

Resume Advice for Educators

Lorn B. Coleman, Director of Placement
Northeastern Illinois University

A modern-day resume is a written advertisement focused toward a prospective employer. In a resume, however, the "product" being advertised is you, the candidate.

Many job applicants become confused about what to include on a resume. This article covers the most common informational categories, but you should strive to include any information that you feel will enhance your chances of being selected for an interview.

Seeking the "Perfect" Resume

Just as every individual is different, each resume presents a distinct combination of skills, abilities, and qualifications about the author. This is why it is impossible to find a perfect sample resume and simply copy it. Your background is unique, and cannot be found in a book. However, reviewing other resumes will certainly be helpful because they will provide a rich supply of ideas and perspectives for your document.

While the perfect resume may be an elusive concept, excellent resumes have many characteristics in common. An excellent resume is one to two pages in length. It is free of typographical errors, produced on high-quality bond paper, accentuates your most salient qualities and qualifications, is organized and easy to read, and conveys a sense of who you are to the reader. This is easier said than done!

As a prospective teacher, a resume with any typographical error is a signal that you are poorly prepared to instruct others, so be sure to have your final document read by others, until all errors are eliminated.

Resumes for teaching and resumes for business have both similarities and differences. Organization, style, appearance, neatness, and punctuation issues apply to both. However, educators' resumes typically include additional categories: student teaching, clinical experience, and certification information. Many schools now use optical scanners to "read" resumes for computer retrieval. Use clear typefaces and straightforward formatting to give your one-to-two page resume a clean appearance.

As you work to write your "perfect" resume, you will undoubtedly receive a variety of well-intentioned advice, and some of it will be conflicting. Everyone will have an opinion to offer. One of your most difficult tasks will be to evaluate

what you hear. Pursue different opinions, and then decide what makes sense to you.

Statement of Teaching Objective

It is appropriate to include a "Career Objective" or "Teaching Objective" statement on your resume. While optional, this statement is highly recommended because it helps identify the specific areas in which you wish to teach. Consider the advantages and disadvantages of the following three sample objectives, and then develop your own to fit your requirements.

- A. Elementary Teaching Position, K-8.
- B. Seeking a classroom position in the upper elementary grades that provides an opportunity to facilitate academic, social, and personal growth of students.
- C. Secondary or middle school position in science/math, in a suburban location. Qualified and interested in coaching track, volleyball or swimming.

Objective "A" is descriptive and to the point. However, additional elements are incorporated into examples "B" and "C". Objective "C" is well thought out and developed, although unless you intend to decline all offers other than those in suburban locations, you should avoid using a phrase which defines location too tightly. The reader will assume that you mean what you say.

Student Teaching Information

It is important that beginning teachers provide information about their student teaching experiences. Do not assume that all student teaching experiences are alike, and therefore need not be described. Some principals remain interested in your student teaching experience even after you have several years of professional experience.

Review the two examples below, and then develop a section that accurately portrays your own experience.

- A. Chinook Middle School, Lacey, Washington. Student Teacher September – November 2003. Taught 8th grade science and math courses in a block classroom format. Coordinated field study trips, and a "Careers in Science" day.
- B. Garfield Elementary School, Olympia, Washington. Student Teacher September – November 2003. Observed, assisted and taught 4th grade regular and accelerated classes. Developed daily lesson and unit plans. Assisted in after-school tutoring program. Coordinated a revised parent

conference format that increased teacher-parent interaction. Refined an existing computer database for classroom record keeping.

Note how the examples include pertinent details of student teaching experiences beyond the routine aspects. It is this information that demonstrates ways in which you made yourself valuable. In your narrative, try to focus on how your presence made something better to make your experience stand out from those who merely developed lesson plans and assisted teachers.

Past Employment Information

Normally, an employer wants to know about your last ten years of professional experience. As a prospective teacher, you should include any experiences in which you worked with K-12 age individuals. Examples of pertinent positions would include camp counselors, teacher's aide, Scout troop leader, and so forth.

Many candidates dismiss non-teaching experiences as unrelated, and fail to include them on their resumes. However, principals and school administrators can draw valuable inferences regarding work habits from this information. Dependability, responsibility, and leadership potential are just a few of the desirable traits you can document with information about jobs you have held.

Related Activities and Interests

Information about activities and interests helps you present the image of a well-rounded and versatile teacher. The following categories represent just a few of the areas you may want to include:

- Volunteer activities
- Professional memberships
- Special interests
- Honors and awards
- Committee work
- Training
- Study abroad
- Community involvement
- Fluency in languages other than English
- Computer skills
- Leadership activities
- Class projects
- Scholarships
- Professional development activities

Remember, the more areas of knowledge and expertise that you demonstrate, the more likely you are to become a desirable candidate in the eyes of school

administrators. School districts actively seek candidates who are flexible and willing to take on a variety of tasks.

A Few Final Do's and Don'ts

Make sure that your resume is not a jigsaw puzzle of unrelated odds and ends, expecting that the principal will be able to piece them together. If those who receive your resume have to work hard to figure it out, it is likely that they will just move on to the next resume.

Writing your resume should be an introspective, exhilarating, positive, pat-yourself-on-the-back experience. If you approach it with this spirit, your resume will be one of which you are justifiably proud.