

Navigating the Job Application Process

~ Job Search Tips for Educators

Academic Advising and Career Development
University of Nebraska-Kearney
MSAB #150
308.865.8501
careers.unk.edu
careerserv@unk.edu



Tips for Navigating the Job Application Process

Applying for your first teaching position can be a little daunting. How are you supposed to know what to send, to whom, and when? Follow the suggestions below to make a positive impression with your application materials.

Before you actually begin your job search, you should take time to complete three key documents:

- ♦ A **Master Application** – a document requiring – at the minimum – your Personal Information, Education History, Employment History, Activities/Skills, and References. You want to have a summary sheet with all this information compiled so you don't have to recreate and recall the dates, numbers, addresses, and all other details every time you complete an application.
- ♦ A **Résumé** – a professional document highlighting your most relevant education, experience, and skills.
- ♦ A 'model' **Cover Letter** – a document to introduce yourself – and your résumé – to a potential employer. This one-page letter will always be tailored to specific positions you are applying for, but will essentially identify the position, display your personality, enthusiasm, and focus, and provide a bridge between the employer's needs and your abilities.

Recognize that there are generally two possible methods for managing your application materials:

- A. Establishing a **Credential File** with the office of Academic & Career Services (AACD); *and*
- B. Creating a **Self-Managed File**.

We recommend that you do **both**, so you are ready to respond to any job opening at any time.



A. To Establish a Credential File with AACD follow these steps:

1. Pick up (in the office of Academic and Career Services), or access online, the **Education Credentials** materials
http://www.unk.edu/offices/AACD/Education_Credentials/Education_Credential_Files/
2. Pay the **\$35 registration fee** and sign the **Release/Waiver** Form
3. Complete the **Data Sheet** and return it to the AACD office (in person or online)
4. Complete the top section of 3-6 **Reference Forms**, then distribute them to professionals who can write positive recommendations for you (*See page 3 for tips on requesting reference letters.)
 - a. If you create a '**confidential**' file, the reference letters will be sent directly to AACD
5. Request that your **Transcripts** be sent from the Registrar's Office to the AACD office
6. Check periodically to see if references and transcripts have been received in our office. Once we have the Release/Waiver Form, the Data Sheet, 3 – 6 Letters of Reference, and your official Transcripts, your file is complete. (Teaching Certificate is optional.)
7. When your credential file is complete, you are ready to begin applying for jobs. When you learn of a job you are interested in, fill out a **Request Form**, telling us where to send your file.
 - a. While your Credential File is being processed, you should send your **résumé** and **cover letter** directly to the school. In your cover letter, note that you have requested that your credential file be sent. (*See the example at the end of this packet.*)

8. When our office receives your **Request**, we will photocopy your file contents, place all documents in a 9" x 12" envelope (to avoid folding of your application papers) and mail to the school address provided. During peak job search times, this may take 3-5 business days.
 - a. The \$35 fee you pay covers five mailings. After 7, if you haven't yet been offered a job, you will want to renew, i.e., pay another \$35 for 7 more mailings.



B. For your self-managed file, follow the directions below:

1. Review your 'model' **cover letter** and **résumé** (see the attached examples, then create your own to present *your* best skills and experiences). Be sure to tailor your documents to **every** position for which you apply, and proofread carefully each time!
2. Collect your letters of recommendation from your reference writers. Request that they create them on letterhead, save them as pdfs, if possible, and send them to you electronically. That way, **(1)** a school district receiving the letters can be reasonably sure they have not been altered, and **(2)** they will look clean and professional, since you won't be scanning or photocopying each one.
3. In your cover letter, be sure to refer to the **enclosed** or **attached** application materials, i.e., résumé, letters of reference, a copy of your transcripts, and (possibly) a copy of your teaching certificate.
 - a. If you are mailing the documents yourself, your materials will be *enclosed*;
 - b. If you are submitting application materials electronically, they will be *attached*.



When transmitting electronically, **Save** your documents with accurate and descriptive titles. For example: *TinaTeacher Resume* and *TinaTeacher_Cover Letter*. Also, be consistent in your titles, so all your documents appear as a cohesive package (*TinaTeacher_Reference1*, *TinaTeacher_Reference2*, etc.)

If you name them something generic, like 'resume13,' or 'reference from Dr. T,' the recipient has to open the document before placing it in the electronic filing system, and there is always a chance a document could get mis-filed. As a result, the employer may think your file is incomplete, which could affect the activation status of your file.

Finally, before sending electronically, **Save** your documents as **pdf** (portable document format) files. That way, the original format is retained no matter what software is used to open your documents.

4. Read employment ads / job postings thoroughly. When responding, follow the directions precisely. This will give potential employers their first look at you as a professional. *Not* following directions or having spelling or mechanical errors in your application documents are big "red flags," and will definitely jeopardize your opportunities for success.



If you are asked to **mail** your application materials, be sure to print your résumé and cover letter on nice, bonded (ivory or white) résumé paper. Letters of reference and transcripts may be printed on quality copy paper. You should also print a mailing label, if possible, and mail all

documents in a 9" x 12" envelope. That way it will look professional and will give the employer a positive first impression of you as an applicant!

5. Schools will also have an Application for Employment you will be asked to complete, most of which will be online. Again, create and have available a "Master Application," so you have names, dates, phone numbers, and addresses readily available. Also, write out responses to commonly asked questions about your teaching philosophy, goals, and experiences. That way you have some well-thought-out responses that can be modified and tailored for each school.

Requesting Letters of Recommendation



Securing Letters of Recommendation (or Reference) is an important part of the job search process. At first it may seem as simple as dropping off a form or firing off a quick email, but there are some basic steps to follow if you want to make a good impression and get the best references possible.

- Schedule face-to-face meetings whenever possible. During your conversation ask, "Do you know me well enough to write a favorable reference letter?" or "Would you be willing to write a recommendation for me regarding my skills / experiences with?" (Fill in with specific skills or experiences.)
 - Avoid asking people who don't know you well, or with whom you have had limited interactions.
 - If someone turns you down, don't be offended. They may not know you well enough, or they may not have time to write a thorough recommendation before the deadline.
- Provide the reference writer with a copy of your current résumé, as a reminder of some of your experiences and accomplishments.
- As a member of the UNK community, seek out references related to your current situation:
 - activities you have participated in, professors, and your cooperating teacher and student teaching supervisor. You may also ask current and former employers for recommendations. They may not be able to talk about your teaching abilities, but they can shed light on your personal and professional qualities, such as integrity, creativity, reliability, leadership skills, problem-solving abilities, etc.)
- Allow reference writers at least one week (two is better) to complete the letter. Give a deadline ahead of your final deadline, just in case you need to call with a 'gentle' reminder. It is a large task, and you want them to take the time they need to make sure the letter is detailed and well-constructed.
- Send a thank-you note to all of your reference writers . . . and be sure to let them know when you get a job!



Final Hints for a Successful Job Search

- ♦ **Be Proactive:** Look ahead and begin planning now for the application process. Create drafts of all your documents and set up a file so all application materials are in one easy-to-find location. Take initiative – send letters of inquiry to schools you are interested in – even before they post openings.
- ♦ **Establish Relationships:** People hire people they like and want to work with. Take part in activities, attend meetings (even if they aren't required), initiate conversations, and make people aware of your enthusiasm and commitment to the profession. Avoid participating in gossip sessions or any other activities that could leave a negative impression.
- ♦ **Use Your Resources:** Networking is the #1 method by which people attain jobs, so the more connected you are, the greater your opportunities for employment success. Sometimes we think it's presumptuous to ask people for assistance, so we hesitate to do so. Change your thinking on that . . . now!

Begin contacting people you know and have known in the past . . . professionals in schools you have attended, former employers and co-workers, friends of your family, professors and other personnel at UNK, people in your exercise class, people at your place of worship, and more. Let them know that you are beginning your job search, and that you will appreciate them passing on any job openings they might hear about. Also, when you hear of openings and are in the process of sending your application materials, be sure to call contacts who might have a connection to that system and ask them to 'put in a good word' for you.

- ♦ **Prepare for the Interview:** Talk to the educators you are working with. Ask them about their interview experiences, and ask for hints that will help you. Review lists of commonly asked questions and Schedule a mock interview with advisors in the AACD office; and practice with your cooperating teacher and other educators in your building, as well.
- ♦ **Monitor Your Online Presence:** Now more than ever, it is time to scrutinize your Facebook, Twitter, and other social media sites. Look at them through the eyes of an employer. What would they see? What impression will those pictures, or those comments, or those group memberships give? If you have 'friends' who continually post negative, offensive, or just plain 'stupid stuff,' unfriend them immediately.
- ♦ **Buy appropriate interview clothing:** You have spent a lot of money on your education; don't cheat yourself out of opportunities for success by skimping on your interview attire. It doesn't have to be expensive ... but it does need to show you understand the level of professionalism required for this occupation. Acquire at least one outfit that looks nice and fits well. Make sure it is clean and pressed before each interview.

Cover Letter - Example

Your Street Address
City, State, Zip

Date

Person's Name
Organization
Address
City, State, Zip

Address and Salutation

- Address to a specific person
- If unsure of the gender of the addressee, use full name
- If you cannot obtain the name, address the letter to the position, e.g., Dear Personnel Director

Dear [Person's Title and Name]:

I am writing to apply for the elementary teaching position you advertised on *nebraskaeducationjobs.com*. Being aware of your excellent reputation and your firm commitment to providing quality education to all students in the district, I have a sincere interest in becoming a part of the [Sometown] Public Schools teaching staff.

Introductory Paragraph

- State why you are writing and what position you are applying for
- Tell how you found out about the position
- Show your interest in the organization

In [month/year] I will be graduating from the University of Nebraska at Kearney with a Bachelor of Arts in Education degree, with Elementary Education and Mild/Moderate, K-6 as my endorsement areas. To gain

Body Paragraph(s)

- Highlight your qualifications for the position
- Emphasize any special skills, education or experience that sets you apart from the competition
- Show the employer how your qualifications match the job description

experience, and as a means of financing my education, I worked part time as a paraprofessional at Kenwood Elementary School for two years. Additionally, I recently completed over 100 hours of community service, providing guidance and support to children involved in the "Friends" program. Currently, I am student teaching in a third grade classroom at Windy Hills Elementary. My dedication and enthusiasm for teaching extends beyond the classroom, as I

have also enjoyed volunteering in a summer enrichment program for elementary-aged students. As a result of my professional experience and commitment to the teaching field, I am confident that I will make an excellent role model and educator for your students, and an important contribution to your staff and your community.

Attached is my résumé which provides additional information about my education and experience. In addition, my credential file is being sent from UNK. Please contact me at 308-123-4567 or *teachertm@lopers.unk.edu*. I look forward to hearing from you and will be eager to discuss how my qualifications can benefit you and the [Sometown] Public School system. Thank you for your consideration.

Closing Paragraph

- Refer to the enclosed or attached résumé
- Tell the employer how to reach you
- Ask for an interview
- Thank the reader for considering your application

Sincerely,

Signature (first and last name)

Your Name Typed

Enclosure: Résumé

Tina M. Teacher

1220 Grand Avenue
Kearney, NE 68847

(308) 232-1101
teachertm@unk.edu

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Arts in Education

University of Nebraska at Kearney, May 2023

Endorsements: **Elementary Education, K - 6; Mild/Moderate Disabilities, K - 6**

Cumulative GPA 3.2 / 4.0

- Dean's Academic Excellence Award, Fall 2010

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Student Teaching, Emerson Elementary, Kearney, NE

Special Education, March - May 2023

- Collaborated with supervising teacher and support team to develop and implement Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) for 12 students in grades 3 and 4 with various mental and behavioral disabilities
- Designed daily and weekly learning activities that corresponded with the IEPs
- Evaluated and recorded progress toward IEP goals
- Demonstrated competency in working with students with diverse needs

Student Teaching, Meadowlark Elementary, Kearney, NE

Second Grade, January - February 2023

- Created and implemented units in reading and writing for 32 students
- Adapted teaching methods and instructional materials to meet students' varying learning styles
- Utilized active learning techniques, such as competitive review games, to motivate students
- Participated in Parent-Teacher conferences, sharing learning achievements with parents
- Maintained accurate and complete student records, as required by district policy

Paraprofessional, Kenwood Elementary School, Kearney, NE

Third Grade, September 2022 – May 2022

- Assisted teacher with classroom management; accompanied students to lunchroom and playground, helping to enforce appropriate behavior and resolve conflict, when necessary
- Created and implemented activities for reading groups; practiced vocabulary and spelling words with students – in groups and individually

OTHER WORK EXPERIENCE

Sales Associate, Herberger's Department Store, Kearney, NE 2021 – Present

- Used interpersonal skills to provide outstanding customer service
- Worked cooperatively with a diverse group of people

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Friends Program, Kearney, NE 2021- present

- Role model "big sister" support to two elementary school students

Kearney Public Schools, KCLC, Kearney, NE Summer 2012

- Volunteered with 3rd – 5th grade reading program
- Worked with students individually and in small groups, using interactive activities to support and develop reading skills

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Treasurer, UNK Student Education Association of Nebraska (SEAN), 2020 - 2021

- Collected dues and disbursed payments for bills owed by the organization

Vice-President, Resident Council, CTE Residence Hall, UNK, 2019 - 2021

- Organized three committees for Residence Hall Holiday celebrations

USE BOLD PRINT FOR...

- Your name
- Your degree
- Majors, minors, endorsements
- Section headings
- Job titles

EXPERIENCE

- Begin each phrase with an **action** verb
- Articulate transferable skills
- Emphasize results & accomplishments
- Use reverse chronological order

TO EMPHASIZE, USE...

- White space
- Bullets
- Bold print

OTHER TIPS:

- Include relevant volunteer experience
- Identify leadership, activities, awards, honors and other related accomplishments

Functional Résumé - Example

Street Address • City, State Zip • Phone Number • Email Address

Thomas Teacher

*You may choose to use this style of résumé if you have a lot of experience and your bullets would seem repetitive, **or** if you are changing careers.

Profile

- **Elementary School Educator** with 12 years of professional experience
- Strengths in **literacy development** and **early language acquisition**
- Extensive background working with **multicultural** and **special needs** students and their families

Professional Experience

Kearney Public School District
Meadowlark Elementary, Third Grade
Bryant Elementary, First Grade

Kearney, NE
2021 – present
2014 – 2021

Amherst Public Schools
Amherst Elementary, Fourth & Fifth Grade Combined Classroom

Amherst, NE
2009 – 20114

Professional Skills

Instructional Skills

- Develop interactive and engaging units of study and individual lesson plans for elementary students of varying grade levels
- Include differentiated instruction to meet the needs of students of all learning abilities
- Motivate and guide students to set and attain learning goals

Classroom Management Skills

- Apply district-approved behavior management strategies to minimize inappropriate behaviors among students in the classroom and on the playground
- Implement innovative behavior modification techniques to promote student self-management

Communication Skills

- Collaborate with Resource educators and parents of special needs students to develop and facilitate Individual Educational Plans (IEPs)
- Use exceptional oral and written communication skills to convey appropriate information to partners in education: parents/guardians, administrators, mentors, and peers
- Strategize with colleagues to integrate State Academic Standards into lesson plans

Technical Skills

- Proficient in Windows and Mac platforms
- Utilize a wide variety of technical applications to enhance delivery of instructional materials: Photoshop, iMovie, Dreamweaver, PowerPoint, and others

Leadership Skills

- Led committee of fourth-grade educators to implement the state-approved evaluation process
 - Compiled and analyzed assessment data
 - Developed timeline and delegated assignments, assuring the report was completed and submitted on time
- Mentored five first-year teachers over a three-year time span
 - Observed, on a weekly basis, offering constructive criticism and support
 - Accelerated new teachers' acclimation and adjustment period, resulting in 100% favorable evaluations from school administrators at the end of their first semester

Education

University of Nebraska-Kearney, Kearney, NE
Bachelor of Arts in Education, May 2009
Endorsement: **Elementary Education, K-6**