



Your Guide to Finding a Job in Education

Expert advice on how to job search, create a professional profile and nail your interviews



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We encourage you to print and share this booklet with any colleagues who are looking for employment.



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About this guide

We teamed up with **Dr. Mary C. Clement** to put together this resource guide to help you in your hunt for a new job in education.

Dr. Clement is a professor of teacher education and the director of the Center for Teaching Excellence at Berry College, near Atlanta, Georgia. She was a high school foreign language teacher before earning her doctorate in curriculum and instruction from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

She is the author of 11 books and more than 125 articles that focus on teacher jobs, hiring and new teacher induction. In 2013, she received the STAR award from the American Association for Employment in Education for her research on the hiring of new teachers. She was the 2012-2014 international president of Kappa Delta Pi, honor society in education.



Navigate the New Educational Job Market

Does talk of job cuts have you on your guard? Get tips on how best to prepare for a job search.

The educational job market has become increasingly difficult to navigate as the economy has struggled. Reports of educator job cuts have put a lot of current teachers and prospective educators on their guard.

If you recently lost your job, are

nervous about starting a career in education or are considering a planned return to teaching, these features were created with you in mind. This series includes background on the changing educational job landscape, tips on how to craft a résumé and portfolio,



Get Your Paperwork in Order

Learn about the basic documents you will need before you apply for your next job as an educator.

In a competitive job market, your paperwork has to be perfect, and that includes a résumé, a cover letter, a portfolio, letters of recommendation and thank-you notes.

The résumé is only the beginning. On the surface, it is a 1- to

2-page document that summarizes your education and work experience. It must make you stand out in a positive, professional way.

The Résumé

The first section of your résumé

is your contact information: name, address, email and phone. That is followed by your job objective and all pertinent teacher certifications/licenses that you hold. This should be brief.

Here's an example:

Job Objective: To secure a middle grades teaching position in language arts and/or math. Fully-certified in middle grades education for language arts and math, grades 5-8, state of [insert your state here]. Passed state certification exam June 2010.

More and more résumés are now including a personal statement of teaching, or professional profile, which is like a mission statement. This should be no longer than one or two sentences, and it should state what you will bring to the job.

For example, you could write something like, "As a teacher with one year of experience, I will bring enthusiasm, energy and a proven record of helping students succeed to my middle school classroom."

Some candidates are also adding a line to their résumé, near the top or at the bottom, that directs the reader to their website. Example: *To watch me teach, and to view a sample PowerPoint, lesson and unit, go to www.myname.net.* If you use this electronic media, the site should be lim-

ited to short examples—and only ones that showcase your teaching. Follow all school and student privacy guidelines if you make a sample video clip.

Once employers know your job objective and certification, they'll need to know your educational background. List the most recent education first, such as your master's degree, then your bachelor's degree and teacher certification. If you have earned your teaching credentials after your initial bachelor's degree, list the teacher education program completion first, with any accompanying degree, followed by your undergraduate degree.

Here's an example:

Master of Arts in Elementary Education, May 2009. Any College, Georgia.

B.A. Degree, May 2001, Tennessee State College, majoring in English.

A community college degree should be

In addition to a dazzling résumé, you should arrive prepared with a comprehensive portfolio and a list of good professional references.

included, but extra hours taken at a community college don't need to be included.

Your teaching and work experience should also be listed, starting with your most recent position. If you are a recent graduate, include student teaching and



any major field experiences, especially ones in schools with demographics similar to the one where you want to work. Veteran educators, or those who have stopped teaching for a few years, should list their most recent teaching jobs, and then their student teaching experience. In short, your résumé should cover all of the years you have been teaching. Include action verbs with each entry:



Branch Elementary School, Rolling Hills, MN, August 2008-December 2008.

Student taught with 27 fourth-graders, all subjects.

Lead teacher for three weeks; developed units in social studies and math. Madison Middle School, Madison, MO, August 2007-June 2010.

Eighth grade math and science teacher; sponsor of the academic team.

Achieved above state standard test scores in 2009 and 2010.

Teachers who have worked in other jobs should list those. Empty years on a résumé can raise a red flag. For example, if you were a stay-at-home parent, or were laid

off by a district, include it in your résumé. Any leadership roles you held or informal teaching you did during those years (scout leader, sports coach, substitute teacher, etc.) should be listed.

An educator's résumé is different from a business résumé. It is a good idea to add volunteer work and extras that are related to your teaching skills, including any work with children and community. Always describe these very briefly.

Next, your résumé should include any special experience or skills, such as teaching abroad, speaking a foreign language or advanced computer skills. The résumé ends with a list of contacts for references,

and/or a statement mentioning that you will mail a set of reference letters to the employer from your college's career center.

Here are some key things to keep in mind as you put together your résumé:

- Get noticed with your achievements, not glitz. Avoid using brightly colored paper or pictures. And refrain from including overly personal information (family, pets, etc.).

- Focus on your experience, accomplishments and innovations. Make sure that two people read and edit your résumé before you send it to prospective employers.

- Make sure the type is legible; 12-point type is a minimum. Leave space, and make sure your résumé looks professional.

The Cover Letter

Whether the résumé is sent on paper or electronically, you should include a cover letter. The cover letter is a one-page document with three strong paragraphs. The first paragraph is a statement about the position for which you are applying, with a line about your certification.

The second paragraph is where you want to sell yourself and inspire the employer to read your résumé. Highlight an aspect of your professional experience that sets you apart in a positive way—student teaching abroad, working with at-risk youth or taking students on a field trip to the White House. The third paragraph clarifies which steps of the district’s application process you’ve completed. It ends with your declaration of interest to interview in the district.

Guard against typos by asking at least two people to read and edit each letter you send. Most people create a template for their letters, so be sure that the right cover letter goes to the correct district. It is very important to sign the cover letter legibly, because employers want to know that their teachers have legible handwriting.

The Portfolio

Many colleges and universities require a portfolio for the completion of student teaching or a master’s program in education. This huge notebook is not the same as your interview portfolio. An interview portfolio is a small, neatly organized binder with 6-8 items. Each item is something that you can show while answering a question in an interview. As you prepare all the paperwork for getting a job, build a binder

that includes:

- a typed lesson plan (1-2 pages) of a lesson that was successful
- a letter to parents for the first week of class
- a 1-page classroom management plan
- a unit plan or part of a curriculum map that ties standards to lessons (2-3 pages)
- 1 or 2 samples of student work, with names removed
- 1 or 2 pictures of your previous classroom, showing organizational arrangements or learning centers/labs (only use pictures of students if permission has been secured)

Interviewers rarely ask to see your portfolio. Rather, they ask you questions, and leave it up to you to decide whether to open your portfolio and use it as a visual aid while you answer their questions.

Letters of Reference/Credentials File

You will need to secure letters of reference when applying for jobs. There are several ways to do this. You can ask three or four people to each write a letter for you, and then use your college’s career center to house these letters in a personal credentials file. Whenever you apply for a job, request that the career center send the letters to the employer on your behalf. The

college career center may have an online version of the credentials file that you self-manage. If you don’t have access to a college career center, then you will have to secure and manage your letters of recommendation for each job. Many districts now send a form to your references, who need to complete the form online. Finally, make sure that once you have secured your reference letters, they are sent as directed.

Thank-You Notes and Other Paperwork

A handwritten thank-you note to the potential employer can be effective, if it demonstrates your good handwriting and communication skills. A typed or emailed note also is appropriate. Regardless of format, a thank-you note should be sent after each interview.

Additional paperwork you may be asked to provide varies widely among districts, but it can include a criminal background check, a health exam and/or transcripts. Whatever the requirements, complete them in a timely manner.

All of your paperwork—the résumé, the cover letter, the portfolio and letters—introduce you to the school district. Make your paperwork represent you in a professional manner to win the job you want.



How to Create a Professional Profile That Gets You Noticed

Here's how to stand out from the competition and land that job.

When 300 candidates apply for one education position, a boring job objective at the top of a résumé will not help you stand out from the crowd. An educator's résumé needs to catch the reader's attention very quickly, and a well-worded professional

profile will entice the employer to read the rest of the résumé.

What's a Professional Profile?

Consisting of just one or two very short sentences, a professional profile summarizes a candidate's certification/licensure,

while also indicating strengths and special qualifications.

For example, compare this old-style objective...

- *Job Objective: Seeking an elementary school teaching position where I can help all children learn.*

With this descriptive professional profile...

- *Fully-certified for pre-K through 6th grade in Georgia, I completed a semester of student teaching with first-graders who scored above the state average in reading because of our intensive reading intervention program.*

Obviously, an employer will want to read about this intensive intervention program and see what this candidate can bring to the table!

Another example highlights previous experience and certification:

- *After eight years in the business world, I completed an MAT that included student teaching in Gunther Heights Middle School, recipient of the Maryland Prize for most-improved middle school in 2014. My units in reading and math for seventh-graders helped at-risk students raise their achievement 18 points.*

Wouldn't YOU want to hire this applicant?



Craft Your Professional Profile to Tell Your Unique Story

When the educator job market is tight, employers receive huge numbers of résumés for teaching positions. Many administrators ask an assistant to sort applications by reading the top half of the first page of the résumé.

Fold your résumé in half. Is your teacher certification/licensure clearly evident in your professional profile? Do these one or two lines make you stand out in a positive way so the reader will read the rest of your résumé? What else might help you to make the "short list" of potential candidates?

After your professional profile, your educational background should be summarized, with the most recent degree listed first. Strong candidates list their high

GPA with the degree earned. After education, list teaching experience, remembering that field experience, clinical experience and student teaching ARE teaching experiences. After formal teaching experience, list related teaching experience, followed by other work experience. Yes, administrators look at other work experience to see if you held those jobs over a series of summers or for an extended period of time. Your past experience is the best predictor of your future performance, and working at the community pool for three summers is a sign of your success with that job.

Customize Your Résumé to Match Your Perfect Job

Customization is vitally important for getting noticed. Speak to the type of position you want. For example, if you seek a job in a district with many English language learners (ELLs), your professional profile should stress your work with students in this demographic group. If your student teaching experience, or your first years of teaching, were in a district with similar student populations to the one where you now seek employment, let the employer know that immediately.

These examples include specifics:

- *My 16-week student teaching experience in an inclusion classroom for third-graders completed my licensure for K-5, with a full endorsement in special education. Volunteering with the after-school program showed me the value of guiding parents in how to be their own child's teacher.*

- *An internship program at Madison High School taught me the value of constant planning and assessment. Certified in history for 6-12, my classes will always be designed for meeting standards through student engagement and achievement.*

- *A veteran teacher with six years of experience in New Constance schools, my 4th graders' test scores were consistently at the 75% achievement rate. The use of the LEPA reading program and the ADD-ON math series guided my students' success.*

Show the Uniqueness of Your Past Work

If you can, include experiences that will make your professional profile stand out from the rest. Include these if applicable:

Distinctive field experience. At one college, all elementary education majors must complete a field experience with English language learners, and they qualify for an endorsement in ESOL with that experience and two additional classes. These students

have an edge over other new grads; include it in your professional profile.

Study abroad experience. For foreign language majors, study abroad makes them much more employable. For history majors, study abroad indicates first-hand knowledge that can't be gained from a textbook.

Related work experience. Summer jobs at a camp, volunteer work with after-school programs and tutoring are excellent experiences to add to a résumé. Part-time jobs at pre-schools, swimming pools or libraries are good to add. One student teacher had taught aerobics for two years in her college dorm, which got her a preliminary interview over others who hadn't done any teaching outside of required education courses.

Personal anecdotes. These should be related to education. Some example profiles:

- *Fully certified in middle school social sciences and language arts (6-8). My own experience as a seventh-grader who was identified as at-risk motivates me to help every child succeed. As a recipient of my college's outstanding student teacher award, I know at-risk students can become at-promise.*

- *After 10 years of classroom teaching in fourth and sixth grades, I completed my master's degree in curriculum and instruction. Knowing the theory behind what I have*

been doing makes me a stronger teacher and advocate for student success.

Final Notes

A résumé must be read and edited by others before you send it out. One typo may put your paperwork in the "no way" stack. Adding too many small items makes a résumé tedious. Don't include "made a bulletin board," "took daily attendance" or "walked children to lunch and bus pick-up" as activities under student teaching.

A résumé cannot explain everything. Your professional profile can be developed into the first paragraph of your cover letter, where the reader can get a clear picture of your work. Your unique professional profile can be a one-minute introduction of your expertise on a video interview site, or can be your introduction when you speak with a recruiter at a job fair.

When deciding how to introduce yourself on a résumé, think about the requirements in the job description. If you were the recruiter, résumé sorter or principal, what would YOU want to see at the top of the résumé? What would capture your attention and make you want to know more about the candidate? With these questions in mind, you can write a résumé that will get noticed!



6 New Interview Questions You Must Prepare For

Today's interviewers are asking increasingly savvy questions. Here's how to prepare and show that you're a top-notch candidate.

The oldest interview question in the world is, "Tell me about yourself." This is considered an icebreaker question and generally is used as a gauge of a candidate's overall interpersonal skills and nervousness. Other icebreaker questions might be "What

events have brought you to my office today?" or "Why should I be interviewing you today instead of 300 other candidates?"

No matter how the first question is phrased, you, as a strong job candidate, should begin talking about your preparation to teach, your

teaching experience and something unique about your background in education.

A good answer to an icebreaker might be:

"I am delighted to be here today to interview with a district ranked in the top five in the state for student achievement. Having just finished student teaching in a neighboring district, Meadow Heights, I had a wonderful cooperating teacher who helped me apply everything I learned at Peabody University. One of the strengths I bring to teaching upper elementary school is the work I did last semester with the 'Top Notch' reading program."

This type of answer is called a professional profile, or an "elevator speech." Strong candidates know to make their very first answer one that stands out. It outlines their best success or strength while revealing a quick outline of who they are.

Master the Basics

Basic questions are still asked in every on-site interview. These questions deal with lesson planning, long-term planning, teaching methods, classroom management, discipline, assessment, parent communication and teaching all students. Questions require candidates to explain their training, experience and expertise with the topic of the question.



Before your big interview, carefully prepare your best answer to some of the hottest new questions so you'll make a great first impression.

Behavior-based interview (BBI) questions are used to determine if the candidate has experience with the topic of the question and can perform the skills needed, if hired. For example:

- *Describe a sample lesson plan that*

guides your teaching.

- *How have you planned a semester to determine the amount of content you will cover?*
- *Which teaching methods have you found to work well when teaching {topic} to students this age?*
- *Describe a classroom where you have worked. What routines and procedures did you use to keep the class organized?*
- *Describe a classroom management plan that you have used in the past. What were the rules, and what consequences worked? Were there positive rewards?*
- *Tell about a grading system you used for a nine-week period.*
- *How have you worked with parents?*
- *How have you worked with all students, especially those who _____?*

Tackle the Newest Questions

Today's interviewers are increasingly savvy with their questions. Employers are more apt to have a typed set of questions with an evaluation rubric to assess candidates' answers during the interview.

The questions deal with implementation of the Common Core State Standards, evaluation and use of student data in planning and assessment, raising student achievement, differentiation, advocacy for all



First, you need to be prepared to answer the basics about your background and education philosophy, as well as key behavior-based questions.

students and a teacher's past involvement with professional learning communities (PLCs). Employers are looking for answers to their questions that demonstrate that the teacher candidate is aware of the topic and can discuss examples from their experience.

Here are six sample questions, with some guidelines regarding what employers are hoping to hear in your answer.

1. How have the Common Core State

Standards guided your lesson preparation? Or, how have your state or local standards guided your lesson preparation?

Sample answer: "The standards are certainly a starting point, a focus point. In my college classes, we started our plans with the standard, then developed a student objective that would demonstrate mastery. Next, we determined how to focus students, do a quick review to tie the material to something already learned and how to engage the students with the new material. We always assessed each lesson in some way, formally or informally. Having posted standards helped students monitor their own learning, too."

2. With so much content to cover with standards, describe your approach to long-term planning.

Sample answer: "In the school where I currently teach, we have grade-level meetings to go over our curriculum maps. Curriculum mapping has helped me to see the year at a glance, as well as to look for gaps and overlaps in the curriculum from my grade to another. I can now lead curriculum mapping for a grade level!"

3. How have you used student data to inform planning or assessment?

Sample answer: "It has become quite

common for teachers to use pre- and post-testing to better determine what our students actually know before we plan and teach lessons. With pre- and post-testing, I can also monitor the growth of each individual student. It has worked really well with the eighth-graders in the math classes I teach. Let me show you one example from my portfolio.”

4. Give an example of differentiation in a classroom where you have worked.

Sample answer: “Working with the sixth-grade teacher next door, we divided students for a math activity, based on the students’ needs for review. I was able to work with students who really needed more one-on-one attention to attain higher scores. Even within my group, I modified how I presented information to students who needed more hands-on examples.”

5. How have you worked to be an advocate for students who are at-risk in your school?

Sample answer: “I currently teach at a high school that is striving to increase its graduation rate. I am assigned a homeroom, and I am to monitor students’ grades, referring some students to peer intervention and others to counselors if I see danger signs of dropping out. While time consuming, I find that students who know that

I am there for them come to me for help. This program makes homeroom teachers the advocates, and it works well.”

6. Professional learning communities (PLCs) have become more and more common. Describe any experience you have had with a PLC.

Sample answer: “While my colleagues and I didn’t use the term PLC, we did form a book study group last year for all of the sixth grade teachers on our team. Since we are seeing so many more students coming to our school from lower socio-economic areas, we read a book about teaching students from poverty. We gained some practical ideas, but more important, by meeting regularly, we were able to share our frustrations and our successes. I would like to implement something similar when hired here.”

These sample interview questions and answers indicate that today’s teacher candidates must be aware of the hot topics in education.

Although no student teacher or practicing teacher has experience with every teaching topic, being able to discuss past training and experience with a cooperating teacher, or a teacher down the hall, can help candidates to answer these timely questions.

Take some time to jot down important points you want to remember to make during your interview:



6 Ways Social Media Can Help Your Job Search

Social media can be full of pitfalls for educators, but when used correctly, it could help you land your next job.

Do you know what your digital profile says about you? What would an employer find out about you by checking Facebook or doing a Google search for your name?

About 75 percent of employers do an online search to see if

anything “pops up” about a potential candidate. This is, of course, perfectly legal, and your permission is certainly not needed for a potential employer to read what is available publicly online.

So how do you make your online presence work for you?

Here are six tips to make social media help land you that new job.

Clean up your online presence. Before sending out a résumé or applying for a position, check (and possibly clean up) your social media pages. Why are employers concerned about what they find about you? Principals and other school administrators know that students and parents do online searches to find out about the new teachers in a school. Students who see inappropriate pictures of their teacher quickly spread those pictures, and rumors go viral. Parents are concerned and can complain loudly about their child's teacher and his/her non-professional behavior.

See what other job seekers are talking about. There are certainly positive uses of social media with regard to job searching. There are interesting discussions on Facebook about getting a teaching job and about candidates' experiences in interviews, complete with crazy questions that job seekers have been asked. LinkedIn is considered a more professional site and may be used for "selling" your availability as an educator. One professional organization, Kappa Delta Pi, international honor society in education, has its own social media site, KDPGlobal, just for its members, and the chats are very useful for networking. Visit

kdp.org for basic information and how to join.

Promote yourself on Facebook—carefully. Some teacher candidates have made their Facebook pages multimedia showcases about their teaching skills. They might have pictures of bulletin boards or a video of one of their teaching presentations. However, an individual generally should not post pictures of students in any online format due to laws regarding student privacy. Permission must be granted in writing by students' parents for pictures to be shared. If you're student teaching, it is advised to get legal counsel from your college or discuss this issue with someone knowledgeable in the field if you want to use pictures from your experience. Great care must be taken when using a social media site to present one's teaching abilities.

Use your college teaching portfolio. Another way to share credentials is to have a link to an online teaching portfolio that you made in college. Many colleges require all teacher education candidates to complete online portfolios as a graduation requirement. In some cases, those portfolios are available for view by an employer if the candidate releases a password and the employer has the ability to view that software program. Also, the college must

allow the candidate to provide passwords for this type of use. A bonus of using your college portfolio is that you have had this portfolio reviewed, and graded, by professors, so the content is already edited.

Create your own website. Rather than use a social media site or a college's portfolio site for an online portfolio, job seekers can create an individual website. Share the address of the webpage at the top of the résumé: "Go to sallyteaches.edu7 to see my teaching skills." All of the privacy rules about what to post or not post apply to a private website. It's easy to share sample lesson plans, unit plans, a classroom management plan, an original test and a sample letter to parents. An employer can see your knowledge of planning, management, assessment and parent communication.

Make an introductory video. The website viewyou.com allows you to make a video that highlights your work. (There is a charge for this service.) In the video, you introduce yourself, stressing your certification, teaching experience and one or two vignettes of your teaching success. To let the employer know you are on ViewYou, add a line to your résumé and remind employers in your cover letter that they can go the site for an introduction to you and your work.



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