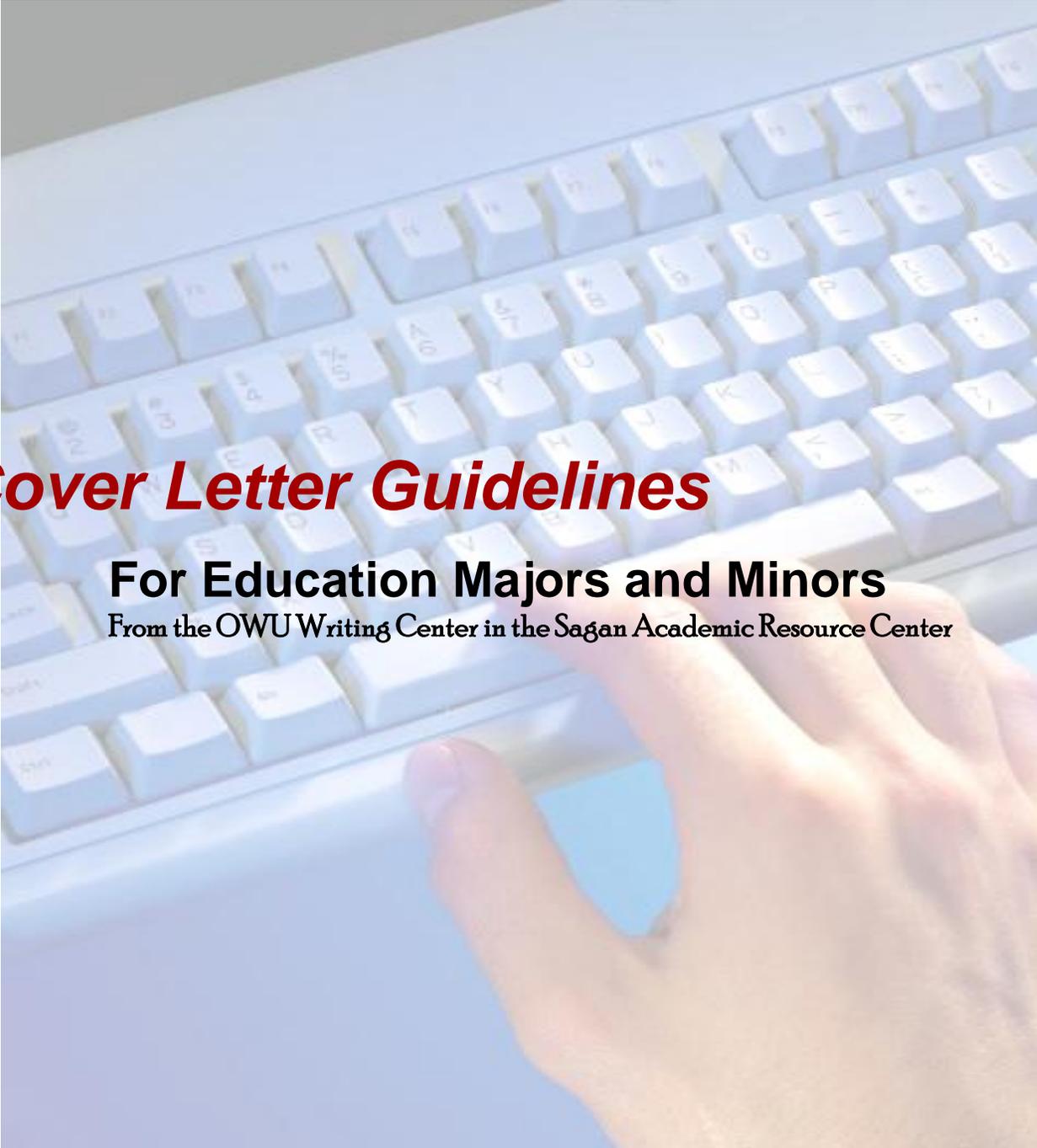


Ohio  
Wesleyan  
University

## Writing Center

Founded 1955

*Promoting writing as a hallmark of liberal arts education*



# **Cover Letter Guidelines**

## **For Education Majors and Minors**

From the OWU Writing Center in the Sagan Academic Resource Center

**The OWU Writing Center**

Corns 316 ▪ (740-368-3925) ▪ <http://writing.owu.edu> ▪ open Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

# Cover Letter Guidelines for Education Majors and Minors

---

## Contents

Writing Your Cover Letter.....	1
I. Organization and Paragraph Development.....	1
A. Opening Paragraphs: .....	1
B. Body Paragraphs .....	2
C. Concluding Paragraphs .....	3
II. Language and Tone .....	3
A. Language .....	3
B. Tone.....	4
III. Editing and Proofing.....	6
IV. Layout, Format, and Appearance.....	7
Education Cover Letters: Examples for Evaluation.....	7
I. Opening Paragraphs.....	7
II. Body Paragraphs .....	8
III. Closing Paragraphs .....	10
Sample Cover Letters.....	12
Works Cited .....	28
Appendix: Phrases for Education Majors & Minors.....	29

# Cover Letter Guidelines for Education Majors and Minors

---

(Developed by the Writing Center, Ohio Wesleyan University, 2010)

Use your cover letter to expand on the qualifications listed in your resume. Introduce yourself by discussing your most important qualifications, including skills and personal qualities. Make a positive first impression by tailoring your letter to a specific teaching position. A good cover letter has several purposes and will be valuable in several ways, including

- Distinguishing yourself from other job applicants
- Illustrating how your qualifications—education, experience, and skills—match those specified in the job posting
- Demonstrating your knowledge of the school and school district to which you are applying
- Communicating ideas about your educational philosophy, teaching methods, and pedagogical practices
- Highlighting your organizational and written communication skills
- Securing a job interview
- Providing discussion material for the job interview

Before drafting the application letter, it is helpful to complete a pre-writing assessment that includes learning about the school district and its philosophy and identifying the qualifications most pertinent to a specific level of teaching (i.e., Early Childhood, Middle Childhood, Adult to Young Adult, or Multi-age).

In addition to the content or “body” of the letter, include the following: **1)** Your name and contact information; **2)** The date; **3)** Information about your contact person—address a specific person, if possible, and use the appropriate title (e.g., Ms., Mrs., Mr., or Dr.); **4)** and the salutation. Check model cover letters for examples. Now follow the organizational, stylistic, and formatting guidelines for writing a **solicited letter**—a cover letter written when you know the school is hiring.

## Writing Your Cover Letter

### *I. Organization and Paragraph Development*

#### **A. Opening Paragraphs:**

- Note why you are writing (i.e., applying for a specific teaching position).
- Identify the teaching position and school.

- Note where or how you learned about the job, particularly if someone working in the school district recommended that you apply.
- State your major, the college you attended, and your graduation date.
- Conclude (the paragraph) with a **“bridge”** or an **“umbrella” sentence** that includes the qualifications you plan to discuss in the body paragraphs.
- Link your qualifications to the school and the specific teaching position.

**EXAMPLE:** I am applying for the third grade teaching position at Oakland Elementary School, at the suggestion of Mr. Alan Jones, Principal of Oakland Elementary. In May 2008, I graduated from Ohio College with a B.S. in Elementary Education. My creative lesson plans and cooperative learning techniques, coupled with my classroom management strategies, make me an ideal candidate to work with your diverse population of students.

## B. Body Paragraphs

- Develop two, ideally three, body paragraphs, focusing on your most important qualifications. Writing only one body paragraph may convey a number of unintended negative messages: **1)** You have limited experience, **2)** You struggle with written communication, or **3)** You did not make an effort to fully explain your qualifications.
- Focus on one topic or qualification in each paragraph; draw on your experiences and highlight: **a)** skills, **b)** personality traits, **c)** expertise or knowledge, or **d)** commendations (e.g., awards and honors).
- Begin with a topic sentence that introduces the main point of the paragraph (e.g., skill, personality trait, or some other qualification or specific expertise).
- Provide evidence to support the topic sentence: examples, details, numbers, statistics, etc.
- Develop cohesive paragraphs and meaningful patterns of organization. The paragraph below, for example, illustrates the writer’s increased expertise over time.
- Link the qualifications to the teaching position; in other words, relate what you have done in the past to what you will do in the future (when you are hired).

**EXAMPLE:** Using up-to-date education theory and practical experience, I can develop innovative lesson plans for the diverse population of readers at Oakland Elementary. In Education 310, Education and Children’s Literature, I received an A+ for my class project on how to teach literature to minority students. As a student-teacher at Eau Claire Elementary, 4<sup>th</sup> graders increased reading comprehension by 40% after I designed 20 integrated lesson plans that included scanning, reading for detail, literature circles, and the Read Naturally literacy program. To further develop my expertise, I am enrolled in a summer graduate course focused on cognition, literacy, and different styles of learning.

**EXMPLE—**Building a “skills” paragraph that emphasizes writing experience and ability: The following could be included in the paragraph: **a)** the number of writing courses; **b)** the total number of pages written; **c)** the kinds of writing courses; **d)** the kinds of papers (e.g., essays, research papers, journalism articles, sales letter; **e)** special writing projects (e.g., senior seminar paper); **f)** writing skills (e.g., writing

with sources and sentence-level editing); **g**) writing performance (e.g., high grades in writing courses or literary awards); and **h**) specific jobs or responsibilities (e.g., writing for the school newspaper, serving as editor of a literary magazine, or developing recruiting material for a sorority or a fraternity).

## C. Concluding Paragraphs

- Note you included a resume or other materials (e.g., transcripts, licenses, or letters of recommendation).
- Request an interview, preferably in question form, and specify when you can meet.
- Conclude with a positive, forward-looking statement, focusing on how your qualifications match the needs of the school.
- Make it easy for readers to contact you.

**EXAMPLE:** As you requested, a resume and letters of recommendation are included. Could we set up an interview? I would like to explain in more detail how my teaching philosophy and practices match those described to me by Principal Jones. I can come to New York for an interview any Tuesday or Thursday afternoon. Please contact me at (492) 564-4561 or Adam\_Jones@yahoo.com.

## II. Language and Tone

### A. Language

**1. Use Discipline-Specific language, concepts, and terms:** Avoid slang and colloquial language. Include the “buzzwords,” concepts, and phrases used by others in your field. For example, if you are an education major, you might include some of the following if appropriate:

- Adhering to objectives set by the state
- Classroom management
- Cooperative learning methods
- Inclusion classroom
- Special needs populations
- Team teaching experiences (**See Appendix for a more inclusive list**)

**2. Streamline sentences and make your writing more direct and concise, particularly in the all-important first sentence:** Simply state, “I am applying for . . .” and avoid the wordy and often awkwardly formal introductory sentences.

### Say This:

- I am applying for the third grade teaching position at Oakland Elementary School.

### Avoid the following (wordy) sentences:

- Please take into consideration my request to be considered for the position of 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at Sanford Elementary School.
- Please accept this letter as an indication of my interest in the position of Spanish language teacher at Weston Middle School.
- I would like to express my interest in becoming part of your teaching staff.

**3. Minimize the use of “I”:** Though you can use the first person singular “I”—after all, the cover letter does center on your qualifications—do so with some restraint. Follow these suggestions:

- Edit out “I thinks,” “I feels,” and “I believes.”
- Use “my” instead of “I”: Instead of saying, “I have taken the following courses in education theory,” note the following: “My requirements included three courses in education theory.”
- Subordinate the sentence so you don’t begin with an “I”: Instead of “I formed cooperative learning groups while student teaching 4<sup>th</sup> graders,” you might say, “While student teaching 4<sup>th</sup> graders, I formed cooperative learning groups.”

## B. Tone

**1. Emphasize the positive:** Stress what you have accomplished and learned; avoid mentioning inexperience and emphasizing uncertainty.

### Say This:

- I am a qualified candidate for the position.
- Based on my teaching experience at Oakland Elementary, my education advisor gave me a strong recommendation.

### Avoid the following statements:

- I believe they would tell you **what I lack** in classroom experience I more than make up for with enthusiasm and motivation. (**Avoid emphasizing inexperience.**)
- Though I have **only one** student-teaching experience, my education advisor gave me a strong recommendation. (**Avoid emphasizing inexperience**)

- I hope my qualifications match your needs. (**Avoid showing uncertainty.**)

**2. Convey confidence:** Edit out words that implicitly raise questions about your qualifications and abilities.

**Say This:**

- I can be an effective fourth grade reading teacher.

**Avoid the following statement and others like it:**

- I think (or I believe or I feel) I can be an effective fourth grade reading teacher.

**3. Convey confidence but don't be absolute about your abilities and qualifications:** Minimize absolute and general statements and build support for your qualification with evidence—details, examples, information, and statistics.

**Say This:**

- I am a good match for the position because . . .
- I am an ideal candidate for the position because . . . (**These examples illustrate confidence without being absolute.**)

**Avoid the following statements:**

- I know that I am the right person for this position.
- I believe I am the person you are seeking.
- You will see I am the perfect candidate for this position.

**4. Convey confidence but avoid treating your reader as a subordinate:** Remember, the reader is in the position to grant (or deny) you an interview.

**Say This:**

- I would like to arrange an interview to discuss how my qualifications match the needs of Oakland Elementary.
- Could we set up an interview so I can explain in more detail how my qualifications match the needs of Oakland Elementary?

**Avoid the following statements:**

- I will contact you within the next few days to arrange a meeting. (**This suggests the writer is in control and the interview is a done deal.**)
- I will telephone you next week to arrange a suitable time to meet.

**5. Be polite but not overly deferential:** Avoid the three bulleted examples listed below—all taken from the same cover letter:

**Say This:**

- I am applying for the first grade teaching position at Merrill Elementary School.
- As you requested, I have enclosed a resume and letters of recommendation.

**Avoid the following statements:**

- Please accept this letter as my application for the position of first grade teacher at Merrill Elementary School.
- Please allow me to highlight my qualifications as they relate to the requirements outlined in the position description.
- Enclosed please find my resume, letters of recommendation, and application packet.

**6. Edit out statements that go without saying:** Would you apply for a position if you were not dedicated, excited or enthusiastic? Plus, readers would rather focus on your qualifications than on your emotions—how pleased, excited, or enthusiastic you feel. In the following two examples, the writers state the obvious:

- I am dedicated and excited about the opportunity to help children.
- I am excited about the opportunity to begin my career in a school system such as yours.

**7. Avoid clichés, sentimentality, and romantic statements about children and education:** Though teaching can indeed be a rewarding experience, the following examples identify inexperienced teachers who may be unprepared for the often sobering realities of the classroom:

- Nothing is more important than providing children with a good education.
- There is nothing more beautiful than the look of excitement on the faces of children as they learn about the world around them.
- Teaching is my passion . . . . It brings me great joy to participate as my students connect learning with their future workplace skills.

### ***III. Editing and Proofing***

- Your cover letter should be free of all errors (typos, misspellings, and grammatical errors) and edited for concision and clarity. Double check—triple check—for accuracy, and ask two or three skilled readers to edit and proof your document.

- Having said that, now remember this: an error-free document does not substitute for a cover letter largely devoid of content. The emphasis placed on writing error-free cover letters often suggests to students that detecting surface errors represents the most important component of generating a cover letter. Let me repeat, yes, a cover letter should be error-free, but proofing should be the final stage of the writing process—after you have developed a letter that illustrates your qualifications in a persuasive way.

#### ***IV. Layout, Format, and Appearance***

- Type your letter and use the block format for business correspondence—single-space text, double-space between paragraphs, align text with left margin.
- Print your letter, as well as your resume and list of references, on quality paper (at least 20lb bond/weight)—either white, beige, or off-white.
- Use the appropriate font size (11 or 12) and a readable and professional-looking font type. Most business documents use Times Roman, Palatino, Helvetica, or Arial.
- Match the heading of your resume with the heading of your cover letter—for a more professional look.
- Sign your letter using black or blue ink. (For print copies, of course)

## **Education Cover Letters: Examples for Evaluation**

### ***I. Opening Paragraphs***

(Developed by the Writing Center, Ohio Wesleyan University, 2010)

**Use the following criteria to evaluate the sample opening paragraphs listed below:**

- Note why you are writing—i.e., applying for a teaching position
  - Identify the specific teaching position and school
  - Note where or how you learned about the job, particularly if someone working in the school district recommended that you apply; or mention if you have another connection to the school district—e.g., as a former student or as a student-teacher
  - Conclude (the paragraph) with a “bridge” or an “umbrella” sentence that includes the three qualification you plan to discuss in the body paragraphs
  - Link the qualifications to the position or school district:
1. It has always been my desired [sic] to become a teacher and I am dedicated to the field of education. With the enclosed resume, I would like to express my interest in becoming a part of your teaching staff. I graduated from the University of Idaho with a B.S. in Elementary

Education after recently completing my student teaching experience with a class of second grade students.

2. Please accept this letter as my application for the position of first grade teacher at Merrill Elementary School. I was referred to this position by my brother, Charlie Sheen. Enclosed please find my resume, letters of recommendation, and application packet.
3. I am submitting my resume in response to the announcement on your website regarding an opening for a third grade teacher in the Pittsburgh Public School District. I believe that I am well prepared and qualified for this opportunity.
4. I am very excited to submit this letter as my application for Special Education Program Assistant at Bay View Middle School. I saw the advertisement for this position on the University of Wisconsin-River Falls “Hire a Falcon” website. Enclose please find my resume, application, transcript and license.
5. I was pleased to learn that you have an opening for a music teacher. I have been waiting for the opportunity to help more children develop a love and appreciations for music.
6. As promised when we met at your teacher fair yesterday, this letter is my formal application for the position of Instructor of Small Business Marketing and Management at Bay Valley Business High School. Your enthusiasm and excitement about your charter high school are contagious. I believe my unique blend of classroom instruction, educational management, and marketing background is perfect of this new position and the curriculum you are offering to your students.
7. I understand the Flushing Community School district will have an opening for a secondary math teacher for the 2008-2009 school year. As you may know, I have been student teaching with Mr. Peterson in his math classes and with Mr. Menenga in a senior government class. I will soon be graduating from UM—Flint and am eager to begin my career. I hope you will take a few minutes to review my credential in consideration for the open math position.
8. It is with great interest that I submit my resume for the seventh grade mathematics position I saw posted on your district’s website. I am familiar with Westwood School District through my methods field experience with Ms. Mary Smith at Lake Middle School in the spring of 2006. I feel that my background makes me a good candidate for the seventh grade position.
9. I really enjoyed speaking with you and Ms. Cinos during my visit to Western Beaver School District last month for the Regional Math Competition. I found your faculty and administration both friendly and helpful and your students eager to learn. I believe this combination demonstrates the positive working environment that I desire. For this reason, I am very interested in the secondary mathematics position currently open with your school district.

## ***II. Body Paragraphs***

(Developed by the Writing Center, Ohio Wesleyan University, 2010)

**Use the following criteria to evaluate the sample body paragraphs listed below:**

- **Develop at least two, ideally three, body paragraphs:** a) Focus on one topic or qualification in each paragraph; b) begin with a topic sentence, which you might link to the position; and c) include plenty of support (i.e., examples, details, numbers, or statistics).
- **Develop cohesive paragraphs with a meaningful method of development:** a) Make connections between sentences and explain how your evidence adds up to something more than the individual parts; b) Some students make the mistake of writing a resume in paragraph form or presenting selected qualifications in a list-like way.
- **Consider the following for language and tone:** a) Emphasize the positive; b) Convey confidence and edit out qualifications; c) Avoid absolutes and over-confidence; d) Avoid treating your reader as a subordinate; e) Avoid being overly deferential; and f) Avoid clichés, sentimentality, and romantic statements about children and education. **Check the cover letter guidelines for additional criteria and examples.**
- **Edit each sentence for concision with the following considerations in mind:** a) Edit out statements that go without saying; b) Minimize the use of “I think,” “I believe,” and “I feel”; and c) Edit out unnecessary words, phrases, and sentences.
  1. During my internship, I developed and implemented two teaching units designed to increase students’ performance in science and mathematics. These units proved to be effective by facilitating students’ interest in science and math while simultaneously enhancing their achievement in these areas.
  2. **My Qualifications:**
    - Developed curriculum projects designed to enhance reading skills during pre-student teaching, student teaching, and Title 1 experiences that utilized scanning, reading for detail, Orton Gillingham phonics instruction and the Read Naturally literacy program to increase reading comprehension by 30%
    - Let a team made up of school administrators and fellow teachers to receive a grant for and adapt the *Investigation* math program to assist fifth grade students at Westside Elementary School in enhancing basic math skills.
  3. Having been a student and a student teacher in the Pittsburgh public schools, I am eager to return as a teacher. My experience in this urban setting was most rewarding and convinced me that I will do my best teaching here. I really want to stimulate the minds of children and to make sure that each child’s individuality and personal talents will thrive. My goal is to make children enjoy learning and become life-long learners.
  4. As a special education instructor, I bring a great deal of real world experience to the position. After completing my undergraduate degree in psychology, I spent five years working as a mental health worker at Hamilton House in Lake Elmo, Minnesota. During this time I was fortunate to work with four adults of varying abilities and see the extraordinary results that can be made through hard work and caring. Because of this wonderful experience, I decided to redirect my career towards working with exceptional children.
  5. I hold a master’s degree in music education from Florida State University. Currently, I am a member of the Florida Symphony Orchestra. I also teach private violin and piano lessons.

6. As my resume and application indicate, I have considerable experience in instructions and in building strong working relationships with business and industry. My qualifications are unusually suited for this position in that I have been successful in creating and delivering business-related curriculum to a wide range of students. It would be my great pleasure to bring that experience to your inventive concept of incorporating business skills with academics.
7. One of the first things you will notice about me is that I am not a traditional college graduate. In fact, it has been a long road to get to this point. But the trip, with all its detours, has been worth the effort. I love math, and more importantly, I enjoy teaching high schoolers. Because I was a troubled student, I can relate to the frustrations many students experience. I understand what it's like to study and struggle to get good grades. This gives me credibility with my students.
8. Working with children is one of my passions, and I have known I wanted to be a teacher since I was a sophomore in high school. I have extensive experience with middle school students through my field experiences, student teaching, and volunteer opportunities. From my experience with Ms. Smith, I know that faculty at the Westwood School District try to incorporate as many creative activities into learning as possible. I was able to showcase my creativity by developing an assignment on surface area that allowed students to design imaginary countries and draw maps.
9. I have had several teaching experiences in secondary mathematics and have had the opportunity to work with multiple teaching strategies. Several students improved their math scores significantly after being tutored individually in my after-school sessions. Enthusiasm in the classroom and dedication to education make me a viable candidate for the position. I believe that I would be a valuable asset to your school district.

### ***III. Closing Paragraphs***

(Developed by the Writing Center, Ohio Wesleyan University, 2010)

**Use the following criteria to evaluate the sample closing paragraphs listed below:**

- Note you included a resume or other materials (e.g., application packet, transcript, licenses, or letters of recommendation).
- Request an interview, preferably in question form, and specify when you can meet.
- Conclude with a positive, forward-looking statement, focusing on how your qualifications match the needs of the school.
- Make it easy for readers to contact you.
- Edit and revise for audience (readers) and tone: Avoid groveling, “sucking up,” making demands, being overly confident, or inadvertently suggesting you control the interview process.

1. I look forward to meeting with you to discuss your goals for Silver Creek Elementary School and the contributions that I will be able to make.
2. My philosophy of teaching means that each student is allowed to utilize their particular gifts and talents to create personal success. I greatly appreciate your taking the time to review my application materials. If I can prove more information or you would like to set up an interview, please contact me at (555) 555-5555 or at president\_bartlett@hotmail.com.
3. Teaching is a great joy to me, and I envision being a good educator in a supportive school district. I will appreciate the opportunity to interview with you and look forward to your response. I can be reached at (724) 946-1234 or cookwe@westminster.edu.
4. My experience working with “real world” adults after finishing my undergraduate degree gives me a unique look into the future lives of exceptional students. I look forward to meeting with you more to discuss my qualifications. If you have any questions or would like to set up an interview, please contact me at (715) 425-5555 or at martoskovitch@hotmail.com.
5. I feel that I am the ideal candidate for the position. I would like to arrange a suitable time for us to meet and discuss your goals for this position. I will telephone you next week to arrange a suitable time to meet.
6. I look forward to hearing from your office and the opportunity to meet with the interview committee. Thank you for your consideration.
7. I have received a good evaluation from both Mr. Peterson and Mr. Menenga. I believe they would tell you what I lack in classroom experience I more than make up for with enthusiasm and motivation. I hope you will give me a chance to share that enthusiasm with you in an interview. I will contact you to arrange a time. Thank you for your consideration.
8. My enthusiasm for teaching, and my dedication to the field of education, make me a viable candidate for the position with your school district. I would appreciate the chance to interview with you and look forward to hearing from you. I can be reached at (724) 555-1234 or joba@westminster.edu. Thank you for your consideration.
9. I look forward to hearing from you and hope we can arrange an interview at your convenience. I can be reached at (724) 946-0000 or doejl@westminster.edu. Thank you for your consideration.

# Sample Cover Letters

Below we offer examples of education cover letters from several sources (the first three followed by critical commentary). These samples may have a few flaws, but for the most part they follow at least some of the guidelines we recommend. As you read and study these examples, identify some of the characteristic features and conventions that were introduced in the first section of the cover letter packet. It might be helpful to write a critique of two or three of the sample cover letters, noting the strengths and weaknesses of each. This exercise will be particularly illuminating if you use criteria from the guidelines to inform your critique.

To prepare yourself, you might begin by reading the first three cover letters, starting on the following page, and then focusing on the critical commentary that follows. Put yourself in the position of an employer—perhaps a school principal—who will select only three candidates to interview from an application pool of 40. The ideal candidate should highlight qualifications that match the teaching position and provide sufficient information to make the selection process easier for the employer.

## Example One

Dear Dr. Snyder:

I was pleased to learn that you have an opening for a music teacher. I have been waiting for the opportunity to help more children develop a love and appreciation for music.

I hold a master's degree in music education from Florida State University. Currently, I am a member of the Florida Symphony Orchestra. I also teach private violin and piano lessons.

I feel that I am the ideal candidate for the position. I would like to arrange a suitable time for us to meet and discuss your goals for the position. I will telephone you next week to arrange a suitable time to meet.

Thank you,

[Ima Nitwit]  
(Wiggins 10)

## Example Two

### Julia Scully

20 Angela Street \* Colonie, NY 00000 \* (555) 555-5555 \* scully@sage.edu

---

[Date]

[Hiring Agent Name]

[Title]

[School Name]

[Address]

[City, State ZIP]

Dear M./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_:

As a dedicated, highly knowledgeable Teacher with certification to teach pre-Kindergarten through grade 6, I believe my skills and talents can make an immediate and long-term contribution to [name of school].

During my intensive teaching assignments with Russell Sage College, I have enjoyed teaching elementary and preschool students in a variety of jobs and educational settings. I am skilled at developing and implementing stimulating lesson plans, administering and evaluating standardized test, writing profiles, and conducting parent-teacher conferences. I am a team player capable of working well and building strong rapport with students, professionals, parents, and staff members. My educational background includes a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education with a minor in Psychology from Russell Sage College. My proven ability to help children achieve their highest levels through positive motivation will be an asset to your team.

The accompanying resume provides further details of my accomplishments and what I have to offer. I believe it would be mutually beneficial for us to meet and discuss your current or anticipated teaching positions. I will next week to inquire about such a meeting.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Julia Scully

Enc. Resume  
(Noble 75)

### Example Three

#### Suki Osaka

15 Longwood Avenue  
Northhampton, Massachusetts 55555  
Cell: (555) 555-5555  
Home: (555) 500-5000

September 25, 2007

Nadine Phillips  
Principal  
Hadley School System  
3 Rindge Road  
Hadley, MA 50000

Dear Ms. Phillips:

What I love about teaching students with moderate special needs is the children themselves. They know that I am interested in them by my enthusiastic approach and my ability to help them learn in the areas in which they are experiencing the most difficulty. I am confident that I would be a strong asset to your special-needs program as a Learning Center Teacher.

I am skilled at developing modifications to curricula and lessons to ensure that each individual's learning style is addressed with appropriate instructional plans. My students are highly motivated by the creative, multisensory lessons I develop. Seeing students grow academically, socially, and emotionally using these approaches is very satisfying.

In order to be the best teacher I can be, I worked hard to develop my skills and knowledge base in my Master's program at Clark University (4.00). I gained top-notch experience as an Inclusion Assistant in the highly regarded Amherst Public Schools for the past two years. Also, I have had extensive practicum experience in neighboring school systems. I feel equipped now to assume the responsibilities of the top teaching role in a learning center.

I am certified in elementary education and moderate special needs (K-9). My experience encompasses teaching the full curriculum to general education classes containing some inclusion students, as well as adapting instruction to specific children in small-group and individual contexts. I collaborate well with other teachers in a team-teaching setting and as part of a multidisciplinary team focused on enhancing the learning experience for each child. This range of experience prepares me well for teaching students in a learning center.

I would appreciate an opportunity to meet with you. I will contact you to set a convenient time. Thank you for considering my sincere interest in the position.

Best regards,

Suki Osaka  
(Noble 71)

## Critique of Examples One-Three

### *The Opening Paragraph*

- Readers want to know why you are writing—i.e., applying for a specific teaching position. Readers do not need to know that you were “pleased to learn that you have an opening for a music teacher” or that you “have been waiting for the opportunity to help more children develop a love and appreciation for music.”
- Readers also want a brief statement or summary of your qualifications and experiences. For recent graduates, this means identifying your degree and including, as these applicants do, a statement about the skills and special talents you would bring to the position. Note that these applicants frame their statements with the readers’ interests in mind—e.g., “I am confident that I would be a strong asset to your special-needs program as a Learning Center teaching.” Note, too, however, that neither one of the three applicants includes an “umbrella” or “bridge” statement—a statement that prepares readers for the three or four major qualification that will be discussed in the body paragraphs.
- Two of the applicants, Julia Scully and Suki Osaka, convey uncertainty, doubt, or a lack of confidence when they frame their “qualification” sentences with the following “hedge” words or phrases: **a)** “**I am confident** I would be a strong asset to your special-needs program as a Learning Center Teacher”; **b)** “**I believe** my skills and talents can make an immediate and long-term contribution to [name of school].” Remove these and other “hedge” words and phrases—the “I think” and “I feel” statements, for example—from your cover letters. **Others:** “If you decide you are interested” or “I hope you will grant me an interview.”

### *The Body Paragraphs*

- Compared to examples two and particularly three, the author of the first cover letter does not provide readers with enough information for the readers to make an informed decision about her qualifications. A letter of this brevity may convey, as noted in the guidelines, one of several unintended negative messages: that you have limited experience; that you struggle with written communication; or that you did not make the effort to explain your qualifications in more detail.
- The author of example two includes more complete information in the body paragraph of the letter than the author of the first example. However, the author presents this information as a list of qualifications, without evidence or support, in one long body paragraph, making it difficult to read and undermining her efforts to make a convincing “argument” about her qualifications.
- Applicant three, Suki Osaka, discusses her qualifications in three body paragraphs, which makes for a more reader-friendly cover letter. Note, however, that paragraph three reads like a list of her experiences, paragraph four lacks focus, and all the body paragraphs lack

evidence. Consider, as an example, how she might revise paragraph two:

**Revision Suggestions:** **a)** Combine sentences one and two and focus more on the students. Note that she says, “I am skilled at” and “I developed”; **b)** Omit sentence three—another statement that focuses more on the applicant than on the students; and **c)** Provide more details about here “curricula and lessons” and also support claims of “success” with benchmark information and quantitative data.

- These applicants should omit statements that go without saying, particularly ones that focus on their emotions or feelings: **a)** “What I love about teaching students with moderate needs is the children themselves”; **b)** “Seeing students grow academically, socially, and emotionally using these approaches is very satisfying; and **c)** “I have enjoyed teaching elementary and preschool students in a variety of jobs and educational settings.” Would you apply for a teaching position if you were not dedicated to teaching and concerned about the well-being of students?

### *The Concluding Paragraph*

- These applicants request an interview, as all applicants should. While one applicant, Suki Osaka, begins the paragraph with a positive and polite statement—i.e., “I would appreciate an opportunity to meet with you”—but she turns this into a negative, as the other two applicants do, when she assumes an interview will be granted by the reader: “I will contact you to set a convenient time.” Consider applicant one: “I would like to arrange a suitable time for us to meet and discuss your goals for the position. I will telephone you next week to arrange a suitable time to meet.” The writer focuses more on herself—“I would like to arrange”—and fails to recognize that the reader, not the writer, will grant or deny the interview.

**Revised Sentences:** Could we arrange a suitable time to meet so I can explain in more detail how my qualification match the needs of your school? I will telephone you next week about this possibility. The writer conveys confidence but avoids treating the reader as a subordinate

- Julia Scully notes that she included a resume, as applicants often do, but she could omit the understood portion of the sentence: “provides further details of my accomplishments and what I have to offer.” In addition, she and the other applicants could provide information about when they would be available to interview: “I could meet with you on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday afternoons after 1:00 pm.”

## Example Four

### **Barbara Watson**

1624 Blanding Lane \* Turlock, CA 95383 \* (209) 653-1722—H \* (209) 698-1624—W

October 20, 2005

Dear Dr. Webster:

As promised when we met at your teacher fair yesterday, this letter is my formal application for the position of Instructor of Small Business Marketing and Management at Bay Valley Business High School. Your enthusiasm and excitement about your charter high school are contagious! I believe my unique blend of classroom instruction, education management, and marketing background is perfect for this new position and the curriculum you are offering to your students.

As my resume and application indicate, I have considerable experience in instructions and in building strong working relationships with business and industry. My Qualifications are unusually suited for this position in that I have been successful I creating and delivering business-related curriculum to a wide range of students. It would be my great pleasure to bring that experience to your inventive concept of incorporating business skills with academics.

You mentioned in our brief conversation that the marketing component is a very important aspect of making Bay Valley Business High School a success. I have taught marketing and entrepreneurship classes when presenting employability skills for the Community College's Job Skills Institute, a program for high school students. My students have learned to create Web pages, use PowerPoint for their "corporate" presentations, and use Microsoft Office to develop their personal portfolios. My students create their own small corporations or business in which they develop job descriptions, elect officers, generate budgets, and experience the many facets of starting up a small business. The students love this! And so do I.

Teaching is my passion. I am most effective when I am in the classroom. It brings me great joy to participate as my students connect learning with their future workplace skills. I have heard wonderful things about the quality of staff and students at Bay Valley Business High School and that your future looks incredibly promising. Your vision of a high school that opens doors for students to achieve both academically and in the business world is innovative and challenging. I believe my passions for education, coupled with my unique background, is a perfect fit with your vision.

I look forward to hearing from your office and the opportunity to meet with the interview committee. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Barbara J. Watson

Enclosures: Bay Valley Office of Education application; resume; two letters of reference (Enelow and Kursmark 271)

## Example Five

Jennire Tolles

75 Bolivar Terrace, Reading , MA 01867  
jennifertee@aol.com ► 781-592-3409

April 30, 2005

Dear Dr. Cronin:

Your school district's reputation for excellence in education—described so vividly in the recent *New England Journal of Elementary Education*—has prompted me to forward my resume for consideration for fall teaching positions. In addition to strong professional qualifications, you will find that I also have the intangible personal qualities that fit your culture and enable me to truly make a difference to the children I teach.

Please consider my qualification:

- Recent bachelor's degree and Massachusetts teaching certification, grades 1-8.
- Year-long teaching experience as an LD Tutor for elementary and high school students—experience adapting classroom material for individual students, delivering individual and group lessons, working collaboratively with classroom teachers, and promoting a positive learning environment for my students.
- Diverse field-teaching experiences (grades 1, 4, 6); successful experiences planning and delivering integrated lessons that sparked students' interest, creativity, and desire to learn.
- Keen respect for each individual child and appreciation for the differences among us.
- A highly effective classroom-management style that creates an environment in which all children can learn.

I will call you within a few days to see when it might be convenient to meet. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Tolles

Enclosure  
(Enelow and Kursmark 266)

## Example Six

### Casey T. Mulcahey

1984 N. Elms Road  
Flushing, MI 48433  
810-555-0234  
caseymulcahey@verizon.net

---

May 19, 2005

Mr. Robert Jones, Superintendent  
Flushing Community Schools  
522 N. McKinley Road  
Flushing, MI 48433

Dear Mr. Jones:

I understand the Flushing Community School district will have an opportunity for a secondary math teacher for the 2005-2006 school year. As you may know, I have been student teaching with Mr. Peterson in his math class and with Mr. Menenga in a senior government class. I will soon be graduate from UM—Flint and am eager to begin my career. I hope you will take a few minutes to review my credentials in consideration for the open math position.

One of the first things you will notice about me is that I am not a traditional college graduate. In fact, it has been a long road to get to this point. But the trip, with all its detours, has been worth the effort. I love math, and more importantly, I enjoy teaching high school. Because I was a troubled student, I can relate to the frustrations many students experience. I understand what it's like to study and struggle to get good grades. This gives me credibility with my students.

I have received good evaluations from both Mr. Peterson and Mr. Menenga. I believe they would tell you what I lack in classroom experience I more than make up for with enthusiasm and motivation. I hope you will give me a chance to share that enthusiasm with you in an interview. I will contact you to arrange a time. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Casey T. Mulcahey

Enclosure  
(Enelow and Kursmark 267)

## Example Seven

### Jerome L. Crown

7529 Heritage Way, Loveland, OH 45140

jlcrown@zoomtown.com • 513-984-3090

May 15, 2005

Dr. Keith Kelly, Principal  
Tristate Alternative Schools  
9325 Cooper Road  
Cincinnati, OH 45242

Dear Dr. Kelly:

As a recent college graduate with extensive coursework in the science, coupled with solid work experiences in high-volume/high-intensity environments dealing with the public, I think I have quite a bit to offer.

As I consider teaching the sciences in public education, and as I further consider what qualifications I might bring to the assignment, the following four points will be of interest to you:

- **I have extensive coursework in the sciences**—biology, chemistry, physics, and mathematics. I present a wide range of teaching capabilities to needy principal.
- **I will be strong in front of the classroom.** I am a natural persuader and influencer, and am people-centered and highly verbal. My sales experiences were very successful and included training my peers, and my time with Juan & Pedro's developed my interpersonal and communication skills.
- **I'm a whiz at documentation and paperwork.** With Juan & Pedro's, I managed the seating allocations for up to 1,000 guests a night. And with G.H. Troutman, I tracked and managed a 5,000-unit inventory rolling over nearly every month. I am organized and efficient.
- **I'm the right personality type.** I am an influencer (DISC), and that means I love the give-and-take of discussions, challenging issues, or intriguing questions. I am considerate of others and oftentimes a leader among my peers.

As you can see, the foundation blocks that indicate probable success in the classroom are present: scientific knowledge, platform/persuasion abilities, organizational capabilities, and personality type.

I thank you in advance for the time you have taken reading this letter and my accompanying resume, and I look forward to meeting you in person to discuss how I can contribute to the excellence of your school district by making a positive impact on the lives of my students.

Sincerely,

Jerome L. Crown

Enclosure: Resume  
(Enelow and Kursmark 268)

## Example Eight

**Christine L Bernardo**  
000 ATTAWA ROAD  
NEW VISTA, NM 88888

---

March 22, 2008

Dr. Stephanie Stasos, Assistant Superintendent  
Human Resources Department  
New Vista Public Schools  
New Vista, NM 88888

Dear Dr. Stasos:

Recently, my neighbor, who teaches at New Vista High School, informed me that there may be several elementary and middle school teaching positions available for the coming school year. Since my last correspondence with you, I have received my middle school endorsement, in addition to my certification to teach in elementary grades. I am now certified to teach social studies at the middle school level through grade eight.

May I add that I feel quite honored to have been chosen from among more than 200 applicants to participate—along with mainly seasoned teachers—in a fully paid summer institute sponsored by the National Geographic Society. I am confident that this unique experience will add much interest to my own classes in project development and general class discussions.

As a substitute teacher in the New Vista schools this past year, I found administrators, supervisors, and faculty exceptionally helpful and pleasant. Such welcoming support from them is particularly assuring to entry-level teachers like me. I felt like one of the family!

Thank you, Dr. Stasos, for taking time from your busy schedule to see me last spring, and I look forward to another meeting with you soon to discuss in more depth my goals and long-range ambitions in the teaching profession. I would appreciate your scheduling me for a formal interview as I apply for a teaching position in the New Vista Public School District.

Sincerely,

Christine L. Bernardo

Enclosures: resume; employment application packet  
(Noble 79)

## Example Nine

**Susan Wiley**  
**Swilwy2222@man.com**  
**Cell: (000) 000-0000**

---

Permanent Address: 1111 Clinton Avenue \* Houston, TX 00000 \* (281) 000-0000

January 30, 2008

*“One hundred years from now it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in, or the kind of car I drove, but the world may be different because I was important in the life of a child.”*

—Anonymous

Dear Mrs. Pearson:

I love the preceding quote! Although it may be seen as too “sentimental” by some, I truly believe that being able to make a positive difference in children’s lives is a worthwhile endeavor—and the *true* reward in life. I am excited about the opportunity to launch my teaching career and influence student growth, and I am certain that my enthusiasm and ability to motivate would be a welcome addition to your faculty.

My educational experience convinced me that being a teacher is a wonderful career choice. While taking upper-level courses in secondary education and completing observation hours at local junior high and high schools, I studied educational theory and, more importantly, realized the value of consistent discipline enforcement, student-centered learning, and classroom/lesson organization, among many other educator functions. Through my Cum Laude G.P.A. and performance on major projects, I demonstrated a strong background knowledge in these areas, and although theory does not always translate into practice, I am confident that my knowledge will transfer effectively in an educational setting.

I have had two very different, yet interesting experiences in my employment history that indirectly prepared me for some of the challenges I will face as an educator. As a server at The Olive Garden restaurant, I was recognized by management for providing excellent, prompt service in an environment that could be described as fast-paced and highly stressful. As an intern reporter for the *Moore County News Press*, I developed a keen appreciation for the richness and value of small-town living through firsthand observation and interviewing local residents for human-interest stories. Although both experiences are quite different from working day-to-day in an educational setting, I do feel that these positions prepared me for handling difficult situations and relating to diverse individuals on a one-on-one basis.

My resume is enclosed to provide details about my background and qualifications. If permissible, I will contact you to follow up on this letter of inquiry, or you may contact me at the number of my permanent residence. I look forward to meeting with you and discussing how I can contribute to the success of your school.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Susan Wiley  
(Noble 73)

## Example Ten

**Ethan Breines**  
86 Pinegrove Avenue, Mapleshade, NJ 55555  
555-555-5555 (h) | 000-000-0000 © | etbreines@tru.net

January 5, 2008

RE: Middle school or high school Social Studies teaching position

Dear Ms. Homes:

Recent deep school-budget cuts means that there are many candidates for a very limited number of positions in the Mapleshade School District. Why should you hire me?

Here's the difference I believe I bring to Mapleshade's students—dedication, motivation, and fun. I can make students work hard, I can make them laugh, and I can make them want to come to class. And I'll do it with all students, not just the top of the class.

But that's not the whole picture. I am absolutely committed to helping students see the world as a whole, not as a town in New Jersey. I want them to know that they are important to this country and to the world—that as citizens they have an obligation to be informed, to make considered choices, to vote, and to participate in the democratic process. I want them to be excited about the past and about how the lessons of the past impact the future.

I want them to love to come to Social Studies class and to groan if they have a substitute teacher because I make Social Studies the best part of their school day. I want them to love to learn, to be excited about what every class brings, to be inspired critical thinkers and writers, and to do well on tests so they will have a better future. I want them to see me walking the halls, chatting with students, attending school events, and coaching sports. I want them to know that I care enough to be there off-hours.

Maybe that's how all new teachers think, but I am sincere and believe I can make it happen—or at least I can try, and never give up. In fact I know it can happen because I've had teachers like that—and that is why I'm writing you today.

Thank you very much for your attention; I look forward to meeting with you the school board.

Sincerely,

Ethan Breines

Enclosure  
(Noble 80)

## Example Eleven

### Donald R. Jones

206 Hawkins Lane \* Columbus, Ohio 43200 \* 614.456.000 \* drjones@juno.com

---

April 17, 2008

Dear Mr. Trobough:

After a successful career in government, I recently fulfilled a lifelong desire to become an educator at the secondary level. I have completed my education licensure requirements and am excited to begin my teaching career. This letter is sent to inquire about possible teaching opportunities within the Columbus City Schools. The enclosed resume will provide detailed information regarding my background and experience in support of my candidacy.

To briefly highlight my qualifications, I offer you the following:

- Social Studies Comprehensive Certification (7-12) complemented by a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science
- Successful classroom teaching experience as a substitute and student teacher in diverse classroom settings—experienced in developing and implementing integrated lesson plans for cooperative learning
- More than 10 years of professional involvement in government at the local, state and federal levels providing invaluable insight and knowledge to bring into the classroom

In short, I bring a unique combination of education and “real world” experience not often found in today’s classroom teachers. I believe the time I spend in government can only enhance my social studies teaching. Should you have a teaching position available, I would appreciate being considered a serious candidate. You should also know that I would be interested in serving as an advisor for extracurricular clubs and/or activities. Feel free to contact me to set up an interview or to answer any questions you may have regarding my background and experiences.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Donald R. Jones

Enclosure  
(Noble 81)

## Example Twelve

### Eileen Wright

121 Foxglove Road \* Hudson, WI 54015 \* 212-5555 \* eileen.wright@uwrf.edu

---

April 1, 2000

Dr. John Bennett  
Superintendent of Schools  
County School  
2549 Oak Street  
Pleasant Valley, IN 47123

Dear Dr. Bennett:

I am inquiring about the availability of an elementary teaching position at County School. As a recent graduate with a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, I am excited about the opportunity to begin my career in a school system such as yours. I particularly appreciate what the system is doing with curriculum revision and “Teachers Teaching Teachers.” The \_\_\_\_\_ of challenge and support provided by these programs creates a positive school environment.

While student teaching 4<sup>th</sup> grade, I formed cooperative learning groups, organized individualized projects, created learning centers, and implemented learning style research in every lesson. Alternative assessment methods, such as rubrics and performance assessments, in combination with traditional tests enabled me to evaluate children individually and comprehensively. In addition, I assisted with the after school tutoring program, where I worked with five students on their math homework in a one-on-one setting. By incorporating real life examples to illustrate concepts from each math assignment the students understanding improved, which was reflected in their grades.

Enclosed you will find my letters of recommendation and resume, which contains other pertinent teaching experience. I would like to request an application and any other materials necessary for the application process. If you have any questions or if I may provide additional information, I can be reached at Eileen.Wright@yahoo.com or at (715) 425-0000. Thank you for your consideration of my qualifications. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Eileen Wright  
(Eileen Wright)

## Example Thirteen

### Melody M. Martoskovitch

999 North 99\* Street \* River Falls, WI 54022 \* (715) 425-5555 \* martoskovitch@hotmail.com

August 21, 2006

Dr. Ivan Denisovich Howard  
Sumico-School District  
2700 Lineville Road Green Bay, WI 54313

Dear Dr. Denisovich:

I am very excited to submit this letter as my application for Special Education Program Assistant at Bay View Middle School. I saw the advertisement for this position on the University of Wisconsin-River Falls "Hire a Falcon" website. Enclosed please find my resume, application, transcript and license.

As a special education instructor, I bring a great deal of real world experience to the position. After completing my undergraduate degree in psychology, I spent five years working as a mental health worker at Hamilton House in Lake Elmo, Minnesota. During this time I was fortunate to work with four adults with varying abilities and see the extraordinary results that can be made through hard work and caring. Because of this wonderful experience, I decided to redirect my career towards working with exceptional children.

During my student teaching experience, I used the knowledge gained in my previous job to develop practical curriculum modifications for students who were mild to moderately mentally impaired. I worked very well as a member of the team that evaluated individual Education Plans by learning to understand the viewpoints of the educator, psychologist and parents. This led to a high comfort level between all team members which created the best possible program for each individual student. I also worked to create a real world curriculum that allowed students to learn valuable life skills while still maintaining high academic achievement. In addition to experience, I have also attended numerous conferences on educational methodology which have made me a firm believer in the power of inclusion, peer teaching and the modeling of proper behavior.

My experience working with "real world" adults after finishing my undergraduate degree give me a unique look into the future lives of exceptional students. I look forward to meeting with you more to discuss my qualifications. If you have any questions or would like to set up an interview, please contact me at (715) 425-5555 or at martoskovitch@hotmail.com.

Sincerely,

Melody M. Martoskovitch  
(Martoskovitch)

## Works Cited

- “Buzzwords and Phrases-Education.” *Career Connection*. D’Youvilled College, n.d. Web. 25 Feb. 2011.
- Enelow, Wendy S. and Louise M. Kursmark. *Expert Resumes for Teachers and Educators*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Indianapolis, Indiana: JIST Works, 2005.
- Noble, David F. *Gallery of Best Cover Letters: A Collection of Quality Cover Letters by Professional Resume Writers*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Indianapolis, Indiana: JIST Works, 2007.
- Wright, Eileen. “Eileen Wright.” *Career Services: Navigating Your Success*. University of Wisconsin-River Falls, n.d. Web. 14 Feb. 2011.
- Martoskovitch, Melody M. “Melody M. Martoskovitch.” *Career Services: Navigating Your Success*. University of Wisconsin-River Falls, n.d. Web. 14 Feb. 2011.
- Wiggins, Aleathea R. *Cover Letters for Teachers*. West Conshohocken, Pennsylvania: Infinity, 2005.

# Appendix: Phrases for Education Majors & Minors

Include language and phrases used by other in the discipline or field.

Adhering to objectives set by state  
Audiovisual learning techniques  
Classroom management (specific)  
Compassion for students  
Computer skills/technology  
Conferences, open houses, meetings  
Confidence in the classroom  
Cooperative learning methods  
Creative abilities/experience  
Critical thinking skills  
Diverse population (global perspective)  
Education team (team teaching)  
Effectiveness of teaching methods  
Enthusiasm/energy in the classroom  
Fairness in the classroom  
Future plans related to teaching  
Hands on learning activities  
High-expectations (teacher, student, parent)  
Improving academic potential (how)  
Inclusion classroom (setting)  
Individual differences between students  
Initiative (examples)  
Innovative ideas  
Involving Parents (classroom projects)  
Languages  
Learning at home/ tutoring opportunities  
Learning centers/activities  
Multi-cultural (settings/global perspective)  
Passion for teaching (give examples)  
Personal growth (describe)  
Real world experience (paid or volunteer)  
Self-Assessment tools  
Social responsibility examples  
Special needs populations  
Student's abilities/class levels taught  
Teaching methods (descriptions)  
Teaching styles  
Team player examples  
Team-teaching experience  
Time-management strategies  
Understanding concepts  
Unit plans (subjects and titles)  
Variety of learning experiences

("Buzzwords and Phrases-Education")