



# Put Your Best Foot Forward

**W**hether you're new to the profession or a seasoned music educator, you know that music teachers value the opportunity to work in Texas. This point was driven home last May when, every day, an average 6,500 visitors reviewed the job services section of our website. If you're anticipating the start of your music education career or if you're preparing to change jobs, it's important to fully understand what those who are hiring music educators expect from the process. To that end, we asked TMEA members who interview prospective music teachers to tell us what they look for in a résumé and how applicants can best prepare for a job interview.

## The Résumé

While an online application doesn't offer much room for personalization, your résumé communicates what you believe are the most important aspects of your knowledge, skills, and experience as they relate to the specific position or organization to which you are applying. Consider the following advice from TMEA members about what they look for when reviewing candidate résumés:

The information must be clear, concise, and applicable to the job for which you are applying. Most of us have limited time to review résumés, and we will lose interest if the résumé is too hard to read or understand. Two of the most important items are your education and previous work experiences. I want to know who your primary musical and humanistic influences were. I also want to see a list of references and not have to ask for them. —*Peter J. Warsaw, Leander ISD*

Educational credentials are, of course, important. But more than that, we look for résumés to include succinct statements

about their interest in teaching the students of our district, experiences they had while student teaching, why they chose to become a music teacher, and some of their goals as a music educator. We are looking for the "heart" of an applicant. —*Bob Bryant, Katy ISD*

The first thing I look for is quality experience with a successful program under a successful, proven teacher/mentor. I also look to see how long an applicant has stayed with a program—I believe three years gives you enough time to make an educated decision about whether to stay. If you just graduated from college, I'll look at where and with whom you did your student teaching. I'm also interested if you taught privately or did other applicable work with a public school program during your college career and the kind of summer teaching activities in which you were involved. —*Roy Renzenbrink, McKinney ISD*

It's always surprising to receive résumés with misspelled words or poorly constructed sentences. Remember that your résumé reflects your attention to detail. Include information that sets you apart from other candidates, such as marching in a drum corps, serving as a music camp counselor, working in a music office, or teaching private lessons. I also look at references—I'm especially interested in whether you included your ensemble conductors and applied faculty. —*Steve Andre, Mesquite ISD*

We know new teachers won't have a lot of practical teaching experience, so that portion being sparse is actually okay. What I like to see is what performance experience you've had, what honors and awards you've earned, and more. Remember, don't stretch the truth. The teaching world is very small, and it's easy (especially now that being connected is so simple) to double-check that what you say is true. —*Cathy Benford, Tascosa HS, Amarillo ISD*

Your résumé is the first step to receiving an interview, so it is important that it contain a sense of your personality. I want to know more than where you went to school and what bands you played in. This is the person who is going to share my vision and work with my students, so I want to know your likes and dislikes in and out of the band world. I want to know why band and music was your chosen profession and gain a sense of your passion for it. —*Diana DD Flores, Plummer MS, Aldine ISD*

Keep your résumé as honest, relevant, and brief as possible. Don't embellish your duties, but do include information

that will set you apart from the field. Your résumé should include educational information, work experience, honors and awards, organization memberships and activity, and 3–5 professional references with contact information (with permission, of course). —*Jay Lester, Abilene ISD*

I want to know who you learned from during your career. This is not to be confused with "It's who you know." I want to know where an applicant is coming from pedagogically and philosophically. —*Todd Toney, North Garland HS, Garland ISD*

Be careful to avoid fluff—it tends to jump right off the page. Less experienced candidates will naturally not have as much

previous employment information, so don't make it up. Your honesty will net you a position faster than your ability to be creative. Remember that previous non-teaching jobs can be valuable for a potential employer in education. Experienced applicants should be selective and able to thoroughly and concisely describe their responsibilities with key previous employment. —*Norm Sands, Tabasco ES, La Joya ISD*

The desire to teach should come through loud and clear. I really don't want to know if you aspire to have a TMEA invited choir someday, although I can usually tell if an applicant has that potential. I want to know if you want to transfer the knowledge you have to students and inspire them to become the best musicians they can be. —*Judy Lee Welch, Taft HS, Northside ISD*

## Using Online Resources

In addition to using the valuable information offered by our members, be sure to consult a variety of sources to help you best summarize your educational and work experience. There are a myriad of resources available online, and we offer the following sites simply as an example of what you can quickly find after some basic Internet searches on this topic. Of course, there is much more to be found, and you need to examine it all thoughtfully to determine how it applies to you.

TMEA Job Board (vacancy postings and résumé upload service)  
[tmea.org/job1](http://tmea.org/job1)

Winning the job (SOUTHWESTERN MUSICIAN feature article, February 2012)  
[tmea.org/job2](http://tmea.org/job2)

Music educator résumés samples (Univ of Illinois College of Fine & Applied Arts)  
[tmea.org/job3](http://tmea.org/job3)

Guide to music educator résumés (National Association for Music Education)  
[tmea.org/job4](http://tmea.org/job4)

UT McCombs School of Business résumé building guide  
[tmea.org/job5](http://tmea.org/job5)

Top 10 résumé mistakes to avoid (monster.com)  
[tmea.org/job6](http://tmea.org/job6)

Résumé tips for graduate students (Princeton Univ)  
[tmea.org/job7](http://tmea.org/job7)

Tips from a recruiter on building a résumé (Forbes article)  
[tmea.org/job8](http://tmea.org/job8)

Job interview tips (monster.com)  
[tmea.org/job9](http://tmea.org/job9)

Social media mistakes to avoid while job hunting (careerrealism.com)  
[tmea.org/job10](http://tmea.org/job10)

Facebook tips for when you're looking for work (makeuseof.com)  
[tmea.org/job11](http://tmea.org/job11)

### What to Know Before You Interview

It's important to be fully prepared for the possibility of an interview. TMEA members shared the following advice regarding what they look for in applicants and what they expect them to know about the program to which they are applying:

I expect an applicant to have opinions regarding scope and sequence of curriculum delivery and a good feel for what students should know and be able to do at various stages. I am interested in a good communicator and a pleasant demeanor. It is not essential for the applicant to know a lot about our program at the time of the interview. —*Cody Myers, Amarillo ISD*

I expect an applicant to have some cursory knowledge of the district and community, including the overall quality of the programs at all schools in the district. You should be able to speak articulately about your educational and professional background and your philosophy of music education and education in general, and about establishing classroom procedures and managing behavior, motivating students through positive relationships, teaching fundamentals of tone production, technical facility, and musical literacy. You also should have thorough knowledge of your specific subject area. Finally, I expect applicants to present themselves with poise and confidence. —*James Drew, Fort Bend ISD*

There are several sites available where you can learn more, including the district or school website, the music program's

website, UIL website, and more. I don't like it when applicants ask me questions about information that's readily available online. You should get an idea of the success and traditions of the program beforehand. —Amy Shuford, *Iola HS, Iola ISD*

Answer the question that you are asked. Make eye contact and smile. Relax. Take the time to visit the school's/program's website. Know what you want the interviewers to know, and if they don't ask you about those critical aspects, share that information if offered the opportunity at the end. Be on time and remember that

people are watching you from the time you pull in the parking lot until you leave. Dress nicely. Be a professional. Know your stuff. —Dean Muths, *Educational Support Center, Clear Creek ISD*

Do your homework. The best candidates know both the strengths and growth areas of a program, school, or district and can articulate methods for improvement. Be confident, but not arrogant. Be ready to answer questions about your philosophy of education, discipline style, and organizational approach. Honest answers will help those conducting the interview

see a glimpse of your personality. Practice answering scenario questions with a wise and respected mentor in your area. One last bit of advice would be to keep your responses student-centered. —Jay Lester, *Abilene ISD*

In an interview, I try to get to know the candidate as a person, so pretending you are confident when you have no experience only misleads me, and I won't see the real you. I look for a familiarity with both Orff and Kodály methods, flexibility to follow what is established in the school, strong musicianship skills, and good classroom management skills working with kindergarten through fifth graders. Applicants should have pleasant dispositions and be able to get along well with colleagues. —Pay-Sung Chew, *Stephens ES, Katy ISD*

Know discipline techniques, be prepared to answer questions on physical setup of beginning instrumentalists and on planning a class period from bell to bell, and be ready to describe yourself and tell how someone else would describe you. —Christy L. Myers, *Turner HS, Carrollton-Farmers Branch ISD*

Minimally, you should know the size of the school and what type it is (college prep, IB, magnet, etc.). Do your research, especially concerning statistics for the school, including college acceptance rate and size of the programs. Be willing to work with a program of that size and realize that size does not equal quality. —Katie James, *Vanguard College Preparatory School, Waco*

I expect applicants to understand our traditions of success and have at least a basic understanding of the socioeconomic makeup of our school. Be prepared to be honest with me about how much time you plan on devoting to the students outside of school hours. Above all, just be honest. —Christina Marioneaux, *Gentry JS, Goose Creek ISD*

Our thanks go to all the TMEA members who took time to offer their advice to those seeking music educator jobs. To review all 150+ answers provided to these questions about résumé and interview preparations, go to [www.tmea.org/tutti](http://www.tmea.org/tutti) where these questions are featured. 



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Apply Online at: [www.shsu.edu/music/camps](http://www.shsu.edu/music/camps)

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