**Cover Letter Lesson Plan**

Date: Monday October 4th, 2011

Class: Business Education

Teachers: Mrs. Cogdill and Mrs. Johnson

Grade: 10th Grade

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| |  | | --- | | **Learner Profile/Contextual Factors** | |  |   Holmen High School – Holmen, Wisconsin. Holmen is located on McHugh Road in western Wisconsin near the Minnesota border and the Mississippi River. The high school services approximately 1,100 students, with 1,077 enrolled in the 2010-2011 school year. The student body is about 48% female and 52% male. Approximately 1% of students are American Indian, 11% are Asian, 1% are black, 1% are Hispanic, and 86% white. About 13% of the students have a disability, (2% cognitively disabled (CD), 2% emotionally or behaviorally disables (EBD), 5%learning disabled (LD), 4% other primary disability) 22% are eligible for subsidized lunch. 95% of students are proficient in English although the other 5% that are limited English (LEP) are Hmong speaking students.  This lesson is intended for a 10th grade high school business class. The class is composed of 26 students made up of 16 boys and 10 girls. Of the students in this class, 2 have Emotional Behavior Disabilities, 3 are Learning Disabled and 5 are Gifted and Talented, and 2 out of the 5 GT students read at a post-secondary level.   |  | | --- | | **Goals** | | |  |  | | --- | --- | |  | Students will review the purpose for a job application’s cover letter and will study examples of cover letters. Students will also be introduced to the five parts of a cover letter, know where to place these five parts, and be able to identify these parts. | | |
| |  | | --- | | **Wisconsin Standards** | |  |   **Business Standards**  **A.12.2 –** Produce technical writing such as memos, forms, instructions, letters, and resumes for appropriate audiences.  **A.BS.3 –**Edit business documents to improve content and effectiveness.  **Language Arts Standards:**  **B.12.2 –** Plan, revise, edit and publish clear and effective writing.  **B.12.3 –** Understand the functions of various forms, structures, and punctuation marks of standard American English and use them appropriately in oral and written communications.   |  | | --- | | **Objectives** | |  |   **Content Objectives:**  TSW be able to explain the purpose of a cover letter.  TSW be able to describe the parts of a cover letter. TSW be able to attempt a first preparation of a cover letter.  **Strategy Objectives:**  TSW identify mistakes of an incorrectly written cover letter by reading an incorrect version of a cover letter and writing their comments in the page margins.  TSW complete a question/answer review at the end of class for assessment of lesson comprehension. |
| |  | | --- | | **Time** | | |  |  | | --- | --- | |  | 90 minutes | | |
| |  | | --- | | **Materials** | | |  |  | | --- | --- | |  | *For the teacher:* books about writing cover letters (for example, *200 Letters For Job Hunters* by William S. Frank, *Cover Letters for Dummies* by Joyce Lain Kennedy, or *Cover Letter Magic* by Wendy S. Enelow – Books found at the back of my room in bookshelf near my desk), Internet access, Web site with example cover letters (Before and After)  BEFORE LETTER : <http://media.monster.com/mm/usen/content/resume/doc/cover-letter-sample-before.html?WT.mc_n=CovLetBef>  AFTER LETTER : <http://media.monster.com/mm/usen/content/resume/doc/cover-letter-sample-after.html?WT.mc_n=CovLetAft>  *For each student:* Packet handout which includes copies of the definition of a cover letter, sample cover letters, five parts of a cover letter and writing tips.  People involved: 2 teachers (Mrs. Cogdill and Mrs. Johnson) and resource teacher for 1 EBD student and 1 LD student. Resource teacher will be in class the entire time, helping with various portions of lesson. Resource teacher has been given lesson plan and handouts ahead of time and is familiar with our teaching style. | | |
| |  | | --- | | **Activity – 1 hour 23 minutes** | | **A. Hook -3 minutes**  (While doing this: hand out the packets)  Ask this question to students: “Think about the time you went to the mall and saw an item you had to buy. What was it about the item that caught your attention?  Raise your hand and tell me the reasons why you were drawn to the item.  Tie in the hook – A cover letter is like a sales letter that should attract employers to call you - the applicant. Ask the students to read the definition aloud from the packet – 1st page- all together.   |  |  | | --- | --- | |  | **B. Introducing the Concept – 15 Minutes** | |  | Define for students the purpose of a cover letter. Explain to them that it is a letter that accompanies an application form or résumé, serves as an introduction to the résumé, and provides an opportunity to highlight the applicant’s special skills and experiences. Point out to students that learning to write cover letters is a skill they need both now and in the future. Explain to students that the cover letter becomes easier to write as they gain work and educational experience, but it is still important to learn how to write such letters now when they must rely on descriptions of informal experiences and personal qualities as supporting evidence.  Explain the 5 parts of a cover letter. List the 5 parts on board to help students visualize. Return Address, Letter Address, Salutation, Body, and, Complimentary Close. Use projector (\* Overhead projector has large font to accommodate visually impaired student). | | | |  |  | | --- | --- | |  | **B. Individual Activity – 20 Minutes** | |  | Give students the first (before corrections) example of a cover letter to read.  Provide time for students to record their impressions of what might be wrong in the cover letter. As students view the examples, displayed with a projector, have the class discuss the intent and organization the example.  Give students the second (after corrections) example of a cover letter. Display the letter with a projector and go over some of the details as to why this letter is the better letter of the two. Point out main details of cover letter.  **C. Group Activity – 45 Minutes**  Divide the class into foursomes (Count off students 1 through 6). Have each group choose a job advertisement from the various Lacrosse Tribune newspaper ads and write a cover letter to accompany it. Each group can decide its target audience, determine the letter’s content and organization, and write drafts. After each draft is written, have the group critique the letter; revise it based on the critique; and edit it for organization, development, and language conventions. Once the groups feel they have final drafts prepared, the letters will be presented in class tomorrow and the class will vote on the best cover letter. | | |
| |  | | --- | | **Closure – 5 Minutes** | | |  |  | | --- | --- | |  | Review with students the 5 parts of a cover letter.  Tell students that they will be talking more about cover letters tomorrow in class and that when they arrive tomorrow they will need to know the 5 parts of a cover letter and where those parts need to be placed in the letter. They will also be drafting their first individual cover letter so they need to come to class with an idea for a first job after high school graduation, a summer position, or an internship.  Assignment: Read the “Cover Letter Tips and Suggestions” article (attached) and make sure to bring the packet to class again tomorrow.  Coming up…..   * Wednesday - Human resources manager from Ashley Furniture, to speak to the class about the importance of cover letters and what she looks for. | | |
| **Assessment – 2 Minutes** |
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| **Adaptations/Accommodations** |
|  |

EBD students: Student A: serviced part of the day in the LD room; but will be in class today. LD teacher will have homework, handouts and lesson plan so that they can work together on the assignment as needed.

Student B: Resource teacher is with student B the entire length of class period. Outburst may occur and if this happens resource teacher will remove the student and handle situation. Preferential seating is mandatory for student- and is toward the back of the room near the door.

LD students: Student A and B have little interventions. Monitor progress and give help when needed. Enjoy group activities and need little help with tasks. Behaviors may escalate if academic demands are too much for them to handle – but this can be alleviated with open communication. Students will be given assistance if needed in the resource center at their designated study hall periods.

Student C: Resource teacher is available the entire class period for this student and student B of EBD. If resource teacher is unavailable, either Mrs. Cogdill or I will be helping student with questions while other students are reading the letter. Homework has been given to Resource teacher and will be worked on outside of classroom setting. Preferential seating is mandatory – student will be seated near the 1 EBD student, near door and exit. Task list is sometimes helpful but is not going to be needed for this lesson. Student C seems to enjoy this course and hasn’t had any difficulties with progress so far.

5 GT Students (2 with post-second reading attributes): Students A, B, C excel at course. They are challenged with extra academic work and will be glad to help with task oriented goals in class. Allow students extra credit at times. Later this week they will be given an opportunity to share their resume and cover letters. Students D and E – post secondary reading levels; seating is near the front of the classroom, given extra help and attention when other students are reading the letters. Letter is already formatted for lower level reading, and should be ok for them to attempt.

Cover Letters

*“You never get a second chance to make a first impression.”*

**DEFINITION:**

A COVER LETTER is a [letter](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Letter_(message)) of introduction attached to, or accompanying another [document](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Document) such as a [résumé](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/R%C3%A9sum%C3%A9). It is a way of introducing yourself to potential employers and explaining your suitability for the desired position.

**5 ESSENTIAL PARTS TO A COVER LETTER**

1. Return Address
2. Letter Address
3. Salutation
4. Body
5. Complimentary Close

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| COVER LETTER GUIDE (PARTS OF A COVER LETTER) | SAMPLE LETTER |
| **RETURN ADDRESS (PART 1)**  **INSIDE ADDRESS (PART 2)**  **SALUTATION (PART 3)**  **BODY (PART 4)**  INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH  1ST MAIN PARAGRAPH  Describe your qualifications. Sell your skills and knowledge. Tell why you are interested in the company or college. Point out any related experience you have.  2ND MAIN PARAGRAPH  Continue to describe qualifications. Highlight relevant training or classes that relate to the job or major for which you are applying.  CLOSING PARAGRAPH  Close by thanking the reader and requesting an interview.  **COMPLIMENTARY CLOSE (Part 5)**  SIGNATURE  NAME  ENCLOSURE  This indicates that you have enclosed other items (resume, transcripts, etc.) for the reader to see. | Your Mailing Address  City, State Zip Code  Today’s Date  (4 “Return”s or “Enter”s on Keyboard)  Employer’s Name  Job Title  Business Name  Business Address  City, State Zip Code  Dear (Mr./Mrs./Ms.) (Use the name of the person that will read the letter):  In response to the February 24th advertisement in the Bangor Daily News, I have enclosed my resume for the Receptionist position.  I have two years of prior work experience as a head waitress at The Frosty Mug in Holmen Wi. My work has involved greeting customers in a fast-paced setting and delivering superb customer service. I have also been responsible for all managing other Frosty Mug team members, as well as reordering supplies and completing nightly closing functions. I am very detail oriented and able to handle multiple tasks simultaneously.  I am currently completing my high school diploma and plan to attend UW LaCrosse with a Bachelors Degree in Business Administration. I have gained valuable experience in several computer programs including Microsoft Word, Excel, and Access during the past 3 years of High School. Additionally, my training has provided me with the skills to reach my goal of office management.  I welcome the opportunity to discuss my qualifications with you in person. I can be reached at (207) 555-1234. Thank you for your time and consideration.  Sincerely,  (4 “Return”s or “Enter”s on Keyboard)  Joe Doe  Enclosure |

EXAMPLE 1: “BEFORE” COVER LETTER

**Renee Simmons**  
15 Elm St. | Sometown, NY | 555-555-5555 | renee@somedomain.com

[June 16, 2010](http://media.monster.com/mm/usen/content/resume/doc/cover-letter-sample-before.html?WT.mc_n=CovLetBef)

[To Whom It May Concern:](http://media.monster.com/mm/usen/content/resume/doc/cover-letter-sample-before.html?WT.mc_n=CovLetBef)

[I am submitting my resume for your review for the retail manager position.](http://media.monster.com/mm/usen/content/resume/doc/cover-letter-sample-before.html?WT.mc_n=CovLetBef) I have a [long and successful career](http://media.monster.com/mm/usen/content/resume/doc/cover-letter-sample-before.html?WT.mc_n=CovLetBef) with XYZ Company and I'm looking for a [new career challenge.](http://media.monster.com/mm/usen/content/resume/doc/cover-letter-sample-before.html?WT.mc_n=CovLetBef)  
  
[My experience and training in management techniques is enhanced by my strong work ethic and ability to learn new concepts quickly. I am an excellent communicator, a results-oriented performer and get great satisfaction from making a difference. I thoroughly enjoy working with people and have done so throughout my career. I bring top results in managing a retail operation.](http://media.monster.com/mm/usen/content/resume/doc/cover-letter-sample-before.html?WT.mc_n=CovLetBef)  
  
I have a [wide array of skills that will increase productivity and effectively contribute to an already successful company such as yours. I am a professional who is detail-oriented, flexible and able to meet deadlines, both independently and in a team environment.](http://media.monster.com/mm/usen/content/resume/doc/cover-letter-sample-before.html?WT.mc_n=CovLetBef)  
  
Given the challenge the current market presents, my ability to quickly assess and [provide solutions would be valuable.](http://media.monster.com/mm/usen/content/resume/doc/cover-letter-sample-before.html?WT.mc_n=CovLetBef) I would welcome the [opportunity to discuss my qualifications and learn more about the open position.](http://media.monster.com/mm/usen/content/resume/doc/cover-letter-sample-before.html?WT.mc_n=CovLetBef) Thank you for your time and consideration of the enclosed resume, and I [hope to hear from you in the near future.](http://media.monster.com/mm/usen/content/resume/doc/cover-letter-sample-before.html?WT.mc_n=CovLetBef)  
  
Respectfully,  
  
Renee Simmons

EXAMPLE 2: “AFTER” COVER LETTER

**Renee Simmons**  
15 Elm St. | Sometown, NY | 555-555-5555 | renee@somedomain.com

June 16, 2010

Ms. Ellen Jones  
HR Manager  
ABC Company  
15 Park Place  
Sometown, NY 55555  
  
[**Re: Retail Manager (Ref Code: 12345) position, advertised on Monster**](http://media.monster.com/mm/usen/content/resume/doc/cover-letter-sample-after.html?WT.mc_n=CovLetAft)

Dear Ms. Jones:  
  
[My 15+ years of experience managing big-box retail operations is an excellent match to the qualifications you are seeking for your New York City store manager. I bring to the table a record of delivering breakthrough improvements, multimillion-dollar sales growth and goal-surpassing performance-to-plan.](http://media.monster.com/mm/usen/content/resume/doc/cover-letter-sample-after.html?WT.mc_n=CovLetAft)  
  
Since 1995 I have worked for XYZ Company, advancing through [promotions and receiving dozens of awards](http://media.monster.com/mm/usen/content/resume/doc/cover-letter-sample-after.html?WT.mc_n=CovLetAft) for driving company-leading results across all key business metrics. In my current role as manager overseeing a [$9 million flagship store,](http://media.monster.com/mm/usen/content/resume/doc/cover-letter-sample-after.html?WT.mc_n=CovLetAft) I have recently achieved:

* [A 14% ($1.1 million) increase in quarterly store sales, despite the challenge of a severe market slowdown in the retail industry.](http://media.monster.com/mm/usen/content/resume/doc/cover-letter-sample-after.html?WT.mc_n=CovLetAft)
* [An 8% reduction in shrink from 2008 to 2009, benchmarking a new-store best in this category across the district.](http://media.monster.com/mm/usen/content/resume/doc/cover-letter-sample-after.html?WT.mc_n=CovLetAft)
* [A 15% increase in employee retention and improved staff morale by focusing on innovative employee training and incentive programs.](http://media.monster.com/mm/usen/content/resume/doc/cover-letter-sample-after.html?WT.mc_n=CovLetAft)
* [Recognition for achieving the highest dollar-per-transaction averages companywide in 2009.](http://media.monster.com/mm/usen/content/resume/doc/cover-letter-sample-after.html?WT.mc_n=CovLetAft)

In all positions held, I have consistently met or exceeded profit and revenue growth goals. I would be [honored to serve as manager of your New York City store and lead the team to achieve gains in revenues, service levels and customer satisfaction.](http://media.monster.com/mm/usen/content/resume/doc/cover-letter-sample-after.html?WT.mc_n=CovLetAft) If you agree that a meeting could be to our mutual benefit, please [contact me at 555-555-5555 or email renee@somedomain.com.](http://media.monster.com/mm/usen/content/resume/doc/cover-letter-sample-after.html?WT.mc_n=CovLetAft) I look forward to speaking with you.  
  
Sincerely,  
  
Renee Simmons  
[Enclosure: Resume](http://media.monster.com/mm/usen/content/resume/doc/cover-letter-sample-after.html?WT.mc_n=CovLetAft)

**COVER LETTER TIPS AND SUGGESTIONS**

Your cover letter is a potential employer’s first impression of you and can be the most vital part of the application packet. A well written letter entices the employer to read your resume. A poorly constructed cover letter may doom your resume to the “No Need to Read” pile. The same can be said for a college or scholarship application that includes an introductory letter. It is important to highlight your skills, knowledge, and experience. These will indicate what you can contribute to the company or school. Effective cover letters must convey a sense of purpose and project enthusiasm. A “form” cover letter rarely does this. Researching the employer, college, or scholarship prior to writing the cover letter will give you the opportunity to effectively personalize your letter.

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| 1. | **Always** include a cover letter when mailing your resume. A letter of introduction will prove useful when applying to colleges. It may act as the basis for a college essay or it may be a useful addition to an application packet. |
| 2. | Unless the advertisement specifies “no phone calls please” and the name is not given in the ad, find out the name and title of the individual who will be receiving your letter. Make sure you spell the name properly and get the proper abbreviation (Mr., Mrs., Ms.). |
| 3. | Do not use “form” letters or photocopies. Personalize each letter. If possible, explain why you want to work for the organization or attend the school. |
| 4. | Use a proper business format for your letters. |
| 5. | Make sure the letter is **PERFECT!** Spelling, punctuation, and grammar count. Have someone proofread the letter before mailing it. |
| 6. | Create the letter on a computer word processing program (Microsoft Word, WordPerfect, etc.) and use a laser printer, if possible. Use good quality paper. Cheap, flimsy paper makes your application seem very ordinary. However, do not use flashy colors! |
| 7. | Utilize a one inch margin on all 4 sides. This white space draws the reader to the body of the letter. |
| 8. | In the opening paragraph, tell the reader the purpose of the letter. |
| 9. | Use “I” statements and action verbs when describing your experience. |
| 10. | Get to the point! Employers do not have the time to read lengthy letters. A cover letter should never exceed one page. |
| 11. | Focus on the specific skills and interests you possess that you can offer the employer or college. Concentrate on skills which match the advertised employment qualifications or the desired program of study. Stress what you can do for the company or college, not what the company or college can do for you. Sound upbeat and confident. Sell yourself! |
| 12 | Don’t mention salary expectations unless the advertisement specifically requests it. In that case, the best strategy is to give a range. For example, “My earnings have ranged from $7.00 to $10.50 per hour in the various sales positions I have held.” |