

Job Application Guide

for Primary Teachers seeking to transition to Secondary School settings



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1 Purpose

Catholic Education SA's (CESA) transition of Year 7's from primary to secondary settings from 2019 presents exciting opportunities including the creation of additional positions which may appeal to primary school teachers, with a commitment to the education of young adolescents, seeking a role within a CESA secondary setting. This is an exciting opportunity both for the schools and teachers who have an interest in transitioning to teach middle years in secondary settings. Some schools have already employed former primary school teachers in their secondary setting, and it is an experience being affirmed as very positive by Principals, students, families and the teachers.

The purpose of this document is to support CESA primary teachers who are interested in applying for middle years (typically Years 7 – 9) positions advertised by CESA secondary schools. The document provides information about how to prepare an application that follows the correct process and format, and that addresses the specific position criteria, particularly in regards to curriculum knowledge and design, pedagogy and wellbeing for young adolescent learners. All of these elements are essential to have the best chance of making the interview list. The interview itself is an important part of the application process toward, ultimately, being the preferred candidate.

This guide includes information about how to:

- find advertised positions;
- research a school to find out more about it;
- write a cover letter, if required;
- prepare your curriculum vitae (CV), and address selection criteria, as required, and
- information to assist you with interviews.

Primary teachers applying for CESA secondary school positions can be reassured that the application requirements for most advertised secondary positions are very similar to application processes for teaching positions in other CESA school settings. The experience of primary teachers recently appointed in secondary settings confirms this. You will note in this guide much of the advice is familiar. The intent is to provide focus on how to highlight your expertise, skills, experience and commitment to Catholic education to demonstrate how these will make a valuable contribution to the learning of young adolescents in the secondary school, and to the secondary school's professional and broader community.

2 Finding positions to apply for

Catholic Education advertises positions on its website:

- CESA website – Working with Us

<http://www.cesa.catholic.edu.au/working-with-us/positions-vacant>

- Some schools advertise positions in 'The Advertiser' and other national newspapers
- Some schools also advertise positions on SEEK.

3 Preparing in advance of your application

As the applicant, you are responsible for ensuring that all information in the application is **complete, correct and prepared by you**. Any statement found to be misleading may result in rejection of the application. If a statement is found to be misleading after you have been appointed to the position, the appointment may be rescinded and action in relation to CESA's Code of Conduct initiated.

Read the position advertisement carefully. It is important to prepare an application specific to each position for which you apply, as every position will be situated in a unique school context, and likely require some variation of skills and experiences.

Before you begin your application, do some research on the school to which you are applying for a position. Take the time to look at the school's website and any published reports, as these will provide information on what has been happening at the school, and its priorities.

Look for information like:

- the school's expression of Catholic Identity, including the charism that inspires the school, where applicable;
- the school's history;
- the school's vision and mission, and particularly commitments, e.g. social justice, ecological conversion;
- the number of students enrolled at the school;
- the school's targets, e.g. in literacy and numeracy, SACE completion;
- the type of school, e.g. co-educational, a multi-campus college, R-12 or Years &-12;
- the school's co-curricular program;
- programs that the school is involved with .

The information you obtain on a school will help you understand the context of the school. This will help you consider if the school is a community in which you would like to teach, and to belong. The information will also help you when preparing a cover letter, and selecting the examples from your experience and professional commitments that best align with the school's ethos, aspirations and context. This selection will help you to address each of the position criteria most thoroughly.

4 Writing a cover letter

Many schools ask that a cover letter is included as part of the application. Cover letters can be challenging to write, however, they are an opportunity to express your personality and enthusiasm for the position and provide information to support your suitability, in addition to what your CV says.

The purpose of the cover letter is to introduce yourself and explain your application and CV so it should:

- demonstrate your keen interest in the role and joining the particular school community, with an emphasis on its charism and school ethos;

- describe clearly the commitments, knowledge and expertise you bring to your teaching;
- highlight your experience and achievements and show how your contribution will be valuable;
- let your personality shine through – portray the genuine person behind the words!

The structure of a cover letter generally contains four sections. Within each section you reveal yourself and your intentions to the school. Be clear and to the point. You want to focus on your best attributes and most relevant qualifications for the job you are applying for, so that you get to the next stage, an interview.

1. The opening paragraph: states your reasons for writing and the objective – the position for which you want to be considered;
2. The pitch: the second paragraph provides some insight about you and should refer to your past and current accomplishments that are relevant to the school and specific position being applied for;
3. The “why me?” part: the third paragraph should summarise why you would be an asset to the school. What are the benefits to the school employing you and what positive outcomes will you achieve?
4. The request for action: this section is often referred to as the closure but don’t just think of it as at the time to say thank-you and goodbye but as the chance to request a next step like an interview or phone conversation. The request for action is where you further clarify your objective (you really want the job!).

When writing a cover letter take on board the following:

- individualise each cover letter for the position - remember you are trying to convince someone why you are the best person for that particular job.
- use the same font and font size as you have in your CV.
- be brief and concise; write in short paragraphs; keep it to approximately one page in length, and use normal margins.
- do not repeat what is in your CV – foreground its highlights to prepare the reader for engaging with the CV.

5 Your Curriculum Vitae (CV)

When applying for positions your CV is essential as it contains information that will enable the hiring school to determine your suitability and ideally make them want to interview you to find out more.

Your CV is you in words! It is a promotional document that presents you in the best possible light for the purpose of getting you invited to a job interview.

It is not just about past jobs. It is about *you* and how you have performed and what you have accomplished in those past jobs – especially those achievements that are most relevant to the work you want to do next.

Information to include in your CV is:

- personal information and contact details (Note: it is **not recommended** to include a photo, your date of birth, age, gender or marital status);

- teacher registration number (optional but useful);
- formal qualifications (most recent qualifications first) and date of completion (or status if still in progress);
- additional *relevant* qualifications and/or *recent* professional development undertaken;
- teaching history, including temporary/replacement and casual positions (list the most recent experience first). For each role listed, provide a brief summary of the school and the *key* activities and achievements *directly applicable* to the position you are applying for;
- details of three (3) professional referees including their names, position titles, employer, location and contact information (including a mobile phone number if available). If you have been working in a school, it is always preferable to include the Principal of that school as a referee. Please don't say you will provide referees on request – be complete and include the details on your CV when you submit it. Note: be sure and inform your referees of any jobs you have applied for so they can be prepared should they be contacted to provide a reference.

It is not necessary to mention where you went to school, unless it will be beneficial to your application. You also do not need to include your hobbies and interests, unless they specifically relate to the position requirements. In addition, any employment that does not relate to or add value to your teaching application can be excluded.

7 Addressing Selection Criteria

If an application requires you to address some or all of the selection criteria then it is essential that you do so, and do it well. It is important to address each criteria separately. Be succinct and preferably limit your response to each criteria to 1-2 paragraphs. You can use the same examples under different criteria, but do present it from a different perspective or with a different emphasis.

Be sure to address the criteria as it asks. “Demonstrated capacity/experience” requires you to explain that you have practically (and successfully) used these skills in the past and can discuss specific examples. “Capacity to” means you have the necessary skills, knowledge or qualities but may not have actual experience so you will have to explain how you will apply the necessary skills into effective classroom practice. “Skills and/or experience” requires you to outline how your skills make you able to successfully achieve the criteria *or* you can explain your actual practical experience and outcomes.

It is useful to include words from the Position Information Document (PID) as this creates an instant match and connection. Do this creatively. Weave the words in with your own to show that your skills, experience, values etc. are the ideal match with what the hiring school wants.

It is when addressing selection criteria that the early research on the school to which you are applying can be particularly useful; it can assist you to make selections from your range of teaching experiences best aligned to the school community and to the advertised position. For example:

- demonstrate your commitment to the Catholic identity of Catholic schools and an understanding of the charism of the school to which you are applying, and its alignment to your educational philosophy and principles;

- if the role involves teaching Years 7 – 9 at a secondary school highlight your understanding of young adolescent learners and how they learn, and emphasise how this can be applied to students Years 7 - 9 inclusively;
- if the role involves teaching Years 7 – 9 at a secondary school, show how you tailor your teaching for all young adolescent learners, and how this can be applied to all students Years 7-9 inclusively;
- if the position statement speaks specifically about the Australian Curriculum General Capabilities, STEM, or any such learning focus, highlight your knowledge of these in terms of curriculum design and pedagogy;
- if the position clearly denotes specialist subject areas, i.e. English, Science, Mathematics, HASS, or combinations of these, foreground your deep content knowledge and passion for the subject/s. Highlight too your comprehensive knowledge of the Australian Curriculum content, General Capabilities and cross-curricular priorities in relation to the subject/s;
- highlight your repertoire of subject knowledge, making the point that you are flexible in the subjects you are able to teach, and enjoy teaching. A flexible repertoire of subject knowledge allows your curriculum design, and pedagogical approach, to integrate learning;
- promote your experience in teaching Religious Education, if it is a subject you enjoy teaching. If you have experience with the new *Crossways* material this is a positive;
- if the school has particular commitments to social justice, including ecological concerns, and you share these commitments make clear the contribution you might make;
- for a co-educational school you can explain how you meet the needs of both genders;
- should the school's student body include students with disabilities demonstrate your teaching strategies to effectively adjust curriculum to address the learning outcomes each student, and all students, are entitled to;
- should the school have a high proportion of students from non-English speaking backgrounds, demonstrate your teaching strategies to effectively address the learning outcomes, including literacy and numeracy, this cohort of students is entitled to;
- if the school has a high proportion of students who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders explain how you incorporate their perspectives and learning objectives into your teaching and learning practices.

In summary, the better you address the selection criteria, the better your chances of progressing to interview.

8 Interviews

So, you're at the interview stage. It all comes down to you now. A job interview is a performance. You are on show and your task is to appeal to your prospective employer.

In an interview situation, whether informal or formal, with an individual or a panel, by phone or in person, first impressions matter. This include words, voice and body language and all three have to be good.

The following are some tips for being your best in an interview situation:

1. Don't be late. Punctuality is a subtle clue about attitude and behaviour. Tardiness, no matter the excuse, is a major blunder. Research in advance your travel route and parking options and allow plenty of time. Plan to arrive at least 10 minutes early.
2. Dress appropriately. When in doubt wear formal business attire, rather than dressing casual.
3. Come prepared. Know yourself – your strengths, weaknesses and accomplishments and practice how you will communicate this information when asked. You should have already familiarised yourself about the school and its priorities etc. so refresh yourself with this information so you can reference it in your responses, as applicable.
4. Be enthusiastic – first impressions, positive or negative, dramatically affect the ultimate evaluation. You can make or break a job interview within the first 5 minutes so be animated and show high levels of interest.
5. Appear friendly and outgoing. Smile and say hello to everyone. Take note of people's names so you can address them later. A positive reaction from *everyone* you interact with at the school during your visit is an important factor in the evaluation.
6. Be self-confident, but not arrogant. High self-esteem and self-confidence are the hallmarks of a successful individual. With confidence, be able to demonstrate how you have overcome obstacles and achieved outcomes. There is nothing wrong with feeling good about yourself but don't cross that line between being too confident and cocky.
7. Come prepared for key questions. Practice your responses to all the typical questions such as "tell me about yourself" and "what is it about this role that is of most interest to you". Make sure your responses demonstrate not just your contribution, but your value or worth. Be familiar with the contents of your CV and refer to it as applicable.
8. Remain involved and attentive. The most effective job interviews are where an active two-way conversation takes place. Maintain good eye contact equally with everyone present at the interview. Sit forward in your chair and don't interrupt your interviewer.
9. If in doubt, ask. If you do not understand a question, ask for clarification. Better to check at the beginning rather than provide an ineffective response.
10. Give 1 to 2 minute responses. A minimum of 1-2 minutes of well-prepared discussion gives the interviewer insight into your interest, intellect and ability to support your claims. Don't answer questions with just a yes or no – provide context, explain actions and describe outcomes and support statements about yourself with specific examples.
11. Ask probing questions. A few strategic questions can demonstrate your intelligence and interest in making a worthwhile contribution. Avoid superficial small talk.
12. Be positive about previous roles and co-workers. Don't bad-mouth previous employers or people you worked with. No matter how well founded, it implies a negative attitude and is not a good look given you need to make a positive impression.

9 Summary

Applying for a job is not easy. It takes, time, effort and commitment and unfortunately there is no guarantee of success. While you may have prepared well, written a great application and interviewed even better, others also may have ticked all those same boxes and just pipped you at the post. Stay positive though and persevere, as each application is an opportunity to fine tune further, so it is only a matter of time and you will succeed.

Good luck!

10 Revision Record

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