Cover Letters for Education Majors

In many cases, a cover letter for a job in a school will receive more attention than 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 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?
Do a little research about that district and include a bit of what you find in your cover letter.

For example, if you went on the Philadelphia City School District 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 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 Philadelphia. (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:

“I believe it’s important to understand the different learning styles and strengths that students bring to the classroom. In my student teaching assignment at Warren L. Miller 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 has 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 that your cover letter should emphasize your strengths as a teacher, which is most effectively demonstrated through positive, concrete examples.

Here are a few practice 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 grey. Use the same paper for your cover letters and resumes, and you can use matching envelopes, as well.
5. Have at least 3 people (besides yourself) carefully proofread your letters for errors.
6. Be sure to sign your letters, and make certain your address is plainly visible.
7. Ask for an interview, and include your phone number and email address in your closing paragraph.
October 20, 2009

Ms. Susan Anderson  
Director of Personnel  
New Horizon School District  
Chestnut Hill, MA 02107

Dear Ms. Anderson:

I was excited to see the opening you listed for a fourth grade teacher. The New Horizon School District has great appeal to me because of its commitment to promoting equity among its students and closing the achievement gaps in all areas, including gender, socio-economic levels, race, ethnicities, and learning capabilities. Having a community of equity does not mean that everyone is treated equally; but rather that each person is treated fairly and with respect. Through creating this type of community, each student is able to reach his or her fullest potential, which will lead to a closing of the achievement gap among the students.

My teaching experiences have allowed me to work with students from a variety of backgrounds. In my student teaching at Warren L. Miller in Waltham, Pennsylvania I am working with a group of students who have very diverse learning styles and needs. The classroom that I work in is an integrated classroom, with one third of the students receiving special education services. Our aim is that each student in the class should be given the opportunity to reach his or her fullest potential with as much time spent in the general education setting as possible. Through my experience in this classroom, I have gained the ability to modify my lessons and provide accommodations for all of my students, including those not receiving special education services, to further enhance their educational experience. An example of this is in the Earth Science unit that I have developed, which focuses on Processes that Change the Earth. This unit is comprised of lessons in a variety of formats, from hands-on lessons to teacher-led lessons, and from discussion-based lessons to student-taught lessons. The final lesson is a presentation made by the students in which they use PowerPoint and iMovie to teach their peers about a specific geologic event. This puts the teaching component into the hands of the students, allowing them to become experts in their topic and to help others learn about it.

I would appreciate the opportunity to speak with you regarding the fourth grade teacher position. I can be reached at the contact information provided at the top of the page. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ellie E. Educator