

Applying for positions in government schools

How Government schools recruit

It is a requirement that all Government schools advertise positions through Recruitment Online on the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development website www.education.vic.gov.au/schooljobs. There are also some other ways schools will advertise and/or find expressions of interest. These include:

- School website
- Word of mouth
- Student teacher placements/internships
- Other schools/principals
- *The Age*, or local newspapers
- Mock interviews conducted by principals with final year education students at various universities.
- Referral from other schools.

The recruitment process

Once schools have advertised, the recruitment process may involve some or all of the following:

- Short-listed applicants have a phone interview with the Principal, then another short-list is compiled and applicants ranked.
- Interview with a panel of teachers including the principal, coordinator/s, assistant principals, neighbouring teachers, and school council presidents. Panels will always have gender representation and a Merit and Equity trained staff member.
- Principals may contact referees and applicants' supervising teachers.
- Principals, if needed, may also seek permission to contact non-referenced referees.
- Following the interview, principals receive feedback from the staff and if no further interview is required, a selection is made.
- Successful notification is usually by phone – unsuccessful applicants are sent a letter.
- Tour of the school and introduction to staff members.

How suitable applicants are identified for Government schools

Factors influencing the selection of a suitable candidate:

- The effort made in applying for the position – consider visiting the school, even before a job is advertised to get a feel for the environment, to drop in your resume, meet the Principal and network. All this effort will pay off. If they can't offer you a job, you may be recommended to another school.
- Resumes – they are often the your first point of contact with a school and they should be of a high standard
- Your responses to the Key Selection Criteria
- Whether you have a good knowledge of the ethos of the school
- People skills- teaching is a "people person" job. Principals need to see that you can relate to parents, staff and students
- Your responses during the interview – the tone of your answers is very important – schools do not want to employ a negative person
- Ability during the interview to be articulate and being prepared to identify your strengths and weaknesses if asked by the interview panel.

- The way you present yourself at interviews – it provides an indication of whether you will fit into the school community
- Referees
- Schools also will keep in mind the type of person they want and what the applicant can offer the school beyond their subject e.g. school productions, sports coaching, debating.

What sets one candidate apart from another?

- Someone that has a genuine interest in working with young people
- A belief that they can make a difference to education
- Passion – the desire to get up in the morning! This can be heard in a person's voice, particularly when they are able to talk about something that they are really passionate about
- Experience with young people is a big bonus (paid or voluntary) – including camps, OSHC, sports coaching. Extra experience shows interest and commitment
- Life experience – travel, hobbies
- Resume – because your resume is often the first point of contact, applicants need to highlight why they are the best person for the position
- Good understanding of VELS, PoLT, learning and teaching styles, curriculum and assessment changes and learning strategies.
- Whether or not the applicant made contact with the school apart from sending in a resume
- Diversity in their learning and teaching - CRT work shows a level of experience
- Whether their beliefs about education align with that of the school
- Ability to articulate meaning and answer questions by drawing on personal experiences
- Someone that sees themselves as a researcher, learner and facilitator who can ignite passion in children – “the mind is not a vessel to be filled but a fire to be ignited” (Plutarch).

Advice for students applying to Government schools

Passion for teaching

- Show enthusiasm and interest in children
- Have positive attitude and be organized

Relevant work experience and knowledge

- Get involved in extra-curricular activities on your rounds – school fetes, camps, sport, debating
- Know your subject areas inside out
- Be aware of current pedagogical practices, political issues (in regard to education), teaching strategies, theorists.

Communication skills

- You must be able to positively engage with the students
- Teaching philosophy
- Develop your own teaching philosophy – know why you want to teach
- Remember the teacher who inspired you to become a teacher!

Teaching philosophy

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- Remember the teacher who inspired you to become a teacher!
- Know what teaching is all about to you- the marks or the passion? Delight and experience?

Looking for work

Making links with schools.

- When looking for work, choose a school that suits you and contact them. Use the school's website to assist you in your research to improve your application.
- Develop a link with the school and build relationships – go beyond volunteering to hear students read, discuss team teaching opportunities.
- Personally contact a school and drop your resume in, not just in applying for specific positions, but to any school you would like to work in. You never know what opportunities may arise at short notice and if they have your resume on file already, you may well be contacted.
- It is hard work- remember there are a number of graduates applying for the same positions.

Choice of schools

Choose a school where you can grow and be challenged to take your career skills higher.

Work experience

Try to get some diversity in your experience to broaden your skills. Don't wait for the experience – create it!

- Consider CRT work as it may lead to contract positions.
- Volunteer work with migrant and refugee organisations can help build up your cultural understanding
- Go beyond just being involved in your teaching rounds; revisit the schools you were placed in, get involved in coaching teams or assisting with drama productions, helping out with after school programs (such as Kelly Sports).
- Keep in touch with your supervising teacher, perhaps use them as a mentor.

Applications

- In your application quote brief, positive examples of your practicum reports.
- When applying for specific positions spend plenty of time on the Key Selection Criteria. Check the genre and that it is easy to understand.

Interviews

- Do your homework before an interview – research the school, look at their website
- Never bad mouth anyone - teachers know teachers from other schools!
- Develop a thick skin for both the interview process and the teaching – you will be interrogated.
- Think about how you can stand out in a crowd – use the Key Selection Criteria to your advantage
- Being able to show a range of experiences puts you ahead of others
- Appearance is very important both on teaching rounds and in an interview. Keep the generation of the person interviewing you in mind. Dress appropriately to reflect the school culture. You need to show you can be a good role model for their school.

- Think about how you phrase your responses in an interview. Never use “Because I’m young”– it implies the interviewer is old. Use alternatives such as: “Because I have learnt in circumstances similar to these students, I believe...”
- Don’t hesitate to talk about your interests

Referees

- Keep in contact with your supervising teachers – school referees are very important.

Keep going!

- Don’t be too disheartened if you don’t get an interview
- Don’t give up!

Once in a school

- Immerse yourself; get involved and things will develop from there.
- Learn to be assertive, especially with parents
- Time management – learn it!
- Don’t be afraid to ask for support if you need it.
- Have a mentor – if your school doesn’t provide one, find one yourself and use them.
- Be prepared to have a term planner that is linked with CSF outcomes and essential learning standards, develop assessment folders for each student and keep all files up-to-date. Ask your mentor for help and advice as each school is different.
- You must be able to work in a team. Value and take advantage of teamwork opportunities you have at university.
- The best teachers are those who like kids, but remember you are a teacher and there is a line. You can be friendly, but not their friend.
- In the classroom you need to be able to show discipline and not favouritism – be fair and consistent.

Lifelong learning

- Continually update your skills – you are a learner for the rest of your life.
- Be knowledgeable about your profession- know what the current issues are, read the Education Age, Sofweb, Education Times, VCAA and so on.
- Continue to constantly update your ICT skills.

©This information has been collated on the basis of interviews conducted with government schools in 2004/5 by Jobshop.