

Educators' Newsletter

How to Write a Great Cover Letter

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From the Education Department at Capital College:
http://www.capital.edu/acad/as/edu/feature_article1.htm

The ability to write well is an important skill, especially for educators, yet many people find constructing resumes and cover letters a formidable task. There are several keys to creating a successful cover letter, the most important being common sense. In order to communicate effectively you have to be precise and detailed. The thought and detail that you put into a cover letter will show potential employers what position you are interested in, what relevant qualifications you have, and how you could benefit their organization.

Cover letters are more than an attachment to your resume. They should be a representative of how you think, and your eagerness to work for a particular district or organization. Each cover letter must be job specific and should follow the ad accurately. It also helps to know as much about an organization as possible. For potential educators this means finding out about the school district's agenda or the goals of the school you are sending your application. Whatever the case, your cover letter should describe your qualifications as they pertain to the applied for position and the goals of the organization. Too often people focus on their own person goals (salary, geography, advancement, etc.) and not on how their skills, expertise and past accomplishments can benefit the employer. This is your key opportunity to enhance interest and showcase your accomplishments. (See the sample letter and tips below).

August 17, 1997

Ms. Karen Allen
Personnel Director
Anywhere City Schools
123 Elm Street
City, State, Zip

Dear Ms. Allen:

I understand that you have an opening at Anywhere Elementary School for a 4th Grade Teacher. I am applying for that position and would like to tell you about my qualifications.

Currently I am a substitute for Someplace Local Schools. I've been substituting for four months. In that time, I've handled a wide range of responsibilities—many of which are relevant to the goals of the Anywhere Elementary School's Star Readers Program. For example, I recently chaired a Read A-thon for Someplace Elementary School. I've also created a young readers book club which has twenty members ranging in age from eight to ten.

All three of these areas encompasses effective and creative communication, patience, and a specialized interest in literacy. But even beyond these skills and specialized areas, I'm certain I could make a positive addition to your team.

I graduated from Capital University May 18, 1997 with a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education (1-8), Reading Endorsement. Prior to graduating I obtained various skills through field experience at Arlington Park Elementary and Cranbrook Elementary. I am certified in the state of Ohio and feel certain that I can bring expertise and creativity to Anywhere Elementary School.

Enclosed is my resume. I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Diane Mathews

P.S. – Should you have time to call me at work, please use discretion. Thank you.

Tips on writing cover letters:

- Address each letter to a specific person, unless the ad states otherwise. If a specific person is not listed, try calling the school or organization.
- Avoid gimmicky openings. It is better to start the first paragraph by simply stating why you are writing.
- Don't recite you resume. Instead, focus on two or three qualities which distinguish you most and how they apply to the job's key requirements. Also note one or two successful projects.
- While following the rules of standard English, write the way you speak. Use a conversational tone instead of stiff language. Write to inform, not impress.
- Use personalized letterhead stationary, preferably paper with a nice quality bond that matches your resume.
- Avoid dark or bright colors. Keep it simple, but elegant. (Off white, egg shell, cream, graystone, etc.)
- Include information you have gathered about the school or organization.
- Always check and recheck every letter you send for typos, bad grammar and spelling mistakes (even if you have a spell checker). Let someone else take a look at it.