

Resume Preparation

- Have your resume ready.
- Update your resume continually with new skills and education as well as career related milestones.
- Ask for recommendation or reference letters from district administrators and agree how to collect them.
- Backup information related to your work achievements such as statistics, emailed compliments, and thank you notes.

Job Searching and Networking

- Visit the Illinois Board of Education employment website at <http://www.isbe.state.il.us/employment.htm>. Many Regional Offices of Education also have employment sites. If looking outside of education, create or update your LinkedIn (<http://www.linkedin.com>) and Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com>) profile now – treat them as your resume. On LinkedIn, you should have at least five positive references. Make sure the references address different areas of your skills, abilities, competencies, personalities, leadership, etc.
- Make a list of ten school districts that you are most interested in working for.
- Given your current employer, your experience, background and skill set, which ten school districts or companies will be dying to hire you today? You might not be excited about working for these districts, and the job might be the same as what you are doing today, but they can be “backups” in a worst-case scenario. You will want to consider these as an option since you will have a huge competitive advantage over other job applicants.
- Do you have any recruiter friends or friends in other districts that are hiring? Contact them, send a copy of your updated resume, and ask them to keep an eye for you. Forming a network of recruiter friends is one of the best ways to build a “safety net” for yourself in case you find yourself needing to look for a job.
- Networking is crucial for getting a job during a recession. Make sure you have a network ready to help you during a difficult time by making a list of 100+ people who can help you get a job. Reconnect with family, friends, and colleagues you have not spoken to for a while. Holiday greetings are a great way to reconnect.
- Keep your network alive: Actively network while you are still working; check in with members of your network with a quick phone call or email; take the opportunity to help others as they may someday return the favor.
- Take time to walk around your school on your last day and say goodbye personally to colleagues. Also, send a goodbye email to people not in the school on your last day or at another location. Attach your resume to the email and ask for referrals. You never know where a job lead can come from.
- Get all of your colleagues' contact information and connect with them on social media sites so that you can network with them later during your job search.
- Go to <http://www.ezinearticles.com>. Search for “finding a job.” There are more than 40,000 articles on this topic containing extraordinary ideas, tips, life-changing advice, and support.
- Find unemployment resources by state at <http://www.dol.gov/dol/location.htm>.

Before leaving current employer

- Assuming you have at least one day left in your district, what are the three things you wish you would have learned but you have not gotten a chance to learn? Come in early, stay late, and make sure you learn as much as you can from your current job.
- Contact your local Association and ask to be referred to your UniServ Director to learn your employee rights and what to do if they are not respected. Many IEA Regional offices hold Reduction in Force (RIF) meetings.
- Calculate how much money the district owes you in unpaid salary and benefits.
- List the documentation that is required for unemployment benefits, income tax joining another employer, etc. This may include a pink slip, other end-of-work documentation, a letter from the district, or a copy of the board motion for dismissal.
- Investigate health insurance options by contacting your school district's administration office. Employers must allow you to continue existing coverage through the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA). You can find information on the web regarding COBRA at <http://www.dol.gov/dol/topic/health-plans/cobra.htm>.
- Find out which documentation the district will expect you to sign before leaving.
- Sign requested district documentation but only if you have received all your entitled rights.
- Make a copy of your personnel folder. Have a last chat with your principal or appropriate administrator and where relevant, discuss the possibility of returning as a substitute.
- Find out which remaining work tasks you need to accomplish before you leave and who those responsibilities will transfer to.
- Return work equipment such as a laptop, uniform, employer ID badge, etc.
- Pack up your personal belongs to take home.
- Consider maintaining your IEA/NEA membership at a reduced rate. This will entitle you to maintain any products you currently receive through NEA Member Benefits and IEA advocacy regarding your rights.

Personal

- Sharpen and brush up on your skills or learn new ones.
- Think about a career change: If you have been thinking about a career change, you are better off pursuing it while you are still employed; when you lose your job, your priority may be finding a new one as quickly as possible.
- Take time for yourself. Your emotional well-being will help you withstand the rigors of a difficult job search. Keep up with interests outside of work such as a daily workout or a hobby.
- Conduct a personal finance check up. The key is to know your cash burn rate in case of lay off. How much cash do you need each month? This will include your mortgage/rent, utility bills, phone, car payment, cable, groceries, credit payments, childcare, etc. Also, make sure you add COBRA payments to continue health care coverage, which could be a significant cost. NEA Member Benefits can assist you with decisions regarding your 403b and retirement funds in general. Contact your IEA Regional Office for the contact information of a NEA Member Benefits representative.