

# Cover Letters

In many cases, your cover letter for a job in a school will receive more attention than would cover letters in most other industries. Administrators view your cover letter as an indication of your enthusiasm for teaching and of your ability to communicate. The best cover letters come alive—that is, they convey something of your personality in a way that your resume generally will not. Cover letters present the opportunity for you to do several things:

1. Demonstrate that you are interested in applying to *that particular school district*.
2. Highlight your two or three strengths as a teacher—and reflect your unique experiences as a teacher.
3. Express your enthusiasm for teaching, for working with young people and/or for the particular grade level or subject you will teach.

## **How do you demonstrate that you are interested in a district?**

Research that district and include a bit of what you find in your cover letter. For example, if you went on a district's website, and you saw that they offer a variety of teacher mentorship programs, you might write a sentence or two about how the mentoring you've already received as a student teacher has influenced your teaching style, and that you are excited about the opportunities to be mentored by experienced teachers in the district. (*Only if that's the truth for you - don't make things up!*)

## **How do you highlight your strengths?**

While your resume presents your background in chronological form, your cover letter offers you the opportunity to draw your readers' attention to a couple of your main strengths (*preferably as they relate to the expressed philosophy or needs of the district, though often it is difficult to make such a direct link*).

The best cover letters use specifics to back up general statements. These specifics can reflect your unique experiences in the classroom and the strengths they represent:

"To my practicum teaching experiences, I have brought classroom management techniques that were honed in my two camp counseling jobs, where I was frequently in charge of 30 to 40 seven- and eight-year-olds, without any assistance."

**OR** "I believe it's important to understand the different learning styles and strengths that students bring to the classroom. In my clinical practice experience at Jane Doe Elementary School, I used movement and dance to encourage the more tactile learners. For the more auditory learners, I incorporated music, rhythms and nature sounds into some of my science lessons."

**OR** "I strongly believe that every child is teachable. This was made real for me when a first-grader who had been diagnosed with a learning disability, and with whom I had been working one-on-one for nearly a semester, had a breakthrough in his reading ability that surprised even his classroom teacher."

**The point is, your cover letter should emphasize your strengths as a teacher, which are most effectively demonstrated through positive, concrete examples.**

### **PRACTICAL TIPS:**

1. Keep a record of all correspondence.
2. The letter should be addressed to a particular individual in the district. If that person is not apparent from the website, call the district office for that person's name and title.
3. Use simple, direct language and correct grammar.
4. Use plain bond paper in white, off-white, light beige or light gray. Use the same paper for your cover letters and resumes, and you can use matching envelopes, as well.
5. Strive for a "picture frame effect" with your margins. Business letters are folded in thirds and mailed in long envelopes, about 9 1/2 inches long.
6. Have a friend carefully proofread your letters for errors.
7. Be sure to sign your letters, and make certain your address is plainly visible.
8. Ask for an interview, and include your phone number and email address in your closing paragraph.

**SAMPLE COVER LETTER**

1234 College Road  
Charleston, SC 29402  
March 19, 2010

Ms. Susan Holiday  
Teacher Recruitment  
Charleston County Schools  
75 Calhoun Street  
Charleston, SC 29403

Dear Ms. Holiday:

I am a College of Charleston senior graduating in May with a Bachelor of Science in Secondary Education with a certification in Math, grades 7-12. Through friends, family, current teachers, and local newspapers, I have heard that the newly established Charleston Charter School for Math & Science will be hiring teachers to fulfill new upper-level mathematics positions. I believe that my education, skills, and teaching experience have prepared me well for a teaching position with CCSMS.

My resume, which has been uploaded on the SC online application, notes my experience in teaching mathematics to high school students. High school students need motivation, which I provide through the integration of math concepts into students' personal interests. During my student teaching at James Island Middle School, I was given a project to create a 21' x 30' American flag with my students. I explained how Pythagorean's Theorem works to create right angles and the students then used this technique to create the flag. Additionally, I created a lesson that integrated other cultures into mathematics, which demonstrates the interdisciplinary skills that I use in my teaching. During the summers, I am an assistant pool manager and a swim coach. Through those jobs I have had the opportunity to hone my interpersonal skills by listening to the concerns of parents and members of the pool.

In addition to my specific interest in this position, I also am interested in the extracurricular activities that I may be involved with at CCSMS. My solid foundation as a liberal arts student has provided me with the ability to learn quickly, adapt to new situations, and work in a team environment. I believe these qualities make me a competitive candidate for your program.

Thank you for considering my qualifications for the Mathematics teaching position. I will call you the week of March 29th to further discuss this position. In the meantime, if you would like to contact me, please feel welcome to reach me via phone at (843) 123-4567 or email at imteacher@edisto.cofc.edu.

Sincerely,

I.M. Teacher

Enclosure

**SAMPLE COVER LETTER**

18 Rutledge St.  
Charleston, SC 29402  
March 3, 2010

Ms. Linda Huff  
Personnel Director  
Danville County School District  
123 River Blvd.  
Danville, SC 12345

Dear Ms. Huff:

I am writing to inquire about a teaching position in elementary education listed in the job postings on the CERRA website. I am excited about the possibility of becoming a teacher within the Danville County School District because of your stellar reputation as one of the nation's finest in education. The students who graduate from your schools outperform the national averages by 20% on the SAT and 10% on the ACT. The focus of instruction in DCSD is in accordance with my own philosophy of teaching—the focus is on what is learned and not what is taught. I believe that my skill incorporating technology and interactive teaching techniques into the classroom and my desire to work in a diverse environment would be an asset to your already remarkable, award winning teaching staff.

In May, I will be graduating from College of Charleston (CofC) with a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education and will be certified to teach grades 1—8. After studying at CofC, I feel I am fully prepared to take on the position of teacher. I have gained an exceptional amount of experience in the classroom, outside the classroom, and in the schools. Although I was told I would be teaching certain units to the students at Flowertown Elementary School, my cooperating teacher allowed me great freedom in developing and implementing my self-created lessons and assignments in the classroom. Through the experience of creating, teaching and assessing lessons, assignments, quizzes and tests at my elementary school placement, I gained tremendous knowledge in teaching strategies and lesson plan development for elementary school students.

In addition, I have been involved in various organizations and activities while attending CofC. I was part of the Emerging Leader program, President of my sorority, and participated in numerous community service projects. I have many skills such as being able to work with Microsoft programs, classroom media/technology, and can speak basic Spanish. While attending school, I held several part-time jobs. My ability to multi-task and successfully manage multiple priorities is evident through maintaining my strong GPA while balancing my extracurricular involvement and part-time jobs.

Thank you for considering my qualifications for a teaching position in the Danville County School District. I will send a credential file within the next five days and will follow-up with you the week of March 15th. If you would like to contact me, I am available by phone at 843-135-7911 or via email at educator@edisto.cofc.edu.

Sincerely,

Edie Cator