

## Does your Cover Letter and Resume tick these Boxes?

The advice provided here was gathered from the three resume and interview skills workshops provided by a panel of TDSB Elementary Principals. If you are applying for contract or LTO positions, review these tips as you write your cover letter and resume.

### Your Cover Letter:

- ◆ The email is part of your business communication.
  - ◆ Keep the email formal, “Dear Ms.,” not “Hi Heather,”. Show respect.
  - ◆ Your professionalism should come through.
- ◆ The cover letter is a one page attachment – not part of the email.
- ◆ A strong cover letter can get you in the door.
  - ◆ It’s about you, not what you have done (that’s your resume).
  - ◆ You need to present who you are and what you can bring to the table.
- ◆ It should be written specifically for the job you are applying for, not a ‘form letter’. Make it relevant to the job.

### Your Resume:

- ◆ Don’t include cute pictures, bright colour paper or ribbons; this is business.
- ◆ Don’t use a writing service to produce your resume. It needs to be you coming through in what you write.
- ◆ It should be as respectful as your cover letter.
- ◆ Use action verbs to describe your skills and accomplishments such as lead, participated, engaged.
- ◆ Check for spelling and format. Mistakes show carelessness.
- ◆ Organize your resume sequentially to make it easy to read.
  - ◆ First – education, A.Q.s.
    - ◆ It is important to list your qualifications as they are used as search criteria.
    - ◆ List your qualifications that meet the specific needs of the job you are applying for – first.
    - ◆ Make sure that the A.Q.s you list appear on the OCT website, otherwise list them as ‘pending’.
  - ◆ Next – Your career summary in the following order, using chronological order and include dates.
    - ◆ Contract teaching
    - ◆ LTO experience
    - ◆ Daily work – and list the schools you work at regularly
    - ◆ Practicum placements
    - ◆ Related experience
      - ◆ Instrumental music doesn’t have an AQ
      - ◆ Sports, dance etc. are an asset
  - ◆ Courses you have completed that are not A.Q.s ( i.e. Tribes)

### Your References

- ◆ List your references on your resume, not ‘upon request’. That’s asking someone to do too much work.
- ◆ Your references must be administrators, not colleagues, mentors or other teachers.
- ◆ Have the person’s permission to use them as a reference and ask for alternate contact numbers, such as cell or home phone numbers.
- ◆ Talk to your references about what they could highlight about you.
- ◆ Give your references a copy of your resume to help them know more about you.

# How to Ace the Interview!

## *Preparing for the Interview:*

**Research the school beforehand.** Be prepared with your own questions to ask based on what you know about the school. Most schools have a literacy/numeracy focus. Check the school's website for initiatives and profile. Know the kinds of programs being offered at the school (multiple programs need team teaching). Think about what you could add to the school.

## *The Interview:*

**Decisions can be made in the first couple of minutes:** Arrive 10 minutes early. Use the time to observe the tone of the school.

**Look professional:** It's a formal business meeting, dress appropriately. Use a firm handshake and make eye contact while shaking hands and during the interview. Be positive! No gum or perfume (shows that you know about the Board's fragrance awareness program).

**Pre-Interview small talk:** Show what you know about the position, school, community and then link it to your skills/strengths/experiences.

**This is your chance to bring your resume to life:** Talk about your strengths and what you have that stands out from the crowd. Use your personal "star stories" to demonstrate your passion for teaching.

**When answering questions:** Don't get rattled if they are writing while you are talking. Listen to the question and include it in your answer. Speak clearly and don't rush through your answer. Talk as if you already have the job. Practice! Watch your time and the interviewer's body language.

**Information you need to know and talk intelligently about:** Know the TDSB core values, mission statement, The Director's *Vision of Hope*, equity statement, TDSB initiatives, policies, procedures, resources, i.e. *TLCP - Teaching Learning Critical Pathway*, *7 Correlates of Effective Schools*, the school profile and improvement plan, Ministry initiatives and resources, recent research in education and related information. Jobs are now often odd combinations, understand the vacancy.

## *Questions you should be prepared to answer:*

**Know the role of the teacher:** As a partner with parents and community, instructor, evaluator, councillor, planner. You must be flexible, proactive and willing to stay up to date (Smart-Boards).

**Experiences you have that make you a suitable candidate.** What will you bring to our school? What sets you apart? Why are you applying for this position? How would you be a good fit?

**Classroom management question:** It's not about discipline. It's about your routines and expectations and how will they be established. Proactive classroom management should be integrated into your daily routines. Mention any training such as Tribes, Future Aces, Second Steps.

**How will you deal with an angry parent?** Need to hear that you are working for a win-win solution. Listen to parents and come up with a solution that works for both parties. Bring a possible solution with you when you seek help from the Principal. Respect for the child's feelings

**Planning and instruction:** Know the curriculum. Describe your literacy program sequentially.

**At risk students or a similar question:** Talk about involving parents, community and board resources such as Mart, Team, IPRC, etc. Make positive 'sunshine' calls home. The data question; how will you identify at risk students?

## **Assessment and Evaluation question**

**Collaboration:** It's more than your classroom and includes parents, colleagues, extra-curriculars. Collaboration is planning, and team teaching – not just sharing lesson plans.

**Equity:** Ability, diversity, poverty, not just ethnicity. Show that you understand the complexity.

**Technology in the classroom:** Computer skills such as Smart-Boards.

## *Portfolios:*

A portfolio can be a tool to communicate your skills and experience to sell yourself. Use it to support what you are saying. Refer only to the sections that relate to the job you are applying to and be able to flip to it instantly. Don't ask at the end, "Would you like to see my portfolio?" It's not a photo album.

## *When they ask you if you have any questions:*

You are still being interviewed. Don't ask a process question – find that out yourself. Ask a question that lets you highlight your skills, talents or interests and leaves a lasting positive impression.

## *The Wrap up:*

Thank them for the opportunity. Express your desire to join their staff. "I look forward to hearing from you." Later, if you don't get the job, tell them you are open to hearing critical feedback.