



Faculty Diversity Search

HOW TO PREPARE FOR YOUR JOB SEARCH

Resumes
Cover Letters
Interviews
Demonstration Lessons

TABLE OF CONTENTS

3	Resume Prep
7	Cover Letter Prep
9	Interview Prep
13	Demonstration Lesson Prep

RESUME PREP

General Tips

- Length—1 to 1 ½ pages max.
- Organize your resume into categories. Begin with Education, followed by Experience. These two categories should be the major categories in your resume.
- You don't need an Objective at the top. Your cover letter should state what kind of position you are looking for.
- You don't need to include a Profile or summary of your qualifications. You can include some of this material in your cover letter.
- Give dates and locations of all institutions. Dates should be prominent.
- Make sure you proofread very carefully. Format should be clear and easy to read. Omit logos, graphics and illustrations. Plain text in black and one font is good. No errors in spelling, grammar or punctuation or typos of any kind! Find someone whose judgment you trust and ask this person to proofread after you have spellchecked.

Education Section

- Identify degrees, majors and institutions and date received.
- If you attended an independent school at any point in your pre college years, please indicate the name of the school and dates of attendance.
- Include any awards or honors either here, or in a separate category.
- If you are a recent college graduate, include your GPA if it is 3.5 or above—if not, omit it.
- If you are a recent college graduate and did not major in the field

you are applying to teach in, please include relevant courses taken.

Experience Section

List most recent positions first.

If you have extensive non-teaching experience, divide this category into two categories: Teaching Experience and Other Work Experience.

For each position, give concise highlights of your responsibilities in bullets. Concentrate on clarifying what you actually did and eliminate vague, empty language. Don't detail the obvious. For example, don't state duties such as "Prepared lessons, assembled course materials, assigned and graded homework" because these are the basic responsibilities of all full-time teachers.

Concise statements that quantify specific responsibilities and indicate content taught are effective. Some good examples are:

- Taught Language Arts, Social Studies, Math and Science to 25+ students in Grade 2.
- Supervised 12 high school students in a dormitory during a 4-week residential program.
- Mathematics Teacher: 5 classes of 25-30 students, including Grade 7 general mathematics and pre-algebra (1 Honors, 1 regular) and Grade 8 algebra (1 Honors and 2 regular).
- Organized history field trips to local museums for all 150 students in Grade 9.
- Taught the writing process using Lucy Calkins materials.

Highlight any achievements or innovations. For example: "Founded a new literary magazine for MS students"; "Collaborated on writing a new Social Studies curriculum for Grade 3".

If you have tutoring experience and your teaching experience is limited, include Tutoring in a separate category, giving brief bullets with details

(subjects, ages, dates).

Other Work Experience Section

- Concise bullets clarifying responsibilities.
- If any of your responsibilities included any form of teaching— instruction, explanation, and/or presentations—highlight that.
- If any work experience involved working with children or adolescents in a non-teaching capacity, include and highlight.

Other Sections

If applicable, include the following, in roughly this order:

Awards—Include awards received at college and at work.

Extracurricular Activities—If you are an experienced teacher, list any extracurricular activities/clubs you advise at schools you have worked in. Include school committees if appropriate.

If you are a recent college graduate, include extracurricular activities you participated in at college. Highlight any leadership responsibilities and any activities that included forms of teaching (peer tutoring, dorm counseling).

Professional Development—List conferences and workshops you attended to improve your skills as a teacher.

Volunteer Work—Teaching and non-teaching volunteer work. Brief. Highlight leadership, work with adolescents or children, and any forms of teaching. Keep this section brief unless work included teaching and/or work with children or adolescents.

Interests (if you have room)—Other important interests or activities, especially those that might be relevant in a school. Summarize. This section should be short and should come near the end.

Skills—Any special proficiencies—fluency in a language, computer applications and technology, sports. Highlight educational technology skills—use of SMART boards, MOODLE, video-conferencing. Do not include very basic computer applications (like Microsoft Word) or only average skills (“some knowledge of Spanish”).

References Section

Before you give anyone as a reference, make sure you have asked the person’s permission to use him or her as a reference, and make sure the reference will be a positive one. Be ready to provide your references’ contact information when a school requests it.

If you have already talked with your references about your job search, you can list them on your resume. If not, under References, state “available on request.” This allows you to contact your reference before the school contacts them to explain why you are interested in a specific position.

If you are a recent college graduate and are applying for a Lower School Associate or Assistant Teacher position:

Follow the guidelines above but note these suggestions:

- If you don't have a MA completed or in process, list any undergraduate courses relevant to elementary education.
- Highlight any experience with children such as tutoring, camp counseling or volunteer work. Place these in a separate section before any other work experience.
- If you have room, include the Interests and Skills section as described above.

COVER LETTER PREP

Your cover letter is an extremely important advocacy document.

Topics for your letter

- What position you are seeking
- A summary of your educational and work experience
- Why you are committed to teaching and your philosophy of teaching your subject. What do you love about teaching a specific grade or subject? What do you want your students to learn from their experience with you? What do you believe students of a particular age need?
- Why you are interested in independent schools and/or the kind of independent school you hope to teach in (This section can be brief—a few sentences—but should indicate some knowledge of independent schools and what they have to offer).
- What your interests, experience and philosophy have in common with the particular school to which you are applying. You need a separate customized cover letter for each school and position.

Though your cover letter should refer to your educational and work experience, don't simply repeat information contained in your resume. Instead, use this letter to highlight something about your background, experience or philosophy. The highlight doesn't have to be an extraordinary accomplishment. It should simply be something that helps to convey you as a person and professional, and to distinguish you from other candidates. Below are some examples of interesting features in a candidate's background:

- work or education in countries other than the US
- teaching experience in 2 or 3 different kinds of schools
- work experience other than teaching

Whatever you highlight, briefly state what you learned from these experiences, and how they might contribute to your success and/your philosophy as a teacher.

You can also use your cover letter to highlight an aspect of your classroom practice or philosophy, rather than your background. What do you do in the classroom and why?

The cover letter is also the place to address any questions which might arise from your resume: reasons why you have changed positions several times; a significant gap in your resume; your interest in moving to NYC to teach. Address such questions briefly but precisely.

If you are a recent college graduate and are applying for a Lower School Associate or Assistant position, use your letter to make a few key points about your experiences with children, and what you think you can contribute to an independent school.

Format

Keep in mind that your cover letter is also a writing sample. It should be concise—no more than one page.

Your letter should be formal in tone (not conversational), well-written and completely free of any errors (spelling, typos, grammar). After you have drafted and spell checked, ask someone whose judgment you trust to proofread it.

Include your contact information (email and telephone) on your letter as well as on your resume.

INTERVIEW PREP

Your first interview may be by phone or you may be invited to the school for a visit. As the process continues, you will probably have the opportunity to meet with several different administrators and teachers. You may want to ask if you can visit a class in an early visit, since this will be particularly helpful to you if you are asked to teach a demonstration class later on.

Before the Interview

Do some research on the school by looking at the school's website. Make sure you note the school's distinctive features: co-ed or single sex, grade range, religious affiliation, whether it describes itself as progressive or traditional, or any special or unusual programs. Be prepared to state your views—and/or ask thoughtful questions—about these features and their impact on the school's mission and community.

Also pay attention to the way the school describes its mission and core values so that you can refer to these in your interviews.

Responding to Questions

You will be asked to elaborate on the experience outlined in your resume. Be prepared to give specific examples.

The questions below are typical of those that might be asked of an experienced teacher:

1. What qualities are you looking for in a school?

2. What are your goals as a teacher of ____? What do you want your students to take away from their experience with you after they've forgotten some of the specifics?
3. Describe a lesson or unit you taught that you considered successful. What worked well and why?
4. Describe a lesson or unit that didn't meet your goals. How would you revise it next time around?
5. Describe the developmental needs of students of ____ age. Then give an example of how your teaching accommodates those needs.
6. How do you incorporate technology into your teaching?
7. How is your commitment to multiculturalism reflected in your teaching?
8. What are your strengths as a teacher? What areas of your practice are you trying to improve?
9. Describe a problem in classroom management or a difficult interaction with a student and explain how you handled the problem. Would you handle the problem differently in the future?

If you are a recent college graduate applying for a Lower School Associate or Assistant position, you may also be asked:

1. How has your experience with children helped to prepare you for an Associates position?
2. How has your undergraduate and/or graduate work helped prepare you for an Associates' position?

3. What do you think you have to contribute to the school?

If you are a career changer with limited teaching experience, you may be asked:

1. How has your work experience helped to prepare you for this teaching position?
2. How has any relevant academic work helped to prepare you for the position?
3. What would the challenges be for you in this position, and how would you prepare yourself for them?

Asking Questions

You should have time to ask questions in some of your interviews. You will want to include some basic questions (class size, responsibilities other than teaching, how students are evaluated). In addition to factual questions, however, make sure to include some larger questions on school philosophy and community. Responses to questions like the following ones will give you a sense of whether the school is a good fit for you.

1. What are relationships between faculty and students like? Between faculty and parents? Between faculty and administrators? Among the faculty as a whole?
2. How is new curriculum developed?
3. How does the school encourage and support the growth of its teachers?

4. Where is the school in its work on diversity? What has it accomplished? What is it working on?

5. What changes is the school (or the division or department) considering and why?

Before your visit ends, ask about timing and next steps in the process.

After the Interview

Send a short note or email to the people who interviewed you thanking them, and briefly stating what you like about the school and the position.

Interview don'ts

Do not refer to your current or past employment in a derogatory way.

Do not speak ill of a former employer or colleague.

If you left a previous position due to personality disagreements, focus on the positives you are seeking in your next position rather than the negative reasons for which you left the position.

Don't forget that you may have been "googled" before your interview. Make sure your internet identity is clean and professional.

Do not ask questions about pay and benefits at your first interview.

Do not look at only one interviewer when there are two or more present.

DEMONSTRATION LESSON PREP

Teaching a demonstration class can feel intimidating, even for an experienced teacher. Keep in mind that the school knows the situation is artificial, and will take your level and kind of experience into consideration when evaluating your lesson. Also remember that in most cases, students in a demo class will rise to the occasion, co-operate easily and respond well.

You'll be asked either to teach a lesson that fits into what the class is studying, or to do a stand-alone lesson, perhaps related to but not part of the current curriculum.

Here are some pointers on preparing your lesson:

1. Ask if you can visit a class before your demonstration lesson. If possible, visit before the day of your lesson, so you can use what you observe to help you plan.
2. While independent schools vary in teaching philosophies, most schools are looking for the following capabilities in prospective teachers:
 - the ability to relate positively to students
 - an in-depth knowledge of subject matter
 - an understanding of the needs of the particular age of students
 - the ability to engage students and to inspire interest in the subject
 - the ability to foster critical thinking
 - clarity of instruction

3. While command of subject matter is important, for most schools what matters most is the ability to develop positive relationships with students. Given this, it's best to plan a lesson that is to some degree interactive in nature. Keep the importance of positive rapport in mind, and don't get so focused on showing your knowledge of the subject that you don't communicate your liking of students.

4. Find out as much as you can about the class you'll teach: what the students have already studied, typical class routines and formats, how students usually behave. Ask to talk to the teacher of the class, as this person will have the best information. Be aware, though, that all teachers are busy. You should probably limit yourself to a total of two contacts with the teacher about your preparations.

5. Make sure you know the basic facts about the class: level, size, length of the class period, classroom layout. Get copies of the text or materials the students use. If you need any classroom equipment or technology for your lesson, ask about its availability and reliability.

6. In planning your lesson, ask yourself what the goal of the lesson is. What do you want students to take away from the lesson? Then ask yourself whether and how the lesson you plan will achieve that goal.

7. Make sure you plan your lesson with the age of the students in mind. Keep in mind that younger students benefit from a change of activities during the lesson.

8. After you've decided on the content and structure of your lesson, plan it in segments, allotting a time to each piece. Then go through your plan by segment, imagining how students will respond and how long their responses will take. Be as specific and realistic as possible in estimating times for each piece of the lesson.

9. If possible, communicate your plan to the teacher of the class (email or phone) and ask that person if she/he thinks your plan is realistic and effective.

10. Once you have a detailed plan, think a bit about what you'll do if the students respond differently than you anticipate. What might you do if the students are so enthusiastic that their responses take longer than you planned? What if they are more reticent? What if they seem to understand so quickly that the lesson moves more rapidly than you anticipate?

11. Since one of your goals is to show how you interact with students, it will be helpful to be able to use students' names when calling on them. You can ask if the students could wear name tags during your demo, or you can simply ask each student, at the beginning of class, to take out a piece of notebook paper, write her/his name on it in big print, and fold it in half so that it stands up on the desk.

12. After your demo lesson, you may be asked to comment both on the students and your lesson. If you were to reteach the lesson to a similar group, would you do anything differently? As part of this conversation, ask for feedback on your lesson, and for any suggestions the observer might have.

13. Some basic reminders:

- Allow extra time and arrive at the school early. You don't want to worry about being late, and you can use the extra minutes to observe the school in action.
- If you need to copy materials for distribution, do this before you arrive at the school. Include some extras for the observers.

14. Before you leave, state your interest in the position and the school, and ask about the timing of the hiring decision.

15. If you do not receive immediate feedback from your demo lesson, ask FDS to follow up on your behalf so that we can all learn as much as possible from the experience.