

Novice Notes



By learning you will teach; by teaching you will learn.

— LATIN PROVERB

Resources

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For Tomorrow's Teacher

Polishing the Apple

Six Steps to a Shining Job Fair Performance

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?

1) Do your homework.

- Secure clear directions to the job fair, know where to park, and allow extra travel time.
 - Check the job fair Web site 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 error-free.
- ### 2) Prepare, prepare, prepare!
- Plan and rehearse (speak out loud in front of a mirror) the introduction you will use when approach-

ing the recruiter's table. Plan concise, professional comments and practice speaking clearly. Consider including your name, 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 tend to scream student.

- 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.
- Locate the restroom and check your appearance.
- Orient yourself to the site and locate 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, 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 recruiters you met within 24 hours. In addition to being courteous, sending a note 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 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 e-fairs.

E-Fair

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.

Associate Professor Dr. Teena Ruark Gorrow draws from experiences as a former school administrator and teacher recruiter to help prepare teacher interns.

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