

# Get That Teaching Job!

 Checklist of Strategies Finalists Use

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[Teacher Express Applicant Coaching Services](#)

## Content Bookmarks

[Applications](#) [Cover Letters](#) [Resumes](#) [Search](#) [Pre-Apply](#) [Interviews](#)

*(Embedded links reference resources for further discussion, descriptions, examples, charts, and rubrics)*

Still searching for your dream job? As you know, there is much competition and your application must be selected before you are invited for an interview.

Ever wonder how applications stand out? What specific actions can you take that lead to interviews? How can you make reviewers find you?

**Problem solved!** Use this checklist and be a finalist! Tasks not completed yet probably describe actions that will help you the most. Use this free resource to instantly learn how to become a stronger applicant!

## Prepare Your Application

### Before You Apply

- 1. Believe in your heart that you are different, that you can make a difference, and that you will get your own classroom. If you believe - and work hard at it - dreams can come true! As encouragement, please know that indicators suggest many teachers will be needed in the near future. Get Ready! ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Page 6; Article [How Teachers Are Hired](#))
  
- 2. Visit the Human Resources Office web page in each district before you apply. Review and follow their instructions exactly. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 8, 12, 20)
  
- 3. Expect applications to be ranked by computers, humans, or both before they are read. Numerical fields (GPA, dates of graduation, Praxis scores, etc.) and important text fields (areas of certification, etc.) are often used to quickly screen applications. Most will be placed aside; only the most promising will be considered further. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 8, 14, 15, 16, 29; Article [How Districts Screen Applications](#))
  
- 4. Select your references carefully and submit only the strongest letters. Share the names of other references for telephone referrals if they are not as strong on paper. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 10, 34)
  
- 5. Be patient - the screening, interviewing, and hiring process takes time. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 8, 9, 10, 11)

- 6. Review your digital footprint. Districts often research Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and other sites to learn more about the applicants. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Page 58)
  
- 7. Follow Up! If you have not heard anything about your application two weeks after the deadline, call the Human Resources Office to inquire about the status of their search. Ask if they have begun screening applications or if they have invited applicants for interviews yet. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 9, 84)
  
- 8. If you were interviewed for a position but learn that another individual was hired, contact one member of the interview team to ask what you might do differently next time. Approach each interview, and even rejection, as a learning opportunity. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Page 83)
  
- 9. Do your homework! Research every district before you apply! Read their mission statement and shared beliefs. Learn what is important to them. Identify with their successes and challenges. Read their objectives or goals. This should be done BEFORE you write your cover letter. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 20, 21)

## Get Organized

- 10. Create a special folder on your computer where you will create and save your cover letters, resumes, and other supporting documents. Keep every version of these files by saving them under unique filenames.
  
- 11. Print "master copies" of a generic cover letter, current resume, Standard Teaching Application (if requested), official transcripts (final and complete), Praxis or other required test results, teaching certificate or letter verifying your eligibility for a state certificate before it is actually received, and recommendation letters. Keep the "originals" and these "master copies" in a safe place. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Page 13)

- 12. Make several copies of your resume on high-grade resume paper and make 5-10 copies of every other document in your "packet" on standard paper. Sort the "sets" in large white envelopes to hand out when helpful. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Page 13)
  
- 13. Create a log to record information regarding all positions that you apply for. This may be a paper journal or notebook or a text document, spreadsheet or database on your computer. The method is up to you. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Page 14)
  
- 14. Make journal entries for all positions you apply for. Store accurate information about the job or district that may be helpful later. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Page 14)

## Clearances & Transcripts

- 15. Learn which "clearances" are required in your state. State education department web sites and school district human resource offices can identify them for you. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Page 25)
  
- 16. Apply for security clearances early. Some may be received quickly, but others take time. You will need to provide documentation that you passed each background check before a district can hire you. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 13, 25)
  
- 17. Request "official" transcripts from all universities or colleges where you completed coursework related to your degree or positions you are applying for. This takes time. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Page 30)

- 18. If you do not have a teaching certificate yet, ask an official at the university or college to write a letter verifying that you are eligible to receive the certificate and that the application is in progress. You may need this letter to prove that you expect to receive your certificate as you apply for positions. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Page 24)
  
- 19. Find out "who" at the university or college sends out the requests for certificates and ask that person to send yours as soon as possible. They often are processed in the order they are received and it takes a long time. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Page 24)

## The Standard Teaching Application

- 20. Download a Standard Teaching Application for your state if one is available. Choose a file format that you may edit using your computer and save it in the folder where with other application documents. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Page 26)
  
- 21. Complete the Standard Teaching Application carefully. Use the space bar to center your text over any wide area where responses may appear. This helps to "format" the Application, giving it a more professional appearance. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Page 26)
  
- 22. When completing the Standard Teaching Application, be careful to spell every word carefully. Make the application look and read well. Choose your references carefully and provide contact information (phone numbers and email addresses) that they will use during summer months. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Page 26)
  
- 23. You will need to compose a short essay in the Standard Teaching Application. The essay shares a philosophical position regarding the prompt you choose and provides a writing sample of your work for the reviewers! Ask others to proofread it for you. It must reflect your knowledge, beliefs, and passion and the essay must be grammatically perfect

with no spelling errors. Although applications are never "chosen" because of the essay, some are screened out! ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Page 26)

## Applying Online

24. They all look alike! Everyone submits the same forms in the same way at the same time, and often, say nearly the same things. When applying online, all applicants appear to be the same. Digital submission exaggerates anonymity. How will you STAND OUT? ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Page 30; Article [Tips for Applying Online](#))

25. Does anyone actually read all the online applications? No. They are screened and ranked by computers, people, or both using just a few fields in the standard application. Numeric entries, such as GPA or test scores as well as text responses (certifications or recent experience) often reduce hundreds of applications to dozens that will be considered further. If your application is screened out, you will probably not hear anything from them. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 31, 40; Article [Tips for Applying Online](#))

26. When applying on national job boards, try to communicate with someone in a leadership role in the organization or in the Human Resource office to promote your interest in a position. This helps to improve your "rank" during screening. An interested executive may work backwards to request a recruiter to review you application again. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Page 43)

27. When asking individuals to write letters of recommendation for you, choose people familiar with your work representing different roles. Include your current or past supervisor or principal as well as peers you worked with, but consider university professors or other professionals and even parents to write letters for you as well. This takes time, so do not delay. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 10, 36)

## Your Cover Letter Counts!

- 28. Customize your cover letter for every application and save it on your computer under a new filename that includes the name of the district where the job is. When completed, you may need to upload this new cover letter and either delete or rename the current one on the server. Keep copies of every letter you submit on your own computer. Do not submit the same cover letter for every job. Be different! ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Page 29; Article [Your Cover Letter Counts](#))
  
- 29. Address every cover letter to a person in the district. Do not send it blindly "To Whom It May Concern." Do your homework and address it to an administrator who would be interested in the position. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Page 29; Article [Your Cover Letter Counts](#))
  
- 30. Describe the position, job number, and District in the first paragraph in your cover letter. This must be unique for each position. In the following paragraphs, connect your skills and experience with district goals! Make them believe you would be a perfect match. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Page 29)
  
- 31. In your cover letter, use terms and concepts important to the district. Name current initiatives or priority goals and suggest how your achievements would help them to accomplish their objectives. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Page 20, 21, 29; Article [What Districts Look for in New Teachers](#))
  
- 32. Be quick and persistent to communicate your enthusiasm to apply for each position and your hope to meet their interview team soon. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 29, 35)

- 33. Describe your affection for children. This is a human services profession and your relationship with every child in the room will largely influence their success. Offer evidence how you promote self-worth and dignity. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 16, 29, 35)

## Your Resume Speaks for You!

- 34. Your resume must speak for you when you are not in the room. When applications are "screened," and you will not know when that occurs, your cover letter and resume will either make the reviewers choose you or lose you. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Page 8; Article [Create an Eye-Catching Resume](#))

- 35. Your resume may be reviewed for only a few seconds! One recruiter admitted that some resumes are placed aside in as little as five seconds! You must say the right things in the right place and at the right time to catch their attention. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 8, 20 ; Article [Create an Eye-Catching Resume](#))

- 36. One prominent HR blogger suggested that effective, winning resumes must pass the "Ten-Second Test." Does yours? (Article [Create an Eye-Catching Resume](#))

- 37. State your professional goal or objective in a few words that share your passion, enthusiasm, high expectations, AND your goal. Share what you are looking for, but also, what's in it for THEM! One or two lines at the top, this leads to interviews! ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 20, 21, 36; Article [Create an Eye-Catching Resume](#))

- 38. Use vivid language! Place powerful words in prominent places to catch attention and communicate your promise as a perfect match. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 28, 36; Article [Create an Eye-Catching Resume](#))



- 39. Promote your skills and achievements in your resume! Add bullet points to describe not only "what" you did, but also "how well" you accomplished the tasks in the past. Talk about growth, improvements, or savings and how you made the organization better. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 20, 27, 28, 36)
  
- 40. Align your skills, achievements and experiences with district priority goals or needs of the district. Use terms they use and be seen as a solution to challenges they face. Even when reviewing applications, administrators are think about reaching their objectives. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 28, 36)
  
- 41. Successful resumes share two things: (1) Applicant skills and achievements align closely with district goals or needs; and (2) Reviewers quickly NOTICE how well they match. Your resume must do both. Give it the "10-Second Test" to see if it passes! ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Page 27; Article [Create an Eye-Catching Resume](#))
  
- 42. Be Different! When applying online, application documents look the same. Every applicant, similarly looks identical. Your RESUME is your only chance to STAND OUT! Let it speak well for you. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Page 8)
  
- 43. In your resume, describe your success as a participating member of a team. Districts are looking for bright, sociable, and committed team players who will address challenges they face. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 20, 27, 32; Article [What Districts Look for in New Teachers](#))

## Be First in Line!

- 44. Get in Front! Whether you are waiting for an amusement park ride, applying for a job, or shopping on Black Friday — first is best! Read job postings often and regularly and apply soon after a position is posted. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Page 20, 41, 44)
  
- 45. Anticipate job vacancies even BEFORE they are advertised publicly by reading internal postings! Your local network inside schools can help with this. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 44, 45; Article [How Applicants Get Interviews for Teaching Jobs!](#))
  
- 46. Apply even BEFORE jobs are advertised publicly by reading school board minutes regularly. Boards approve leaves of absence for professional staff members (retirements, sabbaticals, medical, family leave, etc.) before vacancies actually arise. This will help you to anticipate a vacancy before the position is actually posted. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Page 45)
  
- 47. Expect greater numbers of job vacancies by anticipating retirements! Your local network inside schools can help with this. In addition, every district has a binding contract (benefits agreement) with the local education association. Especially in the current market, the number of retirements increases SHARPLY when the current contract expires. Learn where contracts will be up and Pre-Apply in those districts! ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Page 44, 45; Article [Future Teaching Market Prediction](#))
  
- 48. Meet the decision makers! This is by far the most direct strategy and greatly increases the chance that your resume will be reviewed with interest. There are many ways you can do this. Make a great first impression! ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 46, 47)

- 49. Pre-Apply! Schedule an informational meeting with key individuals to learn about their school, the district, or future goals. Go there to listen, but be ready to promote your skills and beliefs that would help them to meet their objectives. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 46, 47; Articles [How Applicants Get Interviews for Teaching Jobs!](#))

## Search High and Low!

- 50. Research local school districts to learn when their teacher contracts expire. Expect more vacancies than usual in that year. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 44, 45)
- 51. Be aware of discussions by state legislators regarding future of teacher pensions. Expect more retirements than usual during times when these discussions are in the news. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 2, 6, 44, 45)
- 52. Develop a network in each district you would like to work. People on the inside can inform you of position vacancies when they have been posted internally. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 44, 45)
- 53. Read local newspaper ads regularly, especially on weekends. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 38, 39)
- 54. Create accounts in advance on niche-specific employment services commonly used in your state (PA-Educator, PA-Reap, TalentEdK12, etc.) Be certain to upload all documents that are requested so your accounts are up to date and active. This should be in place BEFORE you read that jobs are posted. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 35, 36, 37)

- 55. Create job search agents on popular public job boards to search and inform you when postings match your search criteria (Monster, CareerBuilder, CareerJet, SimplyHired, etc.). ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 7, 21)
  
- 56. Create job search agents on niche-specific public job boards to search and inform you when postings match your search criteria (PA-REAP, PA-Educator, PSBA, etc.). ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 7, 21)
  
- 57. Be willing to search for positions across a broad region as well as local districts near to you. National job boards will allow you to search for jobs in other states as well. Consider all the possibilities. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Page 42)
  
- 58. Consider teaching abroad! Nearly every country in the world has English schools serving residents in the region. Perhaps this would be a good time for you to think about the many benefits of teaching in another country! ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Page 43)
  
- 59. Online learning is a booming enterprise, both in public and in education-for-profit services. Most digital learning providers seek certified teachers in every state in order to satisfy AYP and statewide regulations. As a result, more teachers for online classes are needed than ever before, and this number is expected to increase even more. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Page 42)
  
- 60. Act more like the Hunted than the Hunter! Let them find you! Few applicants see it this way, but it can change everything about your application and job search strategy. You can't sit quietly and wait - you must move, stand out, jump up! Be discovered! (Article [How Applicants Get Interviews for Teaching Jobs!](#))

## Prepare for Your Interview!

- 61. Be ready for a telephone interview! These are used commonly to screen applicants. Get ready to promote yourself from a mobile device!
  
- 62. Be willing to adjust your schedule to permit you to attend every interview, even if the date and time have been decided for you. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Page 9)
  
- 63. If you are asked to teach a model lesson, plan carefully within parameters they establish. Make it focused, engaging, standards-based, challenging, and worthwhile. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Page 10)
  
- 64. Most applicants who are invited to interviews know the right answers to the questions. They have very similar backgrounds. However, they will vary widely in their ability to engage the interview team and show their passion! The winner will have contagious enthusiasm! Practice letting your excitement show! ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Page 34, 35, 53, 56; Article [Prepare and Practice for Interviews](#))
  
- 65. Make a list of traits that will impress the interview team. Identify specific words, tones, and gestures that help to communicate what each of these traits might "look like" and "sound like" during an interview. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 32, 33, 56, 57; Article [What Districts Look For in New Teachers](#))
  
- 66. Learn who will screen the applications and decide which candidates to interview. You should meet them. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 52, 53)

- 67. When you are invited to attend an interview, ask who will be present. The exact identity of team members might not be known, but you'll learn how many will be there and their roles in the district. That will help you to prepare for the day. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 52, 53)
  
- 68. Dress in a conservative, professional manner. Females should consider wearing dresses or suits while males should wear sport jackets or suits with dress slacks and ties. There is nothing casual about this meeting. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Page 53)
  
- 69. Prepare a portfolio that contains samples of your work. Most applicants bring very well-organized collections of photos, sample lessons, activities, and application materials in a binder. Place tabs in the portfolio to help you quickly turn to a page to provide evidence of something you are talking about during the interview. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Page 53)
  
- 70. Listen carefully to each question or prompt and think for a short moment before replying. Organize your response in your brain before you start speaking so it flows with confidence. Be sure to address all parts of complex questions. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 54, 55)
  
- 71. Keep your responses focused. When possible, cite specific examples to illustrate your answers. Use experiences (people, places, things) that offer interesting and visual references to help the audience SEE and HEAR what you are saying. "A picture is worth a thousand words!" ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 54, 55)
  
- 72. Remember that the district has a list of needs and wants, and they are measuring every applicant against these goals. Match your skills and achievements with their priority goals so they see you as the solution they are looking for! ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 20, 29)

- 73. Know what to expect! Walking into the room, you should already know who will be there, what their goals are, and what questions they might ask. In addition, you should have your appearance, presence, responses and examples ready to share as well. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58; Article Prepare and Practice for Interviews)
  
  - 74. Hope is not a strategy! Luck will have little role during your interview. Getting hired is not a game of chance, and nor will it result because the interview team thinks you are nice. TAKE CHARGE of this meeting and present your finest qualities. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 56, 57)
  
  - 75. Successful people consciously and subconsciously act in extraordinary ways to make dreams come true. You can too! Let every response look like and sound like a solution to challenges they face. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 54, 55, 56, 57)
  
  - 76. Write out your responses for interview questions that you expect. Develop an exciting script with brilliant examples that portray your skills, beliefs, and experiences and help to tell your story. Use expected "talking points" and vocabulary and be sure to use signal words that help to communicate knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and passion. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 54, 55, 56, 60, 61)
  
  - 77. Practice your responses out loud in front of live audiences. Rehearsing "in your mind" is not enough. Ask different audiences - up to three people at a time - to ask you the questions in random order and then present your answers to them, using voice inflection, gestures, and examples from your portfolio, just as you will in the interview. Ask for feedback. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Page 56; Article Prepare and Practice for Interviews)
  
  - 78. Do your own research to identify common interview questions. For each, consider the PURPOSE for the question or prompt. Knowing what the interview team expects to learn, prepare strong answers that reflect best practices, your experience, and examples of your work in that area. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 62-81)
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- 79. Shortly after the interview, write down as much as you can remember about the experience. Record the questions and your responses. This reflection is an important part of the learning experience. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 82, 83)
  
- 80. Don't be hard on yourself if you feel you did not do well in an interview. Instead, reflect on what went well, what didn't, and vow to do better next time. And remember, every good fighter gets knocked down. What makes them "good," however, is "how quickly" they get up! ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Page 83)
  
- 81. Interview teams will quickly rank the applicants after the interviews are finished and decide their first, second, and third place winners. If you learn that another individual was hired, feel free to contact one member of the interview team to inquire what you might do differently next time. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Page 84, 85)

## Common Interview Questions and Prompts

- 82. Question 1 - Take a few minutes to tell us about yourself and your interest in this position. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 62, 63)
  
- 83. Question 2 - Share how you would prepare for the first day of school. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 64, 65)
  
- 84. Question 3 - Describe what we would likely see if we visited your classroom unexpectedly. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 66, 67)



- 85. Question 4 - In what ways do you assess or evaluate student learning? ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 68, 69)
  
- 86. Question 5 - Suggest some ways that you could modify a lesson to meet the needs of all students in a class. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 70, 71)
  
- 87. Question 6 - Describe how you build satisfying and memorable relationships with students. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 72, 73)
  
- 88. Question 7 - Suggest some ways that parents may be included as partners in their child's education. ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 74, 75)
  
- 89. Question 8 - If access to devices were available, how would you use technology in the classroom? ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 76, 77)
  
- 90. Question 9 - What activities would you like to coach or advise as a member of the teaching staff? ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 78, 79)
  
- 91. Question 10 - How does your district support professional development for teachers? ([Pathway to Teaching](#), Pages 80, 81)