

Effective Resumes for Education Majors

John F. Snyder

Associate Director, Career Education and Development, Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania

Even in this era of online applications, your resume is still a pertinent document. This one or two-page document captures your teaching skills and experiences. When used as part of an application, the goal of your resume, along with the other paperwork districts require, is to earn you an interview. When used during the course of a job fair or on-site interview, the resume provides the interviewer with relevant information about your qualifications.

As you gather and organize information for your resume, critically examine your skills, experiences, and accomplishments and relate them to teaching. This self-assessment and reflection are excellent preparation for the interview as well.

Before writing your resume, read a job description of a teacher in the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (www.bls.gov/ooh), *O*Net* (www.onetonline.org), or another career reference resource. Talk to teachers about what they do. Pay attention to the words describing the profession and use these same words in your resume. Think about what skills teachers employ. Teachers *plan, organize, prepare, research, instruct, lead, listen, demonstrate, write, supervise, evaluate, motivate, implement, integrate, encourage, facilitate, communicate, and assess.*

While there is no one correct way to write a resume, effective resumes adhere to basic guidelines:

- Beginning with the most important material;
- Starting sentences with vivid verbs describing your skills;

- Using bullet statements or short paragraphs;
- Being consistent in formatting;
- Supplying specific, quantifiable information outlining responsibilities and accomplishments;
- Eliminating all spelling and grammatical mistakes.

A reader spends only 20 to 30 seconds screening your resume; significant information must stand out communicating your competencies to be an outstanding teacher.

Resume Categories

Contact Information. Your name, address, phone number, and email belong at the top of the resume. If you live on campus, you may include both temporary and permanent addresses. Include an "until date" with your temporary address so an employer knows where to reach you. If you have reliable cell phone service, this is the only phone number you need to provide. However, make sure your voice mail greeting is one you want a potential employer to hear. Along this same line, make sure your email address is one that won't embarrass you. Create an email account just for employers.

Objective. Keep the objective concise. Identify the grades and certification areas you are willing to teach. You may include your interest in supervising extracurricular activities. No need to elaborate on your objective by stating that you desire a "challenging teaching position" (all teaching assignments are challenging) or that you want to work in a school that "cares about children" (what school doesn't care?). Address your motivation

to become a teacher or what you hope to accomplish as a teacher in your cover letter and application.

Education. Most first year teacher candidates should list "Education" after the objective because this degree is the basic qualification for teaching. Include all college experiences with the most advanced degree first. List your degree, major, minor, the name and location of the institution, and graduation date. Include your GPA if it is 3.0 or above. If you have unique educational experiences, such as study overseas, include this information here. You may choose to include academic honors, activities, and scholarships here, or you may do so in a separate section.

Professional Preparation. If you are earning your first teaching certificate, you do not have professional teaching experience, yet. This section, which includes student teaching and field experiences, is the most important one and must be the salient part of your resume. You can use the heading "Professional Preparation" or "Student Teaching and Field Experiences" or even "Teaching Experience," but make sure readers know these are pre-service teaching experiences and not professional teaching experiences. State the school, location, and dates. Include the facts of your teaching assignment such as the number of students, classes, grade levels, and subjects. Then describe your experience in specific terms. All student teachers write lesson plans – what specifically did you prepare and present?

Consider addressing issues like these in your student teaching description:

- A unit plan that encompassed a variety of subject areas;
- Lessons designed to meet state standards and prepare students for standardized testing;
- Specific technology you incorporated into your teaching;
- Methods used to assess the progress of your students;
- Cooperative work with other teachers, school counselors, and administrators;
- Paraprofessional and parent volunteer supervision;
- Student behavior management;
- Extracurricular activities involvement.

Experience. After your Student Teaching and Field Experience section, you may want to create a section titled "Teaching Related Experience" which includes paid and volunteer experiences such as a summer camp counselor, Special Olympics volunteer, or after-school tutor. Describe these related experiences in a manner consistent with your student teaching descriptions. Begin with your job title, employer, location, dates. Include the facts of your experience and specifically describe your skills and accomplishments.

If you have had a series of experiences that are similar, you may group these together and provide one description that captures the essence of what you accomplished instead of writing separate descriptions that are repetitive.

Other experiences (not related to teaching) may be valuable as well and belong in a section