



Navigate the New Educational Job Market

By Mary C. Clement, Ed.D.



Table of Contents

Navigate the New Educational Job Market	3
Employment in a Tough Economy	5
Recovering from a RIF to Get Your Next Teaching Job	9
A 20-Point Checklist of Key Strategies for Your Next Teaching Job Search	12
Get Your Paperwork In Order—Résumés, Portfolios, References and More	14
Crack the Interview Code	17
From Job Fairs to Phone Chats: Know Your Interview Venue	20
Be the Job Candidate You Want to Be	23
Sample Interview Questions with Helpful Hints for Answers	25
FAQs about Getting a Job in Teaching	29
9 Things an Employer Seeks in a Job Candidate	33

Navigate the New Educational Job Market

Navigate the New Educational Job Market

The educational job market is becoming increasingly difficult to navigate, thanks to the economic downturn. Reports of educator job cuts have put a number 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, how to decode the job interview and navigate the interview venue, and ways to increase your marketability.

The first step in any job search is knowing where to look. The following websites were specifically chosen to help you get started. Some of these resources will help you write a résumé; post it and find jobs that fit your qualifications. The [NEA state affiliates](#) listing page also provides useful information for educational job seekers and can provide you with greater detail about a particular state and its districts.

Remember that even though websites are a significant part of your job search, they come and go regularly. Using the search parameter “teaching jobs” along with the name of the state or district in which you would like to be employed can go a long way towards helping you pin down other sources. And remember that campus career centers and your personal networks are invaluable in your search as well.

Educational Employment Resource Tools

[Teachers-Teachers.com](#)

Teachers-Teachers.com allows job seekers to post an online job application and to create an electronic résumé for free. The site then matches your qualifications to available jobs. After you apply for a job you can use the site to track your search. A state-by-state list of websites that detail teacher certification requirements is featured on the homepage.

[SchoolSpring.com](#)

Free for job seekers, this site lets you search for jobs by location, category and grade levels. You can sign up for alerts on new openings. The site also lists job fairs by state and includes international job listings. All listings include information on how to apply.

Other online sources similar to teachers-teachers.com and include:

- [EducationAmerica.net](#)
- [TeacherJobs.com](#)
- [TeachingJobs.com](#)

Some of the content-specific organizations now have career and job search sites. They include:

- [Cecsped.org](#) (special education)
- [Reading.org](#)
- [Actfl.org](#) (foreign language teachers)
- [Ncte.org](#) (English teachers)

Navigate the New Educational Job Market

AAEE.org

The American Association for Employment in Education maintains a wealth of resources including their annual edition of The Job Search Handbook for Educators.

Teaching Abroad: Online Resources to Get Your Job Search Started for a Job Overseas

- Teachabroad.com
- Transitionsabroad.com
- Joyjobs.com
- Teachingopportunitiesabroad.com
- State.gov/www/about_state/schools/oteaching.html
- Acsi.org

International job fairs held in the U.S.

- Uni.edu/placement/overseas/
- Cois.org
- Acsi.org/jobs/USEduCalling/tabid/873/Default.aspx

About international job fairs

- Overseasdigest.com/teaching-abroad/teaching-abroad-job-fairs.htm

Employment in a Tough Economy

The teacher job market has become very tight since late 2008, including layoffs in many districts. Because teaching employs so many people, at so many levels, there will always be teaching jobs, but not necessarily in every teaching field and in every school. In a tough economy, the keys to getting a job include finding a position opening and having the right teacher certification/licensure. Next, your paperwork has to be perfect and your interviews have to be polished. Follow the steps in these articles to guide your teacher job search.

Educator Jobs Supply and Demand

According to 2011 [statistics](#) from the American Association for Employment in Education, some shortages of teachers remain in the fields of special education, mathematics, sciences, bilingual education, English as a second language and Spanish. Adding one of these fields as a certification area to your credentials will definitely increase your employability. Additionally, schools in some geographic areas are hiring teachers—consider the Sunbelt states, isolated rural areas and some urban areas. You may also want to consider an online search to determine which areas are still hiring large numbers of new teachers.

When jobs are available, your teacher certification, also known as teacher licensure, is critically important. You have to be fully certified/licensed for the state in which you plan to work when the job becomes available, and each state has its own requirements. For a complete list of states' departments of education and their qualifying requirements, go online to the Department of Education [website](#). [Teachers-Teachers.com](#) also serves as a free resource, matching districts' teaching needs with your qualifications.

Where Do You Start Your Job Search?

Whether you are a new graduate or a teacher who has been laid off, your college career center can still be of service to you. Go to the career center or access their services online through your alma mater's website. Colleges sponsor job fairs, so attend any in your area and in an area where you are willing to relocate. The center can help you write and edit your essential job search documents—the résumé, cover letter and portfolio—and may be able to offer you other services, such as mailing out letters of reference in a formal credentials file. Read the website to find out what your college offers before you make an appointment. If you have moved away from your college, you may want to try the career center of the college or university closest to you. The rules governing these resources differ at every institution. Occasionally online resources and on-campus events are free and available to the general public. Call ahead or check the website to determine if you are eligible to take advantage of these resources.

How Do You Locate Job Openings?

First, think about the state in which you want to work. Find that state's online teacher job site by doing a search (like Google) for "teaching jobs in _____". Each state has a site, but they vary in how jobs are posted. For a good example, visit [teachgeorgia.org](#).

Navigate the New Educational Job Market

National online clearinghouses feature extensive job listings. However, remember that these clearinghouses generally only list openings that school districts have paid to post. Do a web search for “teaching jobs” and you will get thousands of sites. For examples, go to teacherjobs.com, teaching-jobs.org, or schoolspring.com. Specialized professional associations have national websites with job openings specifically for educators. Check the one for your subject—[math](#), [reading](#) or [special education](#), among others. A social media site, such as LinkedIn, may serve you in your job search as well.

Districts often maintain their own websites and list job openings there. Check the districts’ websites every week in the fall semester and every day in the spring semester for jobs that start in August of the new school year.

What Else Exists Besides Online Job Searching?

Networking can help you find out about jobs that haven’t yet been posted, or that are available in districts that don’t post openings online. Consider reaching out to your college professors, the colleagues with whom you student taught, and any employed educators that you know. Let them know you’re looking for a position. Memberships in a local chapter of the NEA and in a professional association, like Phi Delta Kappa or Kappa Delta Pi, give you an automatic network of teachers in your area and state. Of course, some districts still use newspapers to advertise jobs, but make sure you supplement your search in the classifieds with an online search as well.

Register to be a substitute teacher. This gives you another way to “get your foot in the door” of a school district. Schools often need substitutes late in the school year, when hiring is also taking place, so don’t hesitate to work as a substitute immediately after graduation.

What is cold-calling? This means that you wear a career suit, and walk into a school district’s personnel office or a principal’s office with a cover letter and resume in hand. With all the budget cuts and layoffs in today’s schools, most administrators consider this a nuisance and will tell the job seeker to go the district’s website to apply via the regular channels. It might only be considered acceptable in a very small district or one searching for teachers late in the summer.

What About Job Fairs?

There are basically two types of job fairs, those where recruiters come to campuses, and those where candidates go to districts. Your college career center and the state websites can direct you to both. Campus job fairs are held well before most districts know their actual hiring needs, but you should still attend and always offer recruiters a copy of your résumé. Sometimes candidates get 5-15 minute screening interviews at campus job fairs. Recruiters are generally personnel directors and central office administrators, but may include building administrators.

At district job fairs, there are personnel directors, central office administrators, school-level administrators and teachers. You may get to talk with building-level principals and teachers in an informal setting. You may also be interviewed later in the day. Because of the economy, all employers are working to save time and money, and may interview you with a group of others who all want the same job—picture 4 candidates being interviewed by a team of 3 people. Or, you may get an individual interview with a team of teachers asking you questions. Be prepared for any type of interview in a job fair setting. Remember that the job fair is for a district, not just an

Navigate the New Educational Job Market

individual school, so if you are at a large job fair and interview for a position, it could be for a job at any of the district's schools.

Consider "online" or virtual job fairs. While not as common as campus and district fairs, they are growing. Go to aaee.org for an example.

What Do You Do When You Find a Job Opening?

Do your homework and learn everything you can about the district before you apply for a job, attend its job fair, or sit down for an interview. Once you find a job opening, apply exactly as the advertisement instructs. Follow their directions explicitly to ensure a chance at getting the job you want.

Because of teacher retirements and student enrollments, schools will continue to hire educators. As the educator job market becomes more and more competitive, the jobs will go to those who are fully qualified and have worked diligently on their job search and interview skills. Using a college career center, online resources, and networks that you develop will increase your chances of locating a desirable teaching position and winning a job interview.

Finding a teaching job may take a year, so start early and use as many networks as possible. Be especially diligent about searching in June, July and August, as schools may be doing more late hiring than ever before.

Recovering from a RIF to Get Your Next Teaching Job

Losing your job because of a Reduction in Force and budget cuts can be extremely demoralizing. However, the fact that you HAD a teaching job actually makes you more employable for your next teaching job. Use the following strategies to emphasize your past teaching experience as you job search.

1. Before the current school year ends:

- While still working in your district, meet with your department chair and any administrators who have seen you teach. Ask for letters of recommendation from them, and ask that the letters include specific references to your best teaching moments. It is much more powerful for a future employer to read a letter from someone who has seen you teach than from a former college professor, or a character reference.
- Clean and sort your teaching materials. Most teachers spend hundreds of dollars of their own money on teaching supplies, and the ones purchased with your money go with you to be used in your next classroom. The same is true about the original plans, units, curriculum maps and learning centers you have created. Take copies of everything, and keep those copies organized for your next classroom.
- Take pictures of your bulletin boards and learning centers. Put some of these pictures in your portfolio to explain how well organized your past classroom was.
- Consider having the media specialist in your school help you to make a 10-minute video clip of your teaching. Because of privacy laws, you may not be able to have students in the video, but a short clip of you delivering material might be a nice piece to add to your personal website. You can direct potential employers to view this clip with a line in your cover letter and on your resume. Again, follow school guidelines for this activity.
- Network with teachers of other grades for their best teaching ideas. You may end up in a new grade and need fresh ideas and materials. Build a library of teaching ideas. If other teachers are throwing away old copies of teaching magazines or materials, add them to your collection.
- While still teaching, use any extra vacation days or professional days to attend job fairs.
- Build a network of your current colleagues through social media. Consider a website, LinkedIn or a Facebook group as a support group. At the very least, keep everyone's contact information. Networking is critically important.
- Most importantly, keep teaching well. The best recommendation you can get is that even after finding out that you were released, you taught well and helped your current students.

Navigate the New Educational Job Market

2. After the school year ends

- Keep your professional memberships current (including the NEA). Use their offerings.
- Know that job searching is now your job, so plan to spend several hours a day doing online searches, visiting your alma mater's career center and contacting people.
- Take any free summer workshops that might be available to you since you worked in a district the past year. Even if the workshop is not exactly a fit for your teaching area, you never know when it will help you.
- Complete the required paperwork to be substitute teacher in as many area schools as possible.

3. Paperwork hints for the experienced, newly-RIFed teacher

- While it is not good to have gaps in your resume, your time spent as a teacher who was cut due to a RIF is understandable. In your cover letters, and on your resume, explain that you were released due to a Reduction in Force.
- While not employed as a teacher, you should do things that will help you grow as a teacher. Examples include: Take coursework, especially in a high-needs field, such as special education, math, science, Spanish or ESL. Take workshops. List all of the professional development activities completed on your resume.
- Be a volunteer. Serving as a classroom volunteer at your child's school may get you noticed by another administrator. Directing a school play, chaperoning events or serving as a speech contest judge all keep you visible in a school.

4. When you get an interview

- In any telephone or on-site interview, sell your past teaching experience. Have specific success stories ready to present that illustrate student achievement. Be positive about the teaching profession. Past behavior is the best predictor of future performance. If you are negative in the interview, or relate negative experiences, the employer will see you as negative.
- Stress your persistence. I recently met an outstanding teacher whose job was cut each of her first 3 years in teaching. She reported that in each interview she had after that, she stressed how much she learned in her one-year positions. She got hired!
- Do a "show and tell" in your interviews. Your well-organized portfolio should have wonderful examples of your work. Remember that you have more to offer because of your past teaching, even if it was just 1 to 3 years.

Navigate the New Educational Job Market

5. Other jobs available to you

- As time wears on without a teaching job, you will be considering other positions. As you conduct a job search, remember that your teaching skills are transferable. Many businesses need people with strong language skills, who can speak and write well. Teachers have these skills.
- Insurance companies, banks and sales companies hire teachers because they can organize material and explain it well.
- Stress your organizational and computer skills in an interview for any job. The health profession needs people who can greet patients, keep paperwork organized and be supportive. You can do this.
- Remember that having a bachelor's degree makes you more employable than a huge number of people. Your degree indicates your persistence. Being able to conduct research makes you more employable, and you certainly wrote some research papers to earn your college degree.

Final hints:

1. Now is the time to reach out to any and all contacts in education.
2. Read and follow the suggestions for anyone looking for a teaching job, then remember that your experience makes you a stronger candidate.
3. Consider professional help from a life coach or a career counselor.
4. Build a support group for yourself.
5. **Don't give up. You have a lot to offer.**

A 20-Point Checklist of Key Strategies for Your Next Teaching Job Search

- 1. Use national online networks** for find job openings, but also read state and local district websites.
- 2. Consider moving to an area that seeks new teachers**—urban areas, isolated rural areas and sunbelt states.
- 3. Consider teaching abroad** for the experience and the wonderful addition that brings to your resume.
- 4. Create perfect paperwork**—a resume, a cover letter and a portfolio.
- 5. Keep samples of the work you created in a past teaching position.** These make wonderful portfolio additions, and you can use them to explain your teaching in an interview.
- 6. Consider creating a website or using social media to highlight your teaching.** LinkedIn is a professional network that may be useful for you. Be careful with what can be “public” online. If you create a website of your teaching, list it on your resume and in your cover letter.
- 7. Attend job fairs**—both at your alma mater, neighboring universities and in school districts.
- 8. Dress professionally** at all job fairs and for interviews. Your clothes matter.
- 9. Practice answers to typical interview questions.** Write out answers and practice in front of a mirror. Participate in a mock interview at your campus or with an administrator at your current school.
- 10. Be able to share positive vignettes** about your experience with classroom management, differentiation, raising student achievement and test scores and being a leader.
- 11. Have a prepared answer** for what you bring to this job, this school and these students. What sets you apart?
- 12. Do your homework before an interview.** Have a question ready for the employer that shows you know their district. Asking about induction and professional development is always a good idea. Don't ask about anything that is already posted on their website, and salary and benefits are usually posted.
- 13. Do some follow-up.** Write thank you emails or send a note to those who interview you. Reiterate your interest in the position with something specific that you will bring to the position when hired.
- 14. Keep good records** of where you have applied, and what paperwork has been submitted to each potential employer.

Navigate the New Educational Job Market

15. Consider job searching to be your job right now. You should make a schedule for job searching, sending out resumes and preparing for interviews.

16. Seek out professional help. Use a job counselor. Your alma mater has a career center. Use that resource.

17. Network, network, network. This is NOT the time to drop professional memberships, but rather a time to use them.

18. Be positive. Remember that whenever a door closes, a window of opportunity can open. Enthusiasm and being nice are highly appreciated by employers.

19. Good teaching skills are transferable. You can market yourself to private schools, libraries, community colleges and businesses as a teacher or trainer.

20. Remain positive. With today's tight budgets, some districts will not be hiring until mid- to late summer or even early into the school year.

Navigate the New Educational Job Market

Get Your Paperwork in Order—Résumés, Portfolios, References and More

In a competitive job market, your paperwork has to be perfect, and that includes a resume, a cover letter, a portfolio, letters of recommendation and thank you notes. The resume 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, e-mail and phone. That is followed by your job objective and all pertinent teacher certifications/licenses that you hold. This should be brief. Here is 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.

Some strong resumes may have a personal statement of teaching, which is like a mission statement. This should be no longer than one line, and should state what you bring to the job. For example, “As a teacher with one year of experience, I bring enthusiasm, energy and a proven record of helping students succeed to my middle school classroom.”

Some candidates are now adding a line to their resume, 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 limited 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. 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 included, but extra hours taken at a community college do not 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

Navigate the New Educational Job Market

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:

Jefferson 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 resume. Any leadership roles you held or informal teaching you did over those years (scout leader, sports coach, substitute teacher, etc.) should also be listed. An educator's resume is different than a business resume. 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 2 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 also include a cover letter. The cover letter is a 1-page document with 3 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 have completed. It ends with your declaration of interest to interview in the district.

Navigate the New Educational Job Market

Guard against typos by asking at least 2 people to read and edit each letter you send. Since most people create a template for their letters, make sure that the right cover letter goes to the correct district. It is very important to sign the cover letter legibly, since employers want to know that their teachers have legible handwriting.

Crack the Interview Code

The days of teacher interviews beginning with “Tell me about yourself,” and ending with “Where do you see yourself in 5 years?” are long over. Today’s savvy administrators use behavior-based interviewing (BBI) as a means to select the best candidates for teaching jobs. The more you know about this interview style, the better prepared you will be to demonstrate your teaching skills to a future employer.

What Is BBI?

Long used in the business world to create a more objective interview, behavior-based interviewing is built on the premise that past behavior is the best predictor of future performance. School administrators decide the knowledge, skills and experiences needed for a candidate to be successful in each individual teaching position. They write a set of questions based on these qualifications and ask each candidate the same questions. BBI-style questions are built on the basic skills and knowledge needed to teach. So expect questions about curriculum, planning, teaching methods, classroom management, assessment, differentiation, communication with parents and professionalism. The questions will be phrased in a way that will require you to answer with anecdotal evidence based on your past experiences. For example, BBI-style questions begin with “tell me about a time when,” “how have you,” “describe how you have,” or “explain how you.” When interviewers ask a question, they are looking for you to tell them what you know about the topic by explaining your successes in that area.

Sample questions include:

- **Curriculum:** Describe how you have implemented a standards-based curriculum in a classroom.
- **Planning:** Describe a typical lesson plan that you have used and why it was successful.
- **Teaching methods:** Tell me about an effective method to teach _____ that you have found to work. (reading, writing, math, Spanish, etc.)
- **Classroom management:** Explain a classroom management plan that you have used and why it was successful (rules, positives, corrective actions). Describe a classroom where you have taught and how it was organized for positive management (arrangement, procedures, etc.).
- **Assessment:** How do you assess students formally and informally? How have you used assessment in a standards-based classroom?
- **Differentiation:** Tell me about a lesson where you differentiated instruction for students and why it worked. How have you provided opportunities for all students to learn?
- **Communication with parents:** What methods of communicating with parents have you used that worked? Why?
- **Professionalism:** What have you done to stay current in your field?

Questions for specific teaching jobs are designed to ascertain if the candidate has the particular skills necessary for the position. For example, elementary teachers will be asked about methods used to teach reading. Middle school teachers will be asked about team-teaching. High school teachers will be asked specific questions about teaching their disciplines. Be prepared for any “hot topic” questions, such as the standards-based classroom, differentiated instruction or response to intervention (RTI). Additionally, future employers will ask about your experiences with students who match the demographics of the position opening. Be prepared to discuss your work with at-risk, special education or ESOL students if that matches the needs of the new job.

Navigate the New Educational Job Market

The PAR and STAR Answer Techniques

PAR and STAR serve as acronyms for techniques that can help to guide your answers. PAR stands for Problem, Action and Result. When asked a question, describe the problem you have seen or experienced, then the action taken, and the result of the action. For example, if you are asked, “Describe a lesson that didn’t go well and why,” your answer should be something like this:

“While student teaching, I prepared a math lesson about adding fractions. As I taught, I realized my students didn’t know the basics of fractions and were confused. I changed the plan as I went, and implemented a review of the basics. Then, we went on to adding fractions. I learned to assess prior knowledge and not assume students know material that was supposed to have been covered earlier.”

Hopefully, not all of the questions you will be asked will be about problems. When they are not, you can structure your answer around STAR—Situation, Task, Action and Result. When asked about classroom management, open your portfolio and explain how you observed the teacher with whom you student taught organize her classroom and teach a management plan with rules and procedures. Then explain how you used the same plan for your lead teaching and will start with that successful plan when hired—this constitutes the action. Using the visual to highlight specifics could help you tremendously while you deliver your PAR and STAR responses.

Should you be prepared with some “vignettes” and stories from your student teaching or early teaching experience to share in interviews? Absolutely. Think about experiences you have had that fit neatly into the PAR or STAR format, and say them into a mirror or to a friend. Time yourself, as a nice 1-2 minute answer conveys your clarity—a necessary skill for educators. Have a colleague ask you the questions listed above and practice answering all of them.

What if the interviewer doesn’t use behavior-based interviewing and asks hypothetical questions, or ones used to glean your personality characteristics? If you are asked a hypothetical question, and you’ve experienced the situation, answer with a BBI-style answer anyway, since this answer technique will allow you to sell your expertise. Since no teacher, new or veteran, has experienced everything, you can answer with a related situation, your field experience observations, or discussions from a college class.

Questions regarding your age, country of origin, race, religion, marital status or children are not permissible by law. It is not recommended that you volunteer any of that information, either, unless doing so points directly to your professional teaching skills. For example, if you were a stay-at-home mom for 8 years, but during that time coordinated parent training seminars, it’s worth mentioning, since it evidences teaching experience.

Lastly, have some questions ready for the interviewer, as most will ask you at the end of the interview if you have any questions. If not already explained by the interviewer, good questions include:

- What professional development activities are available?
- Will I be assigned a mentor and be offered seminars in a new teacher induction program?
- Will I be able to work in my classroom before the orientation meetings for teachers?

Questions that demonstrate your knowledge of the district and of the position indicate that you have researched the school. As the interview closes, you will want to reiterate your interest in the position and your desire to work in the district.

From Job Fairs to Phone Chats: Know Your Interview Venue

Online, telephone and job fair interviews are used by school districts to screen applicants and increase the likelihood of selecting the best possible candidates to invite for on-site interviews. This means you shouldn't take these short, structured sessions lightly. Make it your goal to stand out in a positive way and better your chances of being called in for a face-to-face interview.

How can an interview be online?

If you are searching for a job in a large district, in another state, or a job teaching abroad, the online application process may include interview-type questions. These questions will be answered online, or perhaps recorded by telephone, to be listened to by an employer at a later date. A few districts may be using "live chats" via the Internet, which include video cameras, and we should expect more of this type of interviewing in the future. Of course, the newest generation of phones has cameras, so telephone interviews can now include a video component.

Hints for answering online interview questions:

- Your typing matters. If possible on the district's form, create your answers in a word processing program and use spell-check and other editing programs before pasting the answers into the form.
- Have someone else read your answers before sending them in. If that is not possible, type in your answers, wait some time and then re-read and edit them yourself.
- Be succinct. Remember PAR and STAR from the earlier section. Use short vignettes to describe your teaching accomplishments. Future employers want to know about your successes.
- If asked a question in an online format, do not simply write, "see my website for my philosophy." If you have a website, or an electronic portfolio, you may direct the reader to those resources as an extra for them, but answer questions directly.

The online, telephone or job fair interview typically consists of 4 or 5 questions asked of each candidate. Sample questions include:

- Tell me about your teaching experience (with a particular grade and/or subject).
- Describe a lesson that you have taught that went well.
- Tell me about positive classroom management rules or strategies that you have used.
- Name one accomplishment that characterizes your work.
- Tell me about a challenge or problem you faced as an educator that you resolved successfully.

It is important to create answers to these questions and to practice them aloud. Try out your answers on a friend, or a colleague in teaching. Time your answers. Most candidates talk too long and add too many irrelevant details. Strive for a 1 to 2 minute answers that are very specific, and that describe a teaching success.

Navigate the New Educational Job Market

The Telephone Interview

As you begin your job search, make sure the voice mail message on your telephone is a professional one. This message should not have jokes about partying, loud background noise or a crazy song. When employers call, make the time to talk with them in a quiet environment. If they call your cell phone number, you may ask to reschedule for a time when you can speak to them without distractions.

If there is something in your past education or teaching experience that makes you stand out, make sure to say it in the interview. One student teacher said that she could tell the interviewer was merely going through the motions until she mentioned her student teaching semester abroad. That caught the employer's attention, and she won an on-site interview and a job.

Job Fair Interviews

The big advantage of the job fair interview is that you are there in person, and your body language, professional attire and enthusiasm can work to your advantage. Always dress professionally for a job fair. Men should wear suits, preferably dark and conservative ones. Khakis with an oxford shirt, tie and sport jacket are also acceptable, but a suit is better. Women may wear a tailored pantsuit or a suit with a skirt. The skirt length should be moderate and conservative—not short or ankle-length. All of your professional clothes should be clean and pressed. Shoes should be comfortable for standing at the fair all day, and must be polished. Looking good is important, but looking professional is key.

You should carry a briefcase with your portfolio and pen and pad for taking notes. You should also bring plenty of copies of your résumé to distribute. If you know ahead of time which districts are at the fair, add personalized cover letters to the résumés and distribute to those districts. Districts will hand out applications, which need to go in your briefcase. You will also collect business cards, which are very important when you write thank-you notes and send follow-up paperwork.

Also, make sure you get a good night's sleep the night before you interview. Don't look tired. Stay hydrated and upbeat so that employers know you have the energy to interview (and teach) all day. Job fairs, in addition to being tiring, can be stressful. So prepare well in advance to quell nervousness. Remember, schools are afraid that they won't have the best teachers when they open their doors in the fall. Demonstrate you are one of the best.

On-Site Interviews

Arrive 15 minutes early for an on-site interview and use your best professional language and manners with everyone you meet. An administrator once said he would never hire anyone whose grammar was poor in the interview, or who failed to introduce themselves and be polite to all the support staff. The professional dress code rules for job fair interviews apply to on-site interviews, too, as do the guidelines for the briefcase and portfolio.

As questions are asked, answer according to the [PAR and STAR models](#). Use your portfolio as a visual aid. Be nice. Smile. Share teaching stories that indicate you are qualified and experienced. If the interviewer invites you for a school tour, or to shadow a teacher, say "yes." Always have plenty of time for the interview and never take a cell phone call while you are there. Make sure your childcare or other obligations are completely covered.

Navigate the New Educational Job Market

Sometimes a potential employer will ask why they should hire you over dozens of other applicants. Have an answer ready. Being prepared mentally for the interview is paramount. Remember that everyone in the school is listening to and watching you during your on-site visit. So everything you say and do should exemplify your best.

The Second On-Site Interview

While second interviews are not very common, a district may ask you to come for a preliminary interview at a personnel office, followed by a second interview, on another day, at the school. If this is the case, the first on-site interview is a sorting interview to narrow the candidates. When invited back for a second-round interview, be sure to ask about who will be interviewing, and if teaching or a presentation is required.

What may happen during a second interview? You may be asked to observe a teacher's class and then meet with a committee of teachers in the grade level or subject area. You may be asked to say hello to a class and to explain your favorite topic to teach to them. Of course, the best way to see how you teach is for the future employer to ask you to teach a lesson. If this is the case, you will be informed about specifics of the lesson and given information about what to teach. If no students are in attendance, the committee may ask you to present about a topic, or to present as if the teachers in the room were your students. Use your best teaching skills and enjoy the experience! While teaching with, or to, observers is stressful, remember that you want to teach, so pretend that they are just students who want to learn from you.

Sometimes second-round interviews may include lunch in the cafeteria or attending a teachers' meeting. Be prepared for a full day and accept all invitations to learn more about the school.

In today's market, employers may have to eliminate 90% of the candidates who apply. Online questions, telephone interviews, job fair interviews and even first-round interviews are used to sort and select candidates. Imagine that you were hiring a new teacher for your own child. You would be equally thorough, right?

Navigate the New Educational Job Market

Be the Job Candidate You Want to Be

What can you do if you do not get a teaching job immediately after you've earned your teaching credentials? How do you get back into a teaching position if you temporarily set aside your career? The best advice is to stay connected to teaching in as many ways as possible, and to keep learning new things that make you more employable. Here are some tips to help you increase your marketability, get closer to being the job candidate you want to be, and make an easier transition back into your chosen career.

Keep your teaching license current. Do whatever you can to remain a fully certified teacher in your state. This may mean completing paperwork every 3 years, or taking a certain number of professional development hours. But this is important, since only a teacher with a license is employable.

Network. Stay connected to professional associations. Maintain your membership in the NEA and at least one other professional association. Membership in a specialized professional organization, such as the International Reading Association, the National Council for Teachers of Mathematics, or the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, will provide you with journals, professional development conferences, job postings and networking opportunities.

The professional associations all have websites. Consider reading them or contributing to them as an author. You might even use LinkedIn or Facebook to stay connected with professors and teachers with whom you have worked.

When soliciting help from your associates, rather than inquiring if they know of any open positions, request their advice on how best to conduct your search. Ask if they know of someone who may be able to help you better refine your search or provide additional pointers on how to navigate a career transition to or from education.

You may also want to consider working as a substitute teacher, especially if doing so allows you the opportunity to attend district workshops with other teachers. You could also think about working as a para-professional/teacher's aide for the same reason.

Enhance your skills and qualifications. Focus on courses that will lead to additional endorsements to your teaching credentials. While the job markets in individual states vary, many schools seek teachers who have additional coursework in special education, ESL/ESOL, Spanish, gifted education, reading, math and science. Check with your local college for areas with a high demand for educators, and find out what you may need to add to your certification/license. In some states, regional education offices offer free, or low cost, professional development seminars. If possible, attend these events and add them to your résumé.

Consider a private school environment. You may not teach in your primary area of teacher certification, but you are gaining more experience. Many private preschools need part-time teachers, so you may be able to work part-time and get low cost or free care for your own children.

Become a tutor. There is growth in private tutoring businesses, so you may be able to work as a tutor for a company in your city. You may also find work as a tutor for a school district. Additionally, you may want to consider starting your own tutoring service.

Navigate the New Educational Job Market

Relocate. Moving is difficult for some teachers, but a move to a Sunbelt state that is still facing teacher shortages can be a great career step. Remember that you must get your teaching license for that state in order to be qualified to teach there. A state's requirements are available online from the state's department of education. Use a public search engine, go to Teachers-Teachers.com or visit NEA.org for a list of the 50 state departments of education.

Look into the business world. Many companies have internal training and development departments to teach employees about everything from computer systems to compliance procedures. There are also companies that specialize in offering training to large corporations. It is possible large industrial, insurance, technology or pharmaceutical companies in your area have a training department or check your local yellow pages for training companies.

Consider job opportunities at libraries and community colleges. Libraries and community colleges need employees who can teach, do research and help clients. Many community colleges also need part-time instructors, and may hire them as late as the first week of class. If you have a master's degree, you may also want to consider being a community college adjunct instructor. Ultimately, you may be able to sub during the day and teach two nights a week at a community college.

Work at a college or university. This may be the time for you to earn your graduate degree. Some universities offer free tuition if you work 20 hours a week for them. As a teacher, you may qualify to work as a tutor, a student teaching supervisor or a teaching assistant. Contact local colleges to find out what positions may be available. Working in student services or student recruitment keeps you tied to current events on campus as well.

Expand your horizons: teach abroad. If you have the flexibility and are in search of an adventure, consider going abroad to teach English for a year or two. Many jobs are available in Asian countries for English teachers able and willing to work and live abroad. Most recruiters for international jobs are searching a year in advance. So reach out to recruiters early even if you are only considering this as a distant possibility.

Monitor your online profile. As you prepare to apply for jobs, be aware that many employers may also look online to see what they can find out about you. It has become common for school employers to go to Facebook and MySpace to see if you have a page. If they find one, it is likely they'll read it and include its contents in their overall assessment. Pages with inappropriate messages, pictures or videos may prevent you from getting an interview. Screen and edit anything that is posted online about you. A simple Google search and a review of your friends' and colleagues' social networking pages is a good place to start.

Once hired, keep good records. Once you are hired, or re-hired, keep records for creating your next portfolio. Sample lesson plans, a curriculum map, student work samples and proof of completion of professional development workshops should be kept. The next time you need to job search, you can update your resume and make a new portfolio very quickly by pulling out your records.

Sample Interview Questions with Helpful Hints for Answers

Icebreakers

- Tell me something about yourself that is not on your résumé.
- What events brought you to this interview today?
- Why do you want to be a teacher, and why did you apply to our district?

Be prepared to introduce yourself in any interview. Do not tell your life story, but rather describe one unique aspect of your professional training, student teaching, or earlier teaching jobs. Do your homework about the district, so that you can have a specific answer regarding why you want to work there.

Early Childhood

- Describe an activity that is developmentally appropriate for five-year olds, but that would be too difficult for a younger child.
- Young children often cry when dropped off for school. How have you dealt with this in the past?
- How have you incorporated play and movement into lessons?

Consider talking about classroom organization strategies for getting students into the room and settled. Talk about routines and procedures, and how they help young children.

Elementary Grades

- What approaches have you used to teach reading?
- Tell about working with non-readers in a class.
- How have you prepared students to take standardized tests?
- Describe writing activities that have worked well for this age group.

Whenever you interview for a position teaching elementary grades, you will be asked about all aspects of literacy. Be prepared to describe a reading series you have used, with specific examples of strategies that have worked.

- What strategies have you used to transition children from one lesson or activity to another?
- What motivates students to behave? How have you rewarded students in the past?
- Describe a classroom where you have worked. How was it arranged and how did the arrangement help you to teach?

Talk about, and show from your portfolio, a classroom management plan.

Navigate the New Educational Job Market

Middle Grades

- How have you integrated subjects together in a lesson?
- Tell about working with a team of teachers.
- How have you taught reading and/or writing skills across the curriculum?
- Tell about your preparation or experience working with adolescents to help them with personal issues that are a part of middle school (sex ed, stress management, relationships, growing up, etc.).

Middle school really is different than elementary or high school teaching. Be prepared to talk about adolescent development and the social needs of this age group. Many middle schools operate with teaching teams, so highlight your experiences with team planning.

High School, General

- How have you encouraged students to stay in school and graduate?
- What is a current trend in the teaching of your subject, and how have you dealt with this trend?
- Describe a lesson that would fit a traditional 50-minute lesson. Or, describe a lesson that would fit into a 90-minute blocked class.
- What kinds of stressors do today's high school students face, and how have you helped them to cope with their concerns?

Think about these questions and have an answer ready that addresses motivational factors of teenagers, since knowing the students is the first step in teaching them. When you describe a lesson, discuss how you focus and motivate students each day.

- Describe a classroom where you have worked. How was it arranged and how did the arrangement help you to teach?
- Describe a classroom management plan that you have used.

All employers want to know that you can set up a classroom with routines and procedures, and can establish rules with corrective actions and positive feedback (rewards). Show a management plan from your portfolio and describe your experiences from student teaching or a former classroom.

Navigate the New Educational Job Market

Questions by Subject Areas for Upper Elementary, Middle and High School

The best hint for how to answer these subject-specific questions is to talk with a veteran teacher in the field, a college professor or your student teaching supervisor. In today's competitive job market, candidates really do need to reflect on possible answers and actually practice what they will say in the interview.

English/Language arts

- How have you kept students interested in reading in your classes?
- How have you incorporated vocabulary and study skills for standardized tests, including ACT/SAT, into your lessons?

Mathematics

- How have you worked to combat students' fear of math?
- Talk about the use of calculators and other technology in math classes.
- How have you handled homework issues?

Science

- Tell about the use of labs or hands-on activities in your science classes.
- Tell about your teaching experience in biology with controversial issues.
- How have you motivated students to like science and to take advanced classes?

History/Social Studies

- What methods have you used to teach, besides lecturing?
- How have you accommodated, or helped, weak readers with the materials to be read for your classes?
- What are some current trends for your subject area?

Foreign Languages

- How much of your lessons are taught in the language? Why?
- Describe your approach to teaching grammar.
- How have you incorporated culture into your lessons?

Art

- Describe how you have worked with regular classroom art teachers to incorporate, or keep, art in the curriculum.
- How have you encouraged students who are not necessarily artistically gifted?
- How do you assess and grade students' art work?

Navigate the New Educational Job Market

Health/Physical Education

- How have you built weight consciousness topics into your courses?
- How have you encouraged out-of-shape students to participate in sports activities?
- Describe your experiences working with large groups of students in a gym or on a field.

Special Education Questions

In general, special education questions will deal with populations of students (what kinds of issues they have), settings for delivery of classes, methods of teaching, and strategies for collaboration and communication with constituents (parents, teachers, administrators). The vocabulary for special education is highly specific and many acronyms exist, so if you are asked a question with an abbreviation or term you do not recognize, ask for clarification. This is especially true if you were trained in one state and are now moving.

- Describe your experiences working with _____. (An employer will ask about special populations—students with autism, students with ADD/ADHD and any or all other categories.)
- Describe your work with students exhibiting marked impulsivity (or other specific issue).
- Tell about your experience working with students in another teacher’s classroom (mainstreaming).
- Describe your experience with a pull-out program.
- Describe your work with one student’s IEP (individualized education program).
- How have you modified lesson for learners? Be specific with your examples.
- How have you incorporated technology into lessons or into an individual student’s program?
- How have you modified a physical environment to assist a student?
- Describe positive communications that you have had with parents.
- Describe positive communications that you have had with other teachers and administrators regarding your students.

What’s the bottom line? What do employers really want to learn about you in the interview? They want to know that you can organize and manage a classroom. They want to know that you can raise student achievement. They want to know that you can work well with colleagues and parents. Share specific past success stories so that the employer feels confident that you will have future success when hired.

FAQs about Getting a Job in Teaching

Q. When should I start my job search if I want to work in August?

A. It can take up to a year to find a teaching job in this economy. Start your search by finding the right websites for the state where you want to teach, and at least one national website that is useful to you. Read a lot of school district websites. Find out what your college career center can offer you, even if you graduated years ago. Start soliciting letters of recommendation. Create a resume, a cover letter and a portfolio. Read at least one book on getting a teaching job. Create a network of friends and colleagues to edit your paperwork and counsel you in your search. Update your professional memberships.

Q. Are there books to read about getting a teaching job?

A. Yes, go to one of the online bookstores (for example, Barnes&Noble.com), and search “[teacher job search](#).” While there are many books about job searching, resume writing and interviewing in general, job searches for teachers are quite different than ones for the business world, and your money will be best spent on a book specifically for teacher jobs. Also, go to <http://www.aeee.org/> for their annual publication, “Job Search Handbook for Educators.”

Q. Is the job market as bad as it sounds? Aren’t many districts still laying off teachers?

A. In a tight economy, the job market is not as strong as in the past. However, teaching remains high on the list of jobs with relatively good job security, and there will be job openings due to retirements and student growth in some areas. The best advice is to get, and maintain, your teaching certification/licensure, and to always be searching the web for jobs in the areas where you want to work.

Q. I have stayed home for almost 6 years with my small children. Does this hurt my chances of re-entering the job market at this time?

A. Employers know that women make up three-fourths of the job market, and that teaching is considered the “family-friendly” profession. As a stay-at-home mom, have you done any work, including volunteer work, that might be added to your new resume? Also, taking some seminars or a class during this time would be a good addition to your resume. You never have to tell employers about family issues, and they can’t ask, but you may have gained some valuable experiences from raising your own children that will make you a better candidate for a job. Spend some time rehearsing how you’ll discuss your time spent out of the workforce and how you’ll reply to questions you may be asked. Having a short list of specific experiences that you can use as examples is always a good idea.

Q. After 15 years in the business world, I went back to college to become a teacher. I’m almost 40, and am concerned that a school will prefer to hire a 22-year-old graduate. What are my chances at getting a job?

A. Many new hires are career changers, and school administrators welcome experts from the business world who can share a variety of experiences with students. Summarize your business experience succinctly on your resume, and be clear about how you have earned full teacher certification before seeking a job. Employers are

Navigate the New Educational Job Market

seeking fully-certified, articulate, candidates who have completed student teaching. Your maturity may work in your favor. Don't say you are entering the teaching force for an "easier" job that is just 8:00 to 3:00 or for the vacation time!

Q. I worked 2 years as a new teacher before experiencing a layoff. Because my spouse is employed, and we are fairly new homeowners, I can't move. What are my options?

A. Have you considered a private school, a library or a community college for part-time work? Can you go back and finish another degree for additional certifications? If you don't find education related employment, always keep your teacher certification current and maintain professional memberships. These things will help you get a job later.

Q. Should I get my master's now, or will that make me too expensive and less employable in the future?

A. The majority of teachers now have a master's degree. School districts must prove that they have highly-qualified teachers, and having a master's degree, especially one in a subject matter field, may make you more employable. The best advice is to earn your master's degree when you have the opportunity, as sometimes life's experiences prevent us from being able to go back to college.

Q. Everyone says that special education teachers are still being hired. I have an endorsement to teach special education, but prefer a job in a regular early elementary classroom. Should I take a job I don't want to eventually get one that I do want?

A. Only you can answer this question, depending on how badly you need a job and what is available where you live and work. Your resume can state, "Seeking a position in early elementary teaching, K-3. Additional endorsement for special education." Most schools that hire you will probably place you in a "regular" classroom with inclusion students. District guidelines on how veteran teachers are assigned to classes vary widely, but be sure to read the district's policies about voluntary and involuntary transfers. You generally have a contract for a district, not one individual school. See your NEA rep with specific questions about assignments after you have worked in a district. The same advice

Q. Do the national websites charge for their services? Are they like "headhunters" in the business world?

A. Many websites offer programs to match candidates to schools with openings. The owners of the site are making money by charging the schools that advertise openings, not by charging the candidates. Read everything on the website before signing up. Remember that not all openings are posted on commercial sites, especially when budgets are tight. Go to state and local district websites and read them frequently—at least once a week.

Q. The teaching jobs that are available seem to have larger class sizes, more preparations and even more extra-duties. Many jobs are in "tough" schools with low-achieving students. If I take one of these jobs, will I be able to eventually work into a better situation?

A. Today's teachers certainly do have challenges, and the budget constraints have not helped. It is best to view teaching as a public service, and to take on the challenges. Achieving success in any teaching situation is what will help you to get your next teaching position.

Navigate the New Educational Job Market

Q. I have heard that employers go to Facebook or other sites to find out about the lives of applicants. Can they do this?

A. Yes, employers can, and do, go to these public sites to see if there is anything about you online. Clean up your accounts and remember that everything that is public can be viewed. Be very careful about your postings and those of your friends on your site.

Q. My student teaching was very difficult and my teacher did not rate my performance highly. How can I work around this negative evaluation?

A. Your student teaching evaluation is rarely part of your application or credentials file. You choose the people who serve as your references and you choose the writers of your letters of recommendation. Hopefully, a letter from your college supervisor, and other former college professors, will highlight your strengths. If asked directly why your cooperating teacher did not write a letter, you may say that the assignment was a challenging one, and that your college supervisor's letter covers your work during that semester. You may want to add a letter from a former employer, possibly from a summer job or an on-campus job. Employers want to know that you are reliable, and those letters will hopefully offset the lack of one from your student teaching experience.

Q. Once I am offered a job, how long will I have to decide if I am going to accept it? I am hoping for an offer from another district, and want to stall the first district as long as possible.

A. While candidates are always worried about not getting jobs, employers are also worried about starting the school year without enough qualified teachers. An employer will probably give you a deadline, 3 to 4 days, and then they will want to hear from you. Some districts mail out letters of intent immediately after offering you the job, and those letters state a date by which you must reply. While a letter of intent is not a contract, it should be considered a legal document.

Q. When interviewing for a position, how much of the contract is negotiable? Could I request a special arrangement if I am in a high needs field, like science? Can I request no extra-curricular duties my first year?

A. Districts have contracts that cover all teachers, and these contracts are negotiated by the teachers' unions and/or professional associations. These contracts exist to protect teachers. Negotiating individual "deals" is rarely done in teaching. However, you should be given all the information needed to make a decision about accepting a job. You may ask about extra-curricular duties and where you will be teaching (not all new teachers get their own classrooms). Districts have published guidelines about signing bonuses, which are rare, and other incentives for new hires.

Q. What is your best advice on getting a teaching job in today's market?

A. Start your search early. Make all of your paperwork error free. Use online and professional networks. Practice for your interviews by creating some vignettes that describe your teaching successes. Dress professionally for on-site interviews. Make sure that nothing embarrassing about you is available publicly online.

Navigate the New Educational Job Market

Q: *With so many teachers in my state experiencing layoffs, usually called a RIF, Reduction in Force, do I have any chance at a job next year?*

A. The answer is, “It all depends.” Some teachers are re-hired late in the summer by their former employers. Others start a job search in another state, or in an urban area of their state. It is important to remember that being employed as a teacher last year is your number one selling point when you job search for next year. Read the other sections on this site for updating your paperwork and preparing for interviews so that you are ready for the next job opportunity.

Q: *I have heard that new graduates are putting video clips of their teaching on personal websites, and directing employers to watch them teach. Should I do this? I am a teacher with a few years of experience who now needs to job search.*

A. You have to be careful with this. The privacy rules that schools have may not permit you to video a classroom with students in it. You may be able to make a video showcasing a presentation, or what your classroom looks like, and while showing the room you can explain your management procedures and rules. That might really impress a future employer. Check with your current administration and media specialist about doing this.

9 Things an Employer Seeks in a Job Candidate

Don't walk into a job interview without the proper preparation. In a job market where school administrators can hire from the top 5 to 10% of the applicants, it is important to know what administrators seek in a new hire.

1. A good first impression. Employers want to hire professionals. Your attire, your speech, your mannerisms and even your handshake are being evaluated. Principals know that their impression of you will be the same as the parents' first impression, and teachers represent the school at all times. Parents will complain about a teacher's dress, hair and lack of organization or poise. Therefore, principals want to hire someone who will not garner parent complaints. Hint: Practice an interview with an administrator at your current school or the director of your college career center during student teaching. Look great when you interview. Be poised and positive.

2. Classroom management. A school administrator's biggest fear is hiring a new teacher whose room will be chaotic. Have a classroom management plan with rules, positive reinforcements and corrective actions in your portfolio. Be ready to share how you established routines and procedures in a previous classroom. Practice your answers to questions about management and discipline because you will be asked these questions.

3. Differentiation. Sometimes it seems that every classroom has become an old-fashioned one-room country school, with students progressing at varying academic levels. You will be asked how you have differentiated instruction, so be ready to speak to that question and to show an example from your portfolio. Principals need to know that you have had experience with students of varying academic levels in one classroom and that you have met their needs.

4. Raising student achievement and test scores. Schools are graded on how well their students perform, and as a teacher you will be graded on your students' test scores. In your interview, be sure to talk about your experience preparing students for standardized tests. Provide concrete examples of how individual student achievement increased, or how overall scores increased in a previous classroom or in student teaching. Hint: Share an example in your portfolio with all identities removed.

5. Flexibility. Employers need to hire teachers who can teach more than one grade level and/or subject. Job seekers who stress their interest and experience in multiple areas are much more desirable. While many elementary teachers are licensed to teach kindergarten through 6th grade, some only list kindergarten through 2nd grade as their job objective. This limits job opportunities.

6. Growth into a leadership position. Many schools have lead teachers for grade levels and department chairs. Share your past experience in leadership roles to inform the employer of your potential to grow into a leadership role once hired. Examples: Serving as a dorm counselor in college is a leadership role, as is being an officer in your college sorority or fraternity. Perhaps you worked as a manager in a previous job, or have served your church or a community organization.

7. Completing paperwork on time. Principals do not want to babysit their teachers. They do not want to have faculty members who are late with grades or required paperwork. Think of an example of how you have met deadlines and completed large tasks and be ready to share that example in an interview. If you haven't led a big project in a school, but did so in your previous job or college experience, talk about that.

Navigate the New Educational Job Market

8. Being strong enough to earn tenure. New hires should remember that administrators want their teachers to succeed. Retention of quality teachers is always a priority for schools. Having to release a weak teacher is a time-consuming and difficult task for an administrator. Principals with high teacher turnover rates often get lower evaluations themselves, so they want to hire quality people who can earn tenure. Share an example of your longevity at a summer job, previous job or your continued service in an organization to demonstrate your persistence.

9. Being pleasant, positive and nice. It is important to be enthusiastic about being a teacher. As one administrator said, “I need to know that my new hires are on-fire and ready to get students to accomplish big things. I have enough burned-out teachers. I need energetic new people to lead the way.” Principals do not want to hire a teacher who will garner complaints from other teachers with a negative attitude. Be positive, pleasant and nice—which is also being a professional. Hint: The school’s support staff/secretaries will often report a candidate’s behavior to the principal, so be professional to everyone you meet in an interview.

About Dr. Mary C. Clement

Dr. Mary C. Clement is a professor of teacher education at Berry College, northwest of Atlanta, Georgia. Her research on the hiring of new teachers has received national recognition. She is the author of “The Definitive Guide to Getting a Teaching Job” and “First Time in the High School Classroom.”