

Writing a letter of application -- A suggested model.

There is more to writing a good letter of application than meets the eye. It needs careful preparation and drafting and re-drafting. Be prepared to construct it over an extended period of time if it is going to do for you what you want it to do. Once constructed it needs constant analysis because as you learn and grow as a teacher you have more insight into the profession which you can reflect in your letter.

The purpose of a letter of application is to secure you an interview, at which you can expand upon your philosophy and experiences and how you would put them into practice at this particular school.

It wouldn't be a bad idea to do some research of the school before applying such as surfing the school website and looking at the OFSTED reports to get a feel for the particular nature of the school you are applying to. If a school feels that you have gone out of your way to find out about the school it will be noticed will be a positive point in your favour. At the very least you will be able to talk about the school with a great deal more authority and how you being appointed would help the school to meet some of the challenges outlined in the OFSTED report.

Avoid the letter becoming a list of "I've done this and I've done that and say how this has helped you to become the teacher that you are and the teacher that you would like to become. The interview / shortlist panel need to know what they will be getting if they appoint you therefore **you need to very carefully weave what you believe (your philosophy on education) and your experiences to show how these experiences have shaped your philosophy.**

- Try to contain your letter to no more than two sides of A4, be very focused and avoid repetition or waffle.
- Find the fine line between selling yourself and being seen to be boastful.
- Don't sit down with no pre-thought and try to write a letter as it is likely to be your first thoughts and will not usually contain thoughtful analysis which you will need to do anyway if invited to interview.
- If you seem to be writing something and you are not sure of what you mean, either find out or leave it out. There is nothing worse than being brought to an interview based on someone else's philosophy or not knowing what you mean and being asked to explain what you mean at interview.

- Start with a line which specifies the nature of your letter. Eg. I write in support of my application for the post of.....

Develop your philosophy.

- Ask yourself..... What do I believe about education, about children's entitlements, and what and how they should learn and be motivated.

Give your opinions upon issues such as:

Child Centred-ness

Do you believe that a child is a vessel to be filled with information or a person to get to know and to know how to best achieve their full potential?

Personalised Learning

Do you believe that every child is different, has different needs and needs individual thought when planning, delivering and assessing the curriculum opportunities on offer?

Differentiation

How would differentiation work in your class, do you understand what it is and how it works and can be planned for or is the work you provide different...there is a difference! How would you cater for the range of abilities in your class from gifted to the strugglers and do you plan in differentiation that allows children to succeed.
(Nothing breeds success like success!)

Gifted and Talented

How are you going to cater for G&T pupils? You are going to be asked about this so think about it now. Do you have plans for G&T pupils beyond the normal differentiated activity and have you thought about what can be done for those who are gifted and talented in those areas other than the core subjects. How can they be challenged and extended?

Behaviour Management

How would you manage behaviour in your class from setting the right framework and ground rules for expected behaviour, to strategies that address situations that come up (and they will!!) that challenge these ground rules?

How do you walk the fine line between being approachable and developing a positive professional relationship with your pupils and developing a big brother / sister figure / relationship that can leave your role as a professional open to abuse?

Self Esteem of Children and Effect on Learning

Have you thought about the impact of negative self esteem on pupil learning? What do you do to raise self esteem and which makes your classroom a great place of learning as well as trust and support?

Assessment for Learning

How does your marking improve standards and when and how do you find out if the children understand what you have taught? Good teachers are always, constantly asking themselves if the children and individuals have understood their lesson objective. Moving on whilst there is confusion leads to further confusion and leaving assessment to the end of term means a loss of learning time when children could have been put back on track earlier.

Target Setting

What are your expectations of the pupils? Are they high enough, do they challenge the pupils? Are they shared with the pupils so that the children have ownership of them, know what they are and can work towards them?

Educating the Whole Child

Sometimes, because of the pressure of the core subjects we forget that we need to educate the whole child and we need to think about opening windows for children to achieve in an area other than the core subjects....do you give all children the chance to achieve as well as attain?

National events and initiatives

Think carefully about major national initiatives and talk about them in your letter as long as it is appropriate. Don't shoe horn things in if they aren't relevant to the point that you are making. How do you feel that the Every Child Matters agenda fits with your philosophy because it is central to the new OFSTED framework.

The skill of writing a good letter of application is to weave together your philosophy with the experiences that have shaped this philosophy and continually lead you to analysing and maturing your philosophy.

When you come to closing the letter, without being pushy say that you would like the opportunity to expand upon this letter at interview and look forward to hearing from them.

Andy Mellor, Headteacher, St. Nicholas C of E Primary School – December 2005