

Promoting yourself:



A practical guide for temporary contract teachers to winning the job!

Temporary contract teachers play an important and valued role in JCPS. Many of you like the idea of one-year assignments and do not want a continuing or permanent teaching position. Others want a permanent assignment but took a temporary contract as the only available option. Regardless of how you got your temporary contract, if you want to continue teaching in JCPS, you must seek reemployment.

This flier explains the rules of the reemployment game and provides you with valuable information about how to promote yourself during the interview process.

The Rules of the Game

After February 15 all open, continuing teaching positions will be posted for both internal—including temporary contracted teachers—and external applicants.

The district hopes to complete hiring by the end of June. However, because of unexpected resignations or retirements, additional continuing positions may become available in late July and August. You would also be able to apply for these positions.

Temporary—one year only—positions will also be advertised during this time. Please note that current teachers in their first or second years of temporary contracts (T-1 or T-2) may apply for either open continuing teaching positions or other temporary teaching positions.

Third year temporary contract (T-3) teachers may only apply for open continuing positions, as the district cannot legally rehire you on a fourth temporary contract. Unfortunately, many schools are reluctant to hire T-3s to fill an open continuing position. This is because on the first day of the 4th consecutive year of employment T-3s become non-probationary or "tenured." As a result, too many qualified T-3s are just not rehired. **JCEA urges temporary teachers to seek a continuing position as soon as possible, unless they prefer to work in a temporary setting.**

If you wish to seek reemployment in the district, you have the responsibility of notifying the district personnel office of your intent by April 1. When doing so, be specific as to the kind of contract you would consider: another temporary contract, a continuing contract, or either contract

type. Also, be specific about the type of teaching position you are seeking.

After June 30, principals fill open teaching positions in two ways. They may request a list of qualified applicants from the personnel office to interview, but they are not required to do so. Because of decentralization and site-based management, principals may simply make a **direct placement**—interviewing and hiring a teacher without going through the district personnel office.

As a result, you should insure that the information at the personnel office is correct and you may want to network with principals seeking a direct placement.

Interview Skills

Experts in the field argue that the process of selecting applicants—rightly or wrongly—is highly subjective. Employers, they say, tend to hire people they like.

For the employer, the interview is an opportunity to assess your personality, determine your skills, and clarify information from your resume or application.

From your perspective, the interview is the opportunity to sell yourself and your skills. It is also a time for you to decide if, in fact, you want the job.

Before the interview, plan ahead:

1. Find out all you can about the school/SERS area and the interviewer(s). Contact a colleague in that school/area and discuss the situation with them. Know the interviewers' names and use them.
2. Be on time. In fact, it is a good idea to get there early so that you can catch your breath and mentally prepare.
3. Always request a copy of the job description well in advance of the interview. Study it. Know what the school/SERS area wants. Catalogue your experiences and training and be prepared to demonstrate them. Be sure to let the administrator and/or interview committee know what you could add to the staff.
4. Develop a portfolio or other way of presenting examples of your skills and experience. Include letters of recommendation, commendations, previous successful eval-

uations, and materials that show your knowledge and skills pertinent to the job description.

5. Get plenty of rest before the interview so that you will be alert and have adequate energy.

During the interview, remember:

1. First impressions are important. Begin with a firm, professional handshake. Convey a pleasant, confident attitude and manner.

2. Never assume you will get the job just because you believe you are qualified for it. Go after each job as if it were your first. Be enthusiastic. Keep your energy level high. Sell yourself!



3. Act, dress, and speak professionally.

4. When you are asked a question, be sure you understand it before you answer. If you are not sure, restate the question in your own words to test your perception. If correct, proceed. If not, ask for clarification. Keep all of your answers succinct and provide relevant, real-life examples. If unsure about the length of your answer, simply ask the interviewer if you need to elaborate.

5. It is perfectly OK for you to ask questions to determine if, in fact, you want to work in this situation. If you decide you do, acknowledge this fact—"I've always wanted to teach in a nongraded primary program, and yours sounds like what I have been looking for!"

6. Be aware of when the interview is coming to a close. Don't draw it out. Thank the principal (and/or interview committee) and shake hands as appropriate. Again, express interest in the job.

After the interview, follow-up:

1. It is always a good idea to send a brief note to the principal and once again express interest in the position. If there was a point you wanted to stress or something that needed correcting, do so briefly.

2. If you fail to get the job, call the administrator and find out why. Ask the administrator how you could improve your interview. Don't despair. Learn from the next one.

3. Finally, you have a right to know who got the job. Administrators should tell you this out of professional courtesy, but if they don't, it is appropriate for you to ask.

Discriminatory questions are taboo!

During an interview, the principal and/or interview committee can ask almost anything about your professional experiences as they relate to the job. However, state and federal antidiscrimination laws, as well as school board policy, forbid certain questions from being asked.

For example, it is against the law/policy to ask about your religious preferences, political affiliation, ancestry, national origin, birthplace, sexual orientation, marital status, or family (children or spouse). It is also unlawful to ask your age, date of birth, or ages of your children.

If you feel this information might be helpful to you, simply volunteer it. One method of doing this is to include it on your resume.

If a taboo, unlawful question is asked, you have several options:

- You can simply answer the question.
- You can ask the interviewer to explain the relevancy and hope it will be withdrawn.
- You can state the question is inappropriate and refuse to answer it.

The best advice is to plan ahead what your response will be if you are asked a potentially discriminatory question.

However you decide to respond, you have a legal right to file a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). **You should also notify JCEA.**

How do I accent the positives and minimize the negatives?

All professional people have strengths and weaknesses—areas in which we need to grow. Principals and/or interview committees understand that and during the interview will attempt to assess both. Your goal is to sell them on your strengths while minimizing your weaknesses.

Some teachers/SERS may also have concerns about negative references, situations, or evaluations which may be a part of their personnel files.

As a matter of practice, most interviewers will review personnel files prior to the interview; so they will already know your professional "warts." Therefore, most experts advise applicants to be prepared to discuss such situations.

If, for instance, you have received a previous evaluation indicating difficulty with classroom management, be prepared to address the issue. Without appearing defensive, explain the conditions surrounding this perception. Then indicate how you have grown/learned from the experience. If you have received additional training to correct the problem, tell the interviewer that too.

A word of caution. While it is OK to acknowledge a difference of philosophy or opinion, never speak negatively about another school or a former principal/supervisor. In general, most employers admire candor and honesty, but be careful.

Call For Information Or Help!



If you are a member and have questions about the hiring process or your contractual/legal rights, call JCEA (232-6405) and talk to your JCEA UniServ Director.

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