



SCREENING GUIDELINES

The purpose of the paper screening process is to identify those candidates most qualified for the position. Papers are only a preliminary indicator of the quality of the candidate and it is usually a mistake to choose a favorite candidate from the paper screening process. This process should only be perceived as an attempt to establish a field of acceptable candidates for further consideration. Paper screening is the second “cut” point after initial application screening.

Because the best predictor for future success is past performance, wise employers look for “red flags” that may indicate previous problems. A single “red Flag” should not automatically exclude a candidate, but should raise the level of concern. Multiple negative indicators typically disqualify a candidate from further consideration. When doubts surface about a candidate in a strong field, the wide course is to look at the other candidates. In some fields, a candidate with some concerns may be included, but must be scrutinized in the interview and reference check steps.

A numerical value is used to rate the candidates in several categories. It is usually desirable to rate candidates so that there will be a good separation of the scores. Ratings must be fair and reflect an objective perception based on the information provided. Under the reason or note sections, other knowledge influencing your scoring about the candidates can be given.

Letters of application:

- This is an opportunity for the candidate to “put his or her best foot forward.” Sloppiness, poor spelling, bad punctuation and poor word usage are areas of concern, especially in secretarial and professional positions.

- Look for the candidate to state qualifications in terms of the job duties. Generic and form letters may not reveal what the candidate can do for us.

Application and resume:

- Applications and resumes must be complete, neat, and logically ordered.
- The application should make a good first impression.
- Ignore personal information and focus on relevant material.

Negative indicators to watch for include the following:

- Gaps in employment.
- Salary or responsibility progression. Frequent or illogical job changes or unexplained geographical changes may be an indication of problems.
- Convictions or prior adverse action on a credential.
- Employment periods for teachers of less than two years – the two-year shuffle.
- Perpetual service as a substitute, especially in a District that has been hiring.
- Leaving a position to obtain a “specialist” credential.

Supplemental application (when used):

- Evaluate in terms of the position. It should be logical and to the point without being overly brief.
- Note the neatness, grammatical form, and if there are spelling errors.

Letters of recommendation (if required):

- Identify who wrote the letters of recommendation. Not including letters from supervisors can be an indication of problems. What references are missing?
- What is the mood of the letter? Is it enthusiastic or matter-of-fact?

- Sometimes a supervisor will list what the person has done without commenting on the quality of the job performance. This may be done to avoid negative statements.
- Know the language of recommendation letters. "Solid" and "competent" are not words of praise, and "will eventually develop" probably won't. "Striving" and "making a strong effort" may mean they are not fulfilling job duties.
- Look to see what is missing in the letter. Check for such qualities as competency, organization, attitude, reliability, leadership, and people skills.
- If letters of recommendation are not required, look for other ways to gauge performance.

Paper screening forms are customized to the position. Job announcements provide information about the position. Paper screeners can also call the department head for clarification about the role or desired qualities if needed.

If you are asked to be a paper screener and you have personal knowledge about the applicants or friends or relatives are applying, please deny the offer to screen. If after you begin the process you realize you have a conflict of interest, please finish the process in an objective manner and notify Human Resources of the issues. It is likely HR will have another screener complete the process. **As with all elements of the recruiting process, confidentiality must be maintained by all persons who are in contact with applications and recruiting materials.**

When you agree to paper screen, please allow enough time to be thorough. Please consider each applicant on his or her own merits, make comments that back your recommendation and recognize that candidates with the highest paper screening scores on average are the ones who will be moved forward in the recruitment process.