

Lesson Plan 5: The Cover Letter

Core www.cfnc.org Area:

Job Search

Total Time:

One to two 50-55 minute class periods

Target Grades:

Grades 10-12

Suggested Timeline:

Any time during school year—preferably at beginning of school year

ASCA Correlation

(Which of the ASCA Standards does this lesson address?)

A-A	A-B	A-C	C-A	C-B	C-C	PS-A	PS-B	PS-C
		X	X	X	X	X	X	

Lesson Objectives

Students will be able to:

1. Explain the purpose of sending a cover letter along with a resume.
2. Explain a basic, effective letter format used for cover letters.
3. Use www.cfnc.org to practice writing a cover letter to include with a resume.

Materials Needed

- Access to www.cfnc.org and computers for each student
- A copy of **The Cover Letter Worksheet** (Activity 1) for each student
- The following terms written in large writing on individual sheets of paper:
 - Heading
 - Prospective employer’s address information
 - Salutation
 - Paragraph explaining why you are writing
 - Paragraph providing details
 - Paragraph asking for interview and ending letter
 - Closing lines

Advance Preparation

- Print the Cover Letter worksheet
- Individual sheets of paper with each of the terms related to writing cover letters written on them
- Optional: Have a variety of examples of keyed cover letters to show the students. (The cover letters can be real or not real. If time to create examples beforehand, have cover letters to show students the difference between what a letter looks like with effective “white space” and one without effective “white space”. Other examples could include one that is too long or one that does not include all the needed information.)



Activator (Typically 5-10 minutes)

Discuss the following points:

- A cover letter is a brief letter included with a resume that introduces you to a prospective employer.

Student role play:

- Select student volunteers.
- Assign one student as the “employer” and the other student as the “hopeful employee”
- Tell the employer that he owns his own business and needs to hire some people.
- Ask the hopeful employee what kind of job he/she would like.
- Tell the employer that he/she has an opening for that job.
- Ask the hopeful employee to explain how they heard about the job, why they are interested, and why they are the right person for the job.
- Ask the employer to ask clarifying questions.
- Ask the class to discuss whether or not the introduction would have grabbed the attention of a potential employer and how it could be improved.

Discuss:

- Explain that the cover letter is going to be the way we “introduce ourselves” to someone who is doing the hiring.

Core Learning Strategies/Lesson Activities (Typically 30-40 minutes)

Session #	Step #	Responsibility	Action Steps
1	1	School counselor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on today’s work: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Distributes the (optional) Sample Cover Letters and the Cover Letter Worksheet 2. Ask students to review the cover letters and/or the Cover letter worksheet 3. Read and discuss the sample cover letters that you provide and/or the sample cover letter on the worksheet 4. Ask students to complete the questions on the worksheet
	2	Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the questions on the worksheet
	3	Counselor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask students to sign in to www.cfnc.org and click on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Career Planning ○ Get A Job ○ Cover letter Creator • Ask students to complete all steps in the cover letter creator, using the guided practice on the worksheet for assistance
	4	Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sign into www.cfnc.org and Complete the Cover Letter Creator



Session #	Step #	Responsibility	Action Steps
	5	Counselor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist students as they complete their cover letters • Remind students that their cover letter will be saved and stored in their www.cfnc.org Portfolio.

(chart from RI School Counselor Association's Toolkits, found at www.rischoolcounselor.org)

Summarizer/Informal Assessment (Typically 5-10 minutes)

To review quickly with students, have seven volunteers hold 8 ½" x 11" sheets of paper with the terms (see below) so that all of the students can see. Mix the order of the students (terms) up, and have the class put the terms in order of parts of the cover letter. Have the students explain the terms to review.

Follow-Up

Opportunities for additional learning could include the lessons provided related to Job Search project lessons.

You may want to expand upon this assignment by completing the resume lesson and then providing the opportunity to create both a resume and cover letter that would fit a specific employment objective. (If the students have the opportunity to customize their resumes and cover letters to ones of interest at the time of the assignment, they will be more vested in the assignment and could use the documents to apply for a "real" job.) If time allows, have students critique each other's documents following guidelines suggested in the lessons.



The Cover Letter Worksheet (Activity 1)

Student Name: _____

1. **Directions:** Review the information below to use as a guide for a cover letter. Then answer the questions below.

A **cover letter** = brief letter included with a resume that introduces you to a prospective employer

355 Great Pine Ct.
Fargo, ND 58102
April 15, 2010

Include your home address and the date you are writing the letter

Include the complete name and job title of the person who is in charge of hiring people within the company. Include the name and complete business address of the company. If unsure of the name to whom the letter should be addressed, call the business and ask. Be sure to get the correct spelling of the name.

Mrs. Traci Hall, Manager
Mac's Sporting Goods
800 4th St. North
Fargo, ND 58102

Include both a salutation at the beginning and a closing at the end.

Dear Mrs. Hall

1st paragraph = Tell why you are writing. Include where or from whom you learned about the job.

I recently saw an ad in the local newspaper about a job opening you have for a customer services representative at your store. Please consider me an applicant for that position.

2nd paragraph = Provide any specific details that would highlight personal qualities, skills, and experiences that make you a good candidate for the job. Refer to your resume; and, if necessary, include two paragraphs to include all the information you might want to highlight.

As you can see by my enclosed resume, I have two years experience working as a stock clerk for my uncle's grocery store. In that position I learned all about working with clients and coworkers in a sales environment. I have a "can do" attitude that would be perfect for someone working in customer services. In addition, I have many years of experience participating in team sports. My knowledge as both a player and a student team manager would fit well with your company.

3rd paragraph = graciously end the letter; ask for interview for the job. Be sure to include how you will follow up, and indicate how you can be contacted.

Would you be interested in meeting with me to discuss the job and how I could fill it? You may reach me at (234) 789-4566. Thank you for considering me for this opportunity.

Sincerely

An appropriate closing = Sincerely or Sincerely yours (Leave enough blank line space to sign the letter in your handwriting.)

Scott Preston

Be sure to leave "white space" around the body of the letter; white space helps so that the document doesn't look too full; the white space around the text should "frame" the text like a "picture frame"



1. What belongs in the heading of a cover letter?
2. Imagine you are writing a cover letter to Mrs. Jane Kelly. How do you key the salutation/greeting?
3. If you do not know the name of the person to whom you are writing, what do you do?
4. What should be included in the first paragraph of a cover letter?
5. What should you include in the second paragraph of your cover letter?
6. True or False? If you have a lot of details that you want to include in the second (middle) paragraph, you can separate it into two paragraphs so that the total number of paragraphs would be four.
7. What should you write in the last paragraph of your cover letter?
8. What should be included in the closing part of the letter?
9. What should you do before you print the cover the letter, and what are some other steps you can take to make sure your cover letter is the best it can be?
10. What should you do after your print the letter?



SUGGESTED ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS ABOVE: Teacher's Information

1. *The heading includes your address (two lines) and the date of your letter.*
 2. *Dear Mrs. Kelly*
 3. *It is best to address the letter to the person who will be in charge of hiring the person for the job. You can do this by calling the company and asking the name of the person to whom you should the letter to. (Check to be sure you have the spelling of the name correct.)*
 4. *You should explain why you are writing and that you want to apply for a job. You should give the title of the job that interests you and say where you learned about the job opening.*
 5. *You should describe your skills, experience, or education—anything that would highlight that would show that you are a great choice for the job.*
 6. *True (Be careful! Don't make the letter too long! Keep it brief and to the point!)*
 7. *The last paragraph should include your thanks to the employer for considering you as a candidate for the job, ask for an interview at the employer's convenience, and state how you can be contacted by phone. (Be sure that you will be able to answer the phone so that the employer does not have to leave a message!)*
 8. *The closing should include a closing line like **Sincerely, Sincerely yours,** or **Cordially yours** and your full name keyed below the closing line with enough blank space for you to sign your letter.*
 9. *Before printing, be sure that your letter is perfect! No spelling mistakes! Also, ask an adult to read your letter to make sure that it is the best it can be!*
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2. *After you print your letter, sign the letter in blue or black ink.*



Creating a Cover Letter

Part II Directions: Using www.cfnc.org complete a cover letter to include with your resume. The letter will be addressed to Mr. Jace Thompson, City Staff Manager. Mr. Thompson is in charge of hiring a high school student as a city park supervisor for the summer. Mr. Thompson is looking for a responsible person who would be in charge of overseeing students currently in middle school. The middle school students will be volunteering time mowing lawn, pulling weeds, and emptying trash and recycling containers from May 1 to September 1 in the city park. The city park supervisor's duties would include the following: answering phones at the park's office, keeping track of volunteer hours, and being sure that the students check equipment in and out of the park office for their jobs. (You would like the job of city park supervisor.)

Mr. Jace Thompson's address is: 7324 Hamilton Street; Cornelius, OR 97113, and he works for the Cornelius City Works Office at 7324 Hamilton Street. Use today's date for your letter.

Cover Letter Guided Practice: Use the information listed above to complete

1. Sign in to www.cfnc.org
2. Click on Career Planning
3. Click on Get a Job
4. Click on Thank You Letter Builder
5. Choose the type of cover letter that you are creating
6. Complete the cover letter
7. Print or Save your cover letter
8. If you would like to expand on your cover letter, complete the following steps
 - a. click export to file in the upper right hand side of the screen
 - b. Save your cover letter as a word document
 - c. make modifications as needed
 - d. save changes
 - e. attach the 'new' version to your www.cfnc.org Portfolio

