

How to Work a Teacher Job Fair Script

Slide 1: Title

Thank you for viewing SFA Career Services' "How to Work a Teacher Job Fair" presentation.

My name is Heather and I am a Student Career Advocate in Career Services. I'll be guiding you through the in's and out's of navigating a job fair during this presentation. Make sure to grab a pen and paper because we're going to talk about a lot!

Attending a career fair can be one of the most important first steps in securing a great position – however, you have to do it right.

Slide 2: Topics

In this presentation, we are going to cover three important aspects of "how to work a teacher job fair" so you can be as prepared as possible to make a great first impression!

Those 3 aspects are:

1. How to prepare for the fair before you even walk in the doors
2. "GO" time...the fair itself; and lastly
3. How to "make the cut" and take the appropriate steps after the fair

To begin, just putting on a nice outfit and walking into a fair WITHOUT preparing is NOT going to cut it in today's job market. The Teacher Job Fair is only offered for a few hours, and if you have classes to attend, or have to work, that time may be limited. You must prepare so that you can make the most of your time and experience.

To prepare beforehand, I'll address a few areas:

1. Performing a "self-assessment"
2. Doing the research
3. What materials you'll need to prepare
4. Creating your "elevator speech," and
5. How to dress to impress, along with what not to wear

Let's start with performing a self-assessment!

Slide 3: iSelf Assess

One of the most important pieces of information you can understand when pursuing a career is... YOURSELF. You are going to be selling yourself, and as with any other "product", you must know yourself inside and out in order to sell it effectively. Sound like you can skip this step? Think again. Here, let me explain.

By performing a self-assessment, you are taking a closer look at your priorities, desires and must-haves when seeking a position. For example, you must know what your career goals are – both short-term and long-term. You'll also need to be able to quickly communicate specific qualities about yourself... what are your strengths, weaknesses, likes and dislikes? Are you looking to stay in a certain geographical location, or open to anything? Do you prefer working with an under-privileged demographic? Would you be open to advising extra-curricular activities? Also, take a close look at past experiences that relate to what you are seeking.

By knowing this information, the recruiter will be able to help match you to an opportunity that best fits what you are looking for.

Slide 4: Notebook paper

Prior to the fair, Career Services posts a list of participating organizations on our website, and has copies available in office for pickup, so make sure to obtain a copy of the list beforehand. Utilize this list to select your "Top 5" organizations that, at all costs, you must visit during your time at the fair. Hopefully you will have enough time to hit other organizations you have interest in, but your Top 5 are those companies that you MUST hit. And make sure that your Top 5 list is YOUR list – not your boyfriend's, your parent's or your best friend's. Only you can make this vital decision!

Now, take time to review the website and job descriptions of organizations you are interested in. Make note of relevant facts, notable achievements, size and offerings, current news, and any other information you feel is important in considering the organization as a potential employer.

Utilize the information that you find during your research to create "cheat" sheets for the fair. For instance, right before you approach a booth, review your cheat sheet to remind yourself of the top points you wanted to mention to showcase your research and knowledge of the organization... you'll be sure to knock their socks off!

Lastly, think of questions you may be asked and what your answers will be. For example, "Why would you like to work at ABC ISD?" or "How has your education prepared you for your first classroom?" or "Tell me a bit about your background and experience." In the same manner, jot down questions you plan to ask, and take those with you to the fair.

Slide 5: Padfolio

There are several pieces of information that you can bring with you to the fair. Utilizing a professional padfolio, which can be found at Staples or Wal-Mart, will enable you to neatly keep track of each of your documents in one convenient location. Don't count on that backpack to do the job – in fact, leave the back pack and large purses in the car! Oh, and make sure to throw in a writing utensil or two – you'll need to keep track of a lot of information!

A career fair MUST is a professional, well-written, mistake-free resume. You will want to bring many copies; I would say at least two dozen. Along with your resume, feel free to bring along a list of pre-contacted, professional references. If you would like to submit a copy of your resume to Career Services for a critique, we'd love to look over it! Feel free to email it to: careerservices@sfasu.edu, and provide at least one week's time prior to the fair.

Since you will be targeting your Top 5 organizations, you will also have an opportunity to tailor a cover letter to the 5. However, be forewarned, you will want to MAKE SURE to give the right cover letter to the right organization!

Lastly, bringing a portfolio (if you have one) would be a wonderful idea! Certain organizations may prefer to wait until an interview to review it, but it doesn't hurt to have it on hand, just in case!

And if you prepared those cheat sheets we discussed earlier, be sure to bring those with you too!

Slide 6: Elevator speech

One of the most daunting aspects of attending a career fair is the most important... walking up and introducing yourself to a recruiter. One of the easiest and most widely used techniques today is to put together an "elevator speech." The premise behind an elevator speech is this challenge: How would you concisely and accurately "sell" yourself to a potential employer if fate placed you both on an elevator, and you only had the time it takes to get from the top floor to the bottom? Developing a great elevator speech is the key to a great first impression and solid conversation with a recruiter.

To begin, you will want to introduce yourself by stating your name, major and graduation date.

Next, state your reason for attending the fair. Are you there to network, as you are not graduating for another three semesters? Or are you there seeking immediate full-time employment?

To follow-up, you'll want to mention a point or two about the organization, just to prove that you have done your research.

Lastly, and probably the most important part of the elevator speech, is to communicate how your skills, education and experience relate to available career opportunities, or to what you are seeking in a position.

I know that that sounds like a lot of information to include in just 15-30 seconds, but it's definitely attainable! Here, let me give you an example of an elevator speech to help if you're looking to create your own:

"Hi! My name is Mary Smith and I am a senior Interdisciplinary Studies student, seeking to teach science in grades 4-8 upon my graduation this December. I recently completed my student teaching at ABC ISD, which was a vital learning experience and afforded me the opportunity to become accustomed to the daily classroom routine, as well as develop skills in recognizing individual academic growth in students. Also, during this time I helped mentor students wishing to participate in extracurricular UIL science events. One thing that particularly caught my attention about your district is that the "all students" group has maintained an Exemplary rating in science, and at a 98% rate! As we all know awards and ratings make the difference, I would set it as my goal to strive to maintain, and even improve this rating, all while providing students with progressive and exploratory learning opportunities."

See, that wasn't so bad, was it? Another example is provided on this slide.

You will want to be careful that your speech doesn't sound too scripted – so be sure to practice several times prior to the fair.

Slide 7: Attire

Before you can act and speak the part, you've got to *look* the part! A neat and organized appearance can go a long way in making a good impression. At the very least, think "Sunday best" when dressing for the career fair, and you can't go wrong in a suit!

Make sure your clothes are clean and pressed. Spots on ties, runs in hose, or wrinkled clothes can do more damage than you think. Men, shine those shoes and select a belt that coordinates with your outfit selection and matches your shoes. Ladies, think conservative when it comes to jewelry, and don't select anything that reveals body parts above, below or through the clothing. A few more pointers for both men and women: 1) When it comes to hair, basically DON'T try to make a statement; 2) Don't wear too much (or any!) cologne or perfume, and 3) Neat, clean professional and conservative are always your best bet.

And what's the piercing rule? Basically, if you're a guy, earrings are not appropriate. For women, stick to your basic earrings, one in each ear. For either gender, piercings anywhere else are inappropriate and should be removed prior to the fair. Remember, it's better to be safe than sorry!

When you check-in at the fair, you will be supplied an adhesive badge to use as a nametag. Write your full name, certification and classification using neat, printed writing. The nametag goes on the RIGHT side of your chest. Why? Because as you shake hands, you want your nametag to angle towards them.

Slide 8: What not to wear

In any circumstance, blue jeans, workout clothes and shorts are all big career fair no-no's! Also, be careful of trends that can influence your appearance – even if you're going clubbing after the event, you won't want to wear your "clubbing" clothes to the fair! Whatever you do, don't commit these fashion faux pas!

Slide 9: Topics

Now that you're prepared for success before the fair, it's now GO TIME! Your success at the career fair will depend on many factors, so let's dive into that now! We'll discuss:

1. What to expect the day of the fair
2. Creating a game plan to navigate the fair
3. The actual conversation with a recruiter
4. And finally, general do's and don'ts of a career fair.

Slide 10: What to expect

Career fairs are typically loud, busy and hectic, especially during peak times. The fair usually starts to die down within the last ½ to 1 hour. Some people may be tempted to attend during that time so they don't have to deal with the rush; however, I wouldn't recommend it as some recruiters will close up shop early, and you may miss out on the opportunity to visit one of your Top 5's.

It is also very likely that your Top 5 are the same as other attendee's Top 5 – so be prepared for lines. If you are in a line, and you still have other organizations to see, feel free to step away for a bit to see the others, and then come back. Also, if you notice that the recruiter is giving the same schpeel to all the candidates, feel free to step in and listen. You can still give your elevator speech after the other candidates walk away, but I'm sure the recruiter would appreciate you saving their voice!

In today's economy, many of the organizations that have traditionally been top hirers may have reduced, or even eliminated, hiring. However, you may still see them at the fair, as they want to keep their name out there. Don't get discouraged by this. After your elevator speech, simply ask if they are currently hiring – and they'll tell you. If they're not currently hiring, ask when they are looking to hire, and for which positions. Take this as an opportunity to learn, and then focus your efforts on those that are currently hiring.

You may also come across some organizations that don't accept resumes at the fair. Don't take this personally – it's most likely a policy. If they don't take your resume, just ask them how they would like you to proceed. You may be directed to email it to them or to an online application on their website. Just ask!

Many times a recruiter will tell you what step or steps you should take from here... so be sure to listen! If they tell you to apply online, to send a resume or to sign up for an interview – DO IT! You'll be listening to many different people that day and it's likely that you'll forget what you should be doing next... so feel free to take notes after you leave their booth.

Slide 11: Create a game plan

Prior to arriving at the fair, you selected your Top 5 organizations. Now, once you arrive to the fair, you will be given a map of where each of the organizations are located. Map out your "plan of attack" so that you can make the most of your time. Do so by marking the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 on your map, in order of priority. This will give you a visualization of where your Top 5 organizations are located at, and possibly a direct route you can use to hit them all!

You will also want to know what your next week or two's schedule looks like. 90% of the time you will just be learning about an organization and receiving instructions on how to follow up afterwards. However, you just may make quite an impression on the recruiter, and they may want to schedule an interview with you! So if you know your schedule, you can make the appointment at that time, and feel confident that you can stick to it.

Lastly, the career fair is one of the only settings in which it is completely appropriate (and expected) to ditch your friends! Although having someone by your side may be a comfort to you, navigating the fair with friends is numero uno on the list of career fair don'ts! Friends distract you from the task at hand, as well as the recruiter. What if a recruiter overhears a nasty comment your friend makes in passing? This now becomes a direct reflection on you. So leave your fears and your friends at the door... neither will aid you during the fair.

Slide 12: Conversation

For some, sitting through a day-long certification exam is more desirable than approaching and having a conversation with a recruiter at a career fair. However, if you look at the interaction as more of a conversation between new acquaintances, versus an awkward plea for a job, you'll begin to see how simple this daunting task truly is!

After you have confidently approached the recruiter, simply introduce yourself. "Hi, my name is Mary Smith. I've been looking forward to speaking to you about available teaching positions with ABC ISD. Can I ask you a few quick questions?"

As we discussed in the preparation section, you should have prepared a list of questions to ask the recruiters you speak with. Ask open-ended, thought-provoking questions that showcase your knowledge and experience, the research you performed before coming to the fair, and, lastly, your desire to learn more about the job! Examples of great questions to ask are:

- "How did you find yourself at ABC ISD?"
- "What qualities are you seeking in a first-year teacher?"
- "What sets ABC ISD apart from the other districts?"

After you ask a few questions, the recruiter will inevitably ask you about yourself. This is where the heart and soul of your "elevator speech" comes into play. All that preparation beforehand pays off at this exact moment, so own it!

Once you've delivered your message, answered questions, and established your interest in the position it is time to thank the recruiter, get a business card and state that you will follow up.

Still nervous about the conversation element of the fair? Feel free to "practice" the conversation piece on 2-3 recruiters you are not particularly interested in before moving on to your Top 5. A few practice conversations should loosen you right up! Another thought is to stand back and watch others' approaches to recruiters. Observe what it is you like and dislike, and copy!

Before we move on, let's talk freebies. The squishy stress balls, flexible, light-up pens, even a jump drive every now and then. Feel free to select one freebie – yes, just *one* – if the recruiter has asked you to, or after asking the recruiter. Snatching freebies without first talking with the recruiter is always bad form – even if you are in dire need of that neon green koozie they are handing out.

Slide 13: Do's and don'ts

Take some time to briefly read through these lists of career fair do's and don'ts. You may find items that surprise you!

Slide 14: Making the cut topics

You've shown the recruiters that you're serious about finding a position. You dressed professionally, prepared your questions, and were enthusiastic and polite. But wait, your job's not done yet! You've got to make the cut! We'll discuss now follow up techniques, getting organized and your next moves.

Slide 15: Say thank you

Recruiters see MANY candidates at the career fair, and even though you made a GREAT impression on the recruiter, you should always, always, always follow up. The key is to make your follow up personal. Incorporate something that you talked about with the recruiter that would make you stand out and help them to remember you, or mention something you didn't get a chance to. Also, make sure to inform the recruiter if you have followed through with instructions you were given at the fair, and most importantly, thank them for their time.

As far as *how* to follow up, that's completely up to you. An email is immediate, whereas a letter or phone call shows a little more effort. Each have their advantages, so do whichever you feel is more appropriate. The most important thing is that you DO IT!

As I mentioned earlier, if a recruiter asked you to email a resume to them, to complete an online application, or to sign up for an interview, DO IT! A positive first impression can quickly be ruined if you don't follow up appropriately.

Slide 16: Get organized

Depending on your graduation date or if the organization is hiring or not, you may not be able to pursue an organization immediately. If you find this to be the case, file that information away. I recommend having a "Career Opportunities" folder, binder or filing system where you keep notes, business cards and company literature.

In today's age of technology, I also recommend that you create an electronic database of your career submissions, contacts and outcomes. A great example of an Excel spreadsheet option is available on this slide. Feel free to record information such as:

- Who you met with
- Where you met them
- Which organization they are with
- Their contact information
- Available positions and geographic locations
- Application information, and
- Important dates including resume submissions, application completions, follow-up sent, etc.

An additional "Other Information" category is always great for those miscellaneous items, and can provide your ticket in the door! Did you discover that you were both members of the same sorority, or that you both attended the same small-town high school? Always keep your eyes and ears open for this type of information, and use it!

Slide 17: Topics

While there's lots to keep in mind, Career Services hopes that this presentation has enabled you to better prepare to make a positive impression at the upcoming Teacher Job Fair. After attending the fair, you're sure to feel a better sense of available career options and opportunities, as well as confidence in interacting with professionals in the future.

Slide 18: CS contact information

If you have further questions, we'd love to hear from you! Please feel free to contact Career Services by giving us a call, shooting us an email or visiting us in the office.

Thank you again for viewing this "How to Work a Teacher Job Fair" presentation. See you at the Teacher Job Fair!