



*“You’re off to Great Places!
Today is your day! Your Mountain is waiting.
So . . . get on your way!”* —Dr. Seuss



STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS AT THE JOB FAIR

Teena R. Gorrow and Rebecca A. Emery

A successful job fair performance can be a powerful tool in securing your first teaching job. However, making a positive impression on a recruiter doesn’t happen simply by chance. Recruiters will best remember the candidates who stand out from the hundreds they see. What will help you stand out in the crowd and be called back for an interview?



RESOURCES

**KDP Global—
Job Search Academy**
my.kdp.org/communications

KDP Career Center
www.kdp.org/resources/attendingjobfairs.php

Look to KDP for information on education career fairs and other pertinent aspects of searching for and procuring a teaching position—including building résumés and portfolios, interviewing, and more.

American Association for Employment in Education
www.aeee.org

Website lists upcoming education job fairs nationwide, maintains useful job search blogs and links, and offers *2014 Job Search Handbook for Educators*.

EducationJobFairs.com
www.educationjobfairs.com

Lists *online* job fairs for education jobs. They’re free, with no travel necessary and 24-hour access to the job fair while it’s happening.

Book
Getting hired: A student teacher’s guide to professionalism, résumé development & interviewing.
Anthony, R., & Coghill-Behrends, W. (2010). Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt.

1. Do your homework.

- Secure clear directions to the job fair, know where to park, and allow extra travel time.
- Check the job fair website for a list of participating school districts.
- Identify the districts of interest to you.
- Research those districts to become familiar with their educational programs and school locations, determine existing openings, examine salary schedules and benefits, and identify potential questions to ask recruiters.
- Prioritize the districts by where you would most like to teach.
- Prepare and update your résumé so that it is current and accurate.

2. Prepare, prepare, prepare!

- Plan and rehearse (speak out loud in front of a mirror) the introduction you will use when approaching the recruiter’s table. Plan concise, professional comments and practice speaking clearly. Consider including your class standing, specific skills, grade or content you hope to teach, and why you want to work in that district (based on your research). Be prepared for follow-up questions about yourself and your goals.
- Practice a firm, professional handshake.
- Polish shoes and select professional attire. A business suit or business casual clothing is more appropriate than jeans, even when you attend only to gather information.
- Craft your responses to standard interview questions in case the opportunity for a full interview arises.
- Gather essential items: extra copies of your résumé, note pad, black pen, and your professional portfolio. Carry these items in a briefcase or leather folder to portray a professional image. Book bags and backpacks should be left at home.
- Take copies of your references, transcript, and other appropriate information needed to complete an application—just in case.



3. Acclimate yourself upon arrival.

- Check in at the registration desk and put on a name tag for the fair.
- head to the restroom and check your appearance.
- Orient yourself to the site and find your preferred districts.
- Carry your organized materials in your left hand to facilitate shaking hands with recruiters.
- Speak positively to yourself about your teaching ability and success at the fair.
- Approach a recruiter from the middle of your preference list to “warm up” before speaking to interviewers from your favored

districts. Smile, look the recruiter in the eye, shake hands, and offer a warm hello.

4. Recall your manners.

- Remember that you are on display. Recruiters may be observing you, even when you are not directly engaging them in conversation. Talking on the phone, chewing gum, hanging out with friends, laughing loudly, congregating in corners, or blocking the aisles does not portray a professional demeanor.
- Address recruiters by their titles (Dr., Mr., or Mrs.) and last names.
- Ask the recruiter how he or she is feeling while exchanging greetings.
- Be considerate of the recruiter’s possible need to take a break, and offer a beverage from the refreshment table.
- Patiently await your turn, remember to say thank you, and be conscious of where you stand to avoid blocking access to the tables. If a line is long, visit another recruiter and return when the line is shorter.
- Approach each recruiter with a fresh and enthusiastic attitude, regardless of what transpired at the previous table.

5. Stay focused.

- Go it alone. Though it’s tempting to work the job fair with friends, especially if you arrived together, it should be an individual pursuit. Speaking with recruiters alone narrows the focus to YOU and prevents possible feelings of insecurity or dependence on others.
- Listen. Pay careful attention to the discussion taking place between recruiters and the participants ahead of you. You may hear potential questions and gain insights to further help you prepare for your turn.

6. Follow up after the fair.

- Send a thank-you note to the recruiters you met within 24 hours. In addition to being courteous, this keeps your name in front of potential employers. Consider writing creative, professional notes to those recruiters from districts where you most hope to receive a call-back.
- Telephone the district’s personnel office within two weeks, if you have not already been contacted after the job fair. Offer additional information and state your continued interest.

Good luck!

NOT YET IN THE JOB MARKET?

Attend a job fair anyway. Don't let the FIRST job fair you attend be the one where you HAVE to get a job. Attending a fair early in your teacher preparation program can lessen the sense of being overwhelmed or intimidated later, when it really matters. Gathering information about school districts and networking before your senior year will ease your eventual job search. Also consider attending virtual job fairs.

VIRTUAL CAREER FAIRS

Seek a position from your desktop at this entirely Internet-based job fair. Candidates search for permanent jobs, as well as summer, co-op, or internship positions, and submit résumés directly to employers. Employers submit information about their organizations and hiring needs.

Dr. Teena Ruark Gorrow, Professor of Teacher Education at Salisbury University, is a former public school administrator and teacher recruiter who helps prepare teacher interns. As Salisbury University’s Director of Career Services, **Dr. Rebecca A. Emery** arranges job fairs, interacts with employers in the education field, and conducts various workshops for teacher candidates.

