

## **Capitalize on Your Field Experiences to Land that First Job!**

Your search for that special “First Job” begins earlier than you think! Field experiences play an important role in landing your first teaching position. Administrators are more interested in the feedback from cooperating teachers and university supervisors than in GPA or any other criteria. Good field experiences result in excellent references that will help you get an interview and ultimately that beginning job.

Your cooperating teacher is critical to your success. Don’t be afraid to ask questions. You are there to learn, to absorb as much knowledge as you can. Do not try to show them up or criticize them or their teaching skills. Be willing to do whatever is asked of you, with a smile on your face, and do it well. Express your appreciation for their support. If your cooperating teacher likes you, they will be more willing to help you to develop and grow as a teacher.

### **Twelve tips for making the most of your Field Experiences:**

- 1) **DO A GOOD JOB!** – How you begin your field experience will leave a lasting impression on all you come in contact with including the cooperating teacher, other teachers, students, administrators and parents. Before you begin your field experience, learn as much as you can about the school district. Review printed materials, the website and speak to individuals living within the district for their insight. Meet the school’s expectations by being on time, dressing appropriately, being positive and of course, professional! Be prepared to come in early and stay as late as necessary. Remember it is important to interact with all school personnel, not just teachers. You will set the stage for how others respond to you by how you perform and communicate with others. All the other tips that follow are contingent upon this one.
- 2) **GET INVOLVED BEYOND YOUR CLASSROOM** - Look for opportunities such as tutoring after school, coaching, writing for the school newsletter, helping with a concert or other school-wide event. Administrators are impressed with anyone who goes “above and beyond” what is required. Coaching is one of those areas that is often the deciding factor in a hire when a principal needs an English teacher and a woman’s basketball coach.
- 3) **SEEK OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPAND YOUR KNOWLEDGE** –Build on prior coursework through practical experience in areas such as standards and testing, behavior management and children with special needs. There will definitely be questions about these topics in your interviews. For example, participation in Child Study Team meetings shows your degree of involvement with your students and provides you with extra insight in collaborating with others to help students succeed.

- 4) **CREATE A STRONG MARKETABLE RESUME** – In planning your resume remember that there are activities in your student teaching, which are expected of you such as developing and teaching lessons, bulletin boards, marking papers and participating in parent-teacher conferences. Think “beyond the box” when describing your student teaching experience. What did you do that was more than was expected? The development of a resume takes time. Don’t wait until the end of the student teaching semester to begin the process. Many campus Career Services Offices regularly sponsor “On-Campus Recruiting” where school districts come to the university to conduct interviews. Your resume must be submitted early to take advantage of these programs.
- 5) **TAKE ADVANTAGE OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES**- Often you will be required to attend in-district staff development workshops during your field experience. When possible, attend additional professional development seminars and conferences to enhance your knowledge of content and/or pedagogy. Join professional organizations reflecting your academic area or those that interest you. Your participation demonstrates to administrators your desire to be a lifelong learner.
- 6) **DESIGN AND REFINE YOUR PORTFOLIO** - Begin to collect artifacts in your early field experiences. Remember to keep copies of everything and to take pictures. When you reach student teaching you can reflect on everything you have done and then focus your presentation portfolio on what you have done really well. Be prepared to talk in depth about anything in your portfolio. Portfolios are not only used in teacher education to get that first job, but also by experienced teachers to obtain National Board Certification.
- 7) **ASK PRINCIPAL FOR A MOCK INTERVIEW** - Practice before the interview with peers. Ask for feedback on how you responded to questions as well as your appearance. Bring your cover letter, resume and portfolio to share during the interview so that you also receive feedback on them.
- 8) **ASK THE PRINCIPAL TO OBSERVE YOU TEACHING** – Ask a principal or other administrator to observe you teaching a lesson and ask them for their feedback. If you did not perform as well as you might have liked, ask if he/she would observe you again at a later date once you have had the chance to incorporate their suggestions. If the administrator is favorably impressed, this can provide you with an additional reference or possibly a job in that school if there is an opening. Principals also know other principals and can often help you network.

- 9) LOOK FOR UNIQUE OPPORTUNITIES FOR FEEDBACK – Consider asking the students to evaluate how you did as a practicum student or student teacher. What did they like and what suggestions do they have for you. You might want to include their evaluations in your portfolio along with those of the cooperating teacher and university supervisor. If you have worked closely with other school personnel consider asking them to observe you teach and possibly serve as a reference.
- 10) DEVELOP AN AREA OF EXPERTISE – Highlight any areas of expertise and demonstrate them during your field experience. These might include knowledge of the writing process, reading, technology, drama, science or math. You could become the resident expert in your school for integrating technology or the stage manager for a school production.
- 11) PLAN YOUR GOODBYES – Think about how you will say goodbye to the students and the staff at the school. Write thank you notes and plan to purchase any goodbye gifts. Firm up any plans to revisit.
- 12) BEGIN TO DEVELOP YOUR OWN THEORIES AND BELIEFS- Once you have been exposed to theories and beliefs of your cooperating teacher and others within your school, begin to develop your own philosophy of education and strategies for classroom management. Write these in your journal and test them out in your classroom teaching. As the semester progresses, reflect upon them and re-evaluate your philosophy and viewpoints. These are often typical questions asked of you in an employment interview.

Don't forget to take advantage of your Career Services Office. Get advice on job hunting, and your resume and cover letter as you develop them. Be prepared to participate in job fairs, virtual job fairs, and on-campus interviews. Put your resume in the university database in order to take advantage of any interview possibilities.

Successful practicum students and student teachers become an integral part of a school. As members of that learning community they will be considered first for any openings for teachers that become available IF they have been doing a good job! You have an advantage over all the resumes coming in because the staff and administration in that school know you! At the end of four months, principals know if you are willing to go above and beyond what is required. They have had the chance to observe your interactions with students, parents and school personnel. You have an advantage by virtue of your placement in the schools so don't forget to CAPITALIZE on your FIELD EXPERIENCES.

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## **NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

The New Jersey Department of Education – [www.state.nj.us/education/](http://www.state.nj.us/education/)

### **Department Overview**

- Abbott Implementation
- Administrative Code
- Adult Education
- Bilingual Education
- Charter Schools
- Community Services
- Early Childhood Education
- Educational Technology
- Finance
- Grants
- Innovative Programs
- Licensing
- NJ Education Statistics
- NJPEP - Virtual Academy
- NJ School Law
- Nonpublic School Services
- Professional Development
- School Choice
- School Ethics
- School Facilities
- School-to-Career
- Special Education
- Standards & Assessment

## **NJHIRE**

NJHire is the Interactive Education Recruitment Network of the State of New Jersey

To contact NJHire E-Mail: [njhire@doe.state.nj.us](mailto:njhire@doe.state.nj.us)

For technical support E-Mail: [njhire@usteach.com](mailto:njhire@usteach.com)

The New Jersey Teacher Recruitment Initiative was established by the New Jersey State Department of Education to recruit qualified individuals to the teaching profession in order to improve the quantity and quality of New Jersey's teaching force.

NJHire, the cornerstone of the Teacher Recruitment Initiative, is a one-stop information and referral recruitment center for individuals who may be interested in a teaching career. NJHire offers a variety of informational and advisor-assisted services to prospective teachers.

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