Use your own words; you do not want your cover letter to sound like it was copied from a book or the internet.

COVER LETTER FORMAT FOR TEACHERS

Name
Your present street address
City, State Zip Code
Telephone email

Date

Contact Person's Name
Title
School or District
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Administrator (or Mr., Ms., or Dr. if you know the person's name):

First sentence/paragraph: State why you are writing: specify the position for which you are applying and whether you saw an advertisement or heard about the position or school through a referral or by reputation.

Second paragraph: Begin with a sentence that immediately grabs the reader's attention. Briefly summarize why you are qualified for the position – use examples and specific accomplishments to show how your skills and experience, strengths and accomplishments will address the school's and the students' needs. Do not reiterate what is on your resume. However, you can elaborate on something in your resume and how it impacted the students. Highlight any special skills that make you a more valuable candidate, i.e. your desire to coach a sport, your theater/drama experience, your interest in music or art, etc. If you are a graduate of the school, student taught or was a TA at the school, mention it in the first sentence of this paragraph.

Third paragraph (optional): Use this paragraph to reveal more of yourself. If you are a career changer, tell how skills developed during your previous experience will be an asset to you as a teacher (i.e. communication, management, follow through, organization). You can also state why you decided to teach.

Last paragraph: Express your sincere commitment to education and teaching children. Close the letter with a request for an interview and include your telephone number if you do not use your resume heading. Conclude by thanking the reader.

Sincerely,
(Signature)

Your full name, typed

SAMPLE COVER LETTERS

Sample cover letter for recent graduate

STEPHANIE ROBINSON
2900 Purchase Street
Purchase, NY 10577
914-323-0000 robinsons@mville.edu

April 20, 2009

Ms. Sara Jones
Director of Human Resources
Summerville School District
Summerville, NY 11111

Dear Ms. Jones:

I am interested in applying for the elementary teaching position posted on the OLAS website.

In addition to completing an undergraduate degree this year, I served as a tutor in an after-school program at a local homeless shelter, where I helped students complete homework assignments and broaden their understanding by connecting to the world outside their community. As a student teacher, I created lessons that engaged all learners by applying a variety of teaching methods and utilizing SMARTboard technology. I formed cooperative learning groups, organized individualized projects, created learning centers and implemented learning style research in every lesson. Alternative assessment methods, such as portfolios, rubrics and performance assessments, in combination with traditional tests, enabled me to evaluate the students individually and comprehensively. In both my student teaching and tutoring experiences, I met with parents to keep them apprised of their child's accomplishments and areas needing extra attention.

Classroom computers present unique opportunities to help each child achieve success. In a staff development workshop I attended called *Problem-Based Learning*, I learned to pose open-ended questions that children could research over the internet. In addition, I have studied and continue to monitor educational software and websites that address the diverse abilities and interests of children.

I am passionate about teaching children and forge relationships with them that help build a sense of confidence and enable them to grow as learners. I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss how my skills and experience can meet the needs of your students. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Robinson

Sample cover letter for a career changer

Thomas Nelson
1111 Purchase Street, Purchase, NY 10577
914-323-0000 nelsont@mville.edu

July 29, 2009

Dr. Rosalie Collins
Human Resources Director
Hamburg High School
2233 Division Street
Hamburg, NY 12456

Dear Dr. Collins:

I am interested in the secondary English teaching position for the 2009-2010 academic year. I am well qualified for this position, possessing New York State certification for English Language Arts (5-12), a B.A. in English, and a Master of Arts in Teaching, Literacy (5-12).

My experiences as a substitute, tutor, and student teacher have afforded me the opportunity to interact with diverse student populations and engage them in learning. Using teaching methods that coincide with the Universal Design for Learning, including providing high-interest learning material, multiple means of assessment and instruction, as well as the careful modeling and scaffolding of new skills, I strive to ensure that every student achieves excellence.

In addition to believing that every student deserves and is capable of achieving success, I am passionate about preparing students for the globalized world that they will undoubtedly face as they grow to be adults. My lessons utilize any and all technology that is available, giving my students an education in common technological uses including professional writing and presentations, internet research, web design, and proper communication. Students are also encouraged to use and create podcasts, web quests, and other similar activities as part of their authentic learning experience, which engages them in the subject matter and teaches valuable real world skills.

Through my previous experience in retail sales and management, I understand the importance of motivation and possess excellent listening and time management skills. In training my sales staff, I created a cohesive team of people from very different backgrounds, modifying my training style to suit the needs of each individual. I participated as a tutor through a program at my company, volunteering each week as a teacher's assistant in a local public school. It was this experience that inspired me to re-evaluate my career and return to school to become a teacher.

I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience to further discuss my qualifications as a secondary English teacher in your district. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Thomas Nelson

COVER LETTER GUIDELINES FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP STUDENTS

Your cover letter should

- Be one to one-and-a-half pages in length with short, clear paragraphs
- Single space within paragraphs; double space between paragraphs
- Describe you, not your previous employer
- Outline the realization of the district's goals
- Show that you have done your homework (know district/school and its needs)
- Be error free – spelling, punctuation, grammar must be perfect
- Be positive, void of anything negative (districts want positive leadership)
- Clearly describe YOU and give the district the opportunity to assess the match between you and the position
- Highlight (but not repeat) information in resume that is germane to the position and the district's needs

In drafting the cover letter, you must assess your knowledge, disposition, skill and match to the position and district. The letter will be the first impression the district has of you and should bring out the highlights of your resume and your knowledge of the district and position. It is an opportunity to explain and expand your resume with a sample of your writing, philosophy and vision, and to establish how these conform to the needs and expectations of the district/school. The cover letter should contain the following four sections.

Paragraph One

- Begin by stating the position for which you are applying
- Include that you are aware of the duties and responsibilities of the position
- State whether you meet all of the qualifications – if you do not, specify which qualifications you do not meet or indicate when they will be met

Paragraph Two

- Highlight the knowledge, skill and experience that you will bring to the district
- Intent should be to inform the district about what you can offer them for the future as opposed to what you have accomplished for someone else in the past. Example: state that you bring two years of experience in administering a primary reading program, instead of stating that you ran the Distar Program for the XYZ District
- Summarize your resume – might include the highest degree attained, total number of years in education, relevant training or experience, etc.
- Can include further explanation and/or additional information not included in your resume – information about your background, the types of students with whom you have worked, evaluations, successes with particular students, other relevant information.

Paragraph Three – Your Match with the District

- Show how your knowledge, skills and experience meet the current and future needs of the school/district
- Become knowledgeable about the history, current issues and future demands of the district
- Analyze the needs of the district and position in light of your experience and abilities – this is the opportunity to show that you are the right match

Paragraph Four – Thankful and Bold Conclusion

- Offer a thank you for the time and effort the district took to review your application materials
- Request an opportunity to meet to further discuss your qualifications

Source:

School Leader Internship: Developing, Mentoring and Evaluating Your Leadership Experiences (Martin, Wright, Danzig, Flanary & Brown, 2005)