

Non-Teaching Applicant Success Toolkit



Welcome

Thank you for your interest in joining River East Transcona School Division.

Every employee contributes to creating safe, inclusive, and engaging learning environments where students can thrive. Whether you are applying to become a teacher, educational assistant, secretary, library technician, custodian, tradesperson, bus driver, professional support staff, or administrator, this toolkit is designed to help you present yourself professionally and confidently throughout the hiring process.

Why Work at RETSD?

Working in education means making a meaningful difference in the lives of students, families, and the community every day. At River East Transcona School Division (RETSD), employees are part of a collaborative and supportive team dedicated to student success and lifelong learning. RETSD offers meaningful and rewarding work, ongoing professional learning opportunities, competitive compensation and comprehensive benefits, and a wide variety of career paths across educational, administrative, trades, and support roles. The Division is committed to fostering inclusive, respectful, and welcoming workplaces where equity, diversity, and inclusion are valued and celebrated. Employees are encouraged to grow professionally through opportunities for advancement, leadership development, and continuous learning, making RETSD an excellent place to build a fulfilling and impactful career.

Understanding the Hiring Process

At River East Transcona School Division (RETSD), our hiring process is designed to ensure a fair, transparent, and consistent selection process for all applicants. While timelines may vary depending on the position, most competitions follow the steps outlined below.

RETSD will provide reasonable accommodation to applicants who may experience barriers during the interview and assessment process, upon request.

Step 1: Application Submitted

The hiring process begins when you submit your application through the RETSD online recruitment system before the competition closing date. Be sure to include all required documents, such as your resume, cover letter, certifications, and any additional documentation requested in the job posting. Incomplete and late applications may not be considered.

Step 2: Resume Screening

Once the competition closes, Human Resources and the hiring manager review all applications to determine which candidates best meet the qualifications outlined in the posting. During this stage, resumes are assessed based on education, experience, certifications, relevant skills, and how well the applicant's qualifications align with the position requirements. Applicants who have clearly demonstrated the required qualifications are considered for the next stage.

Step 3: Candidate Shortlisting

Following the resume review, a shortlist of candidates is developed. Shortlisted applicants are those whose qualifications, experience, and skills most closely match the requirements of the position. Due to the number of applications received, not every applicant will move forward to the interview stage. Please note that for positions governed by a collective agreement, seniority provisions may apply during the shortlisting and selection process in accordance with the applicable collective agreement. Candidates who meet the required qualifications may be considered based on seniority where required by the collective agreement.

Step 4: Interview Invitation

Candidates selected for an interview will be contacted by telephone or email to arrange an interview date and time. The invitation may include details regarding the interview format (in person or virtual), the expected length of the interview, and any materials that should be brought or prepared in advance.

Step 5: Interview

The interview provides candidates with the opportunity to discuss their qualifications, experience, and accomplishments in greater detail. RETSD primarily uses behavioural interview questions, which ask candidates to describe real-life examples of how they have demonstrated key competencies such as communication, collaboration, problem-solving, leadership, adaptability, and customer service. Interview panels assess responses using consistent evaluation criteria to ensure a fair and equitable selection process.

Step 6: Reference Checks

Candidates who are being seriously considered for the position may be asked to provide professional references. Reference checks help verify employment history, performance, reliability, interpersonal skills, and overall suitability for the role. Applicants should ensure that their references are aware they may be contacted and are prepared to discuss their work experience.

Step 7: Conditional Offer of Employment

The successful candidate will receive a conditional offer of employment. This offer is contingent upon meeting all employment requirements, including satisfactory reference checks and the submission of any required documentation identified in the job posting.

Step 8: Required Employment Documentation

Before employment can begin, successful candidates must provide all required employment documentation. Depending on the position, this may include proof of a valid Social Insurance Number (SIN), Criminal Record Check with Vulnerable Sector Search, Child Abuse Registry Check, proof of required education or certifications, and any additional documents required as a condition of employment. Timely submission of these documents helps ensure a smooth onboarding process.

Step 9: Welcome to RETSD

Once all employment conditions have been satisfied, candidates officially become members of the River East Transcona School Division team. New employees will receive onboarding information, complete new employee orientation activities, and begin their career with RETSD. The Division is committed to supporting new employees as they transition into their role and become part of a collaborative, respectful, and student-focused workplace.

Step 1

Finding the Right Position

Applying for a position begins with understanding exactly what the employer is looking for. Before submitting your application, take the time to carefully read the entire job posting from start to finish. The job posting serves as your roadmap as it outlines the qualifications, skills, experience, and competencies that the hiring committee will use to evaluate applicants. A well-prepared application demonstrates not only that you meet the requirements of the position but also that you have taken the time to tailor your resume and cover letter to the specific opportunity.

As you review the posting, pay close attention to the following:

- **Qualifications:** Review the minimum and preferred qualifications to ensure you are eligible for the position. If you meet preferred qualifications, be sure to highlight them in your application.
- **Required Education:** Confirm that you possess the required degree, diploma, certificate, or educational background. Include your education clearly on your resume.
- **Required Certifications or Licences:** Some positions require specific certifications such as First Aid/CPR, Educational Assistant certification, a valid driver's licence, or professional designations. Ensure these are current and clearly identified.
- **Experience:** Identify the type and amount of experience being requested. Consider your employment, volunteer work, practicum placements, internships, or leadership experiences that demonstrate these qualifications.
- **Hours of Work and Employment Status:** Review whether the position is full-time, part-time, term, casual, or permanent, and ensure the work schedule aligns with your availability.
- **Position Location:** Some positions are assigned to specific schools or worksites, while others may require travel between locations. Consider whether the location meets your needs.
- **Competition Closing Date:** Applications received after the closing date and time are generally not considered. Submit your application well before the deadline to avoid technical issues or last-minute delays.

- **Required Documents:** Ensure you have included all requested documentation, such as your resume, cover letter, transcripts, certifications, licences, or other supporting documents. Missing documents may result in your application being considered incomplete.

Identify the Key Words

One of the most effective ways to strengthen your application is to identify the keywords and competencies used throughout the job posting. These are often repeated because they represent the knowledge, skills, and behaviours that are most important for success in the role. Rather than simply listing these words in your resume, demonstrate them through specific examples from your work, volunteer, educational, or life experiences.

For example, if the posting highlights the following competencies:

- Communication
- Teamwork
- Student-centred approach
- Organization
- Initiative

Your resume should provide evidence of each competency.

Instead of writing:

- Excellent communication skills
- Strong organizational skills
- Team player

Describe how you demonstrated these skills:

- **Communication:** Collaborated with teachers, parents, and multidisciplinary teams to support student learning and communicate student progress.
- **Teamwork:** Worked collaboratively with classroom staff to develop and implement individualized student support strategies.
- **Student-Centred:** Adapted learning activities to meet the individual academic, behavioural, and social-emotional needs of students.
- **Organization:** Coordinated daily schedules, maintained accurate documentation, and managed multiple priorities in a fast-paced environment.
- **Initiative:** Identified opportunities to improve classroom routines and independently developed resources that increased student engagement.

Tailor Your Application

Avoid using the same resume and cover letter for every competition. Each position has unique requirements, and tailoring your application demonstrates genuine interest in the role. Adjust your professional summary, work experience, accomplishments, and skills to reflect the qualifications identified in the posting. A customized application helps the hiring committee quickly see how your experience aligns with the position and increases your likelihood of being selected for an interview.

Remember, your goal is to make it easy for the hiring committee to connect your experience directly to the qualifications outlined in the job posting. The stronger the connection between your experience and the employer's needs, the stronger your application will be.

Step 2

Building a Strong Resume

Your resume is often the first impression you make on a hiring committee. It is your personal marketing document and should clearly communicate your qualifications, experience, accomplishments, and potential. Hiring managers typically spend only a short amount of time reviewing each resume during the initial screening process, so your resume should be organized, easy to read, and tailored specifically to the position you are applying for.

Rather than simply listing your previous jobs, your resume should answer one important question:

"Why should we interview you?"

Every section of your resume should help demonstrate that you possess the qualifications, skills, and experience required for the position.

A strong resume should be:

- **Easy to read** – Use a clean, organized layout with clear headings and consistent formatting.
- **Professional** – Present information in a polished and business-like manner.
- **Accurate and error-free** – Carefully proofread for spelling, grammar, and formatting errors.
- **Tailored to the position** – Customize your resume for each competition by highlighting the experience and skills most relevant to the posting.
- **Achievement-focused** – Emphasize your accomplishments and the value you brought to previous roles rather than simply listing job duties.

Recommended Resume Format

A resume should be organized into clearly defined sections that allow the hiring committee to quickly locate important information.

Contact Information

Your contact information should appear at the top of your resume and include only the information necessary for the employer to contact you.

Include:

- Full name
- Telephone number
- Professional email address
- City and Province of residence
- LinkedIn profile (optional, if current and professional)

Avoid including personal information that is not relevant to your qualifications or that could introduce unconscious bias into the hiring process. Do not insert photographs or use unprofessional email addresses. Use a professional email address such as:

Jane.Smith@email.com

Professional Summary

Replace the traditional "Objective" statement with a **Professional Summary**.

An objective focuses on what you want from the employer.

A professional summary focuses on the value you bring to the organization.

Your summary should be three to five sentences that briefly highlight:

- Years of experience
- Areas of expertise
- Key technical and interpersonal skills
- Personal strengths
- Career focus

For example:

Dedicated Educational Assistant with over five years of experience supporting students with diverse learning needs in inclusive educational settings. Skilled in behaviour intervention, collaboration, communication, and relationship building while working closely with teachers, families, and multidisciplinary teams. Recognized for creating positive learning environments that promote student independence, inclusion, and success.

Try to incorporate keywords directly from the job posting where appropriate.

Education

List your education beginning with your most recent credential.

Include:

- Degree, diploma, or certificate
- Educational institution
- Graduation year (or expected completion date)
- Relevant honours or distinctions (optional)

Example:

Educational Assistant Certificate

Red River College Polytechnic

2024

If you are currently enrolled in a program, indicate your anticipated completion date.

If the posting requires specific coursework or specialized training, include it here.

Certifications and Professional Development

Many positions within RETSD require or prefer additional certifications.

Examples include:

- First Aid
- CPR
- Nonviolent Crisis Intervention (NVC)
- WHMIS
- Food Handler Certificate
- Educational Assistant Certificate
- Driver's Licence
- Professional teaching certification
- Mental Health First Aid

- Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)

List certifications in reverse chronological order and include expiry dates if applicable.

Don't overlook professional development. Workshops, conferences, webinars, and training courses demonstrate a commitment to continuous learning.

Work Experience

This section is the heart of your resume.

Rather than describing what your employer expected you to do, focus on what you accomplished.

Ask yourself:

- What difference did I make?
- What problems did I solve?
- What improvements did I contribute?
- How did I support students, staff, or the organization?

Instead of writing:

- Assisted teacher.

Write:

- Supported classrooms of up to 28 students by implementing individualized learning strategies that improved student engagement, independence, and classroom participation.

Volunteer Experience

Volunteer experience is valuable, particularly if you are early in your career or transitioning into a new field.

Volunteer work demonstrates:

- Leadership
- Initiative
- Community involvement
- Teamwork
- Commitment to service

Examples include:

- Coaching youth sports

- School councils
- Community organizations
- Cultural organizations
- Recreation programs
- Mentoring
- Parent advisory committees

Treat volunteer experience with the same professionalism as paid employment.

Describe your accomplishments and contributions.

Resume Tips

A well-designed resume makes it easier for hiring committees to identify your qualifications.

Best practices include:

- ✓ Use a professional font such as Calibri, Aptos, Arial, or Times New Roman.
- ✓ Use font sizes between 10 and 12 points.
- ✓ Leave sufficient white space to improve readability.
- ✓ Keep formatting consistent throughout the document.
- ✓ Use bullet points rather than long paragraphs.
- ✓ Save your resume as a PDF unless instructed otherwise.
- ✓ Name your file professionally (e.g., *Jane_Smith_Resume.pdf*).

Aim for one to two pages. If you have extensive experience, a third page may be appropriate, but every section should add value.

Avoid:

- ✗ Spelling or grammar mistakes
- ✗ Unprofessional email addresses
- ✗ Large blocks of text
- ✗ Graphics, tables, or photos that may not display properly in applicant tracking systems
- ✗ Generic resumes submitted to every employer

X Using personal pronouns such as "I" or "my"

Before submitting your resume, ask someone you trust to review it. A second set of eyes can often identify errors or opportunities for improvement that you may have overlooked.

Writing an Effective Cover Letter

A cover letter provides an opportunity to introduce yourself beyond your resume and explain why you are interested in the position.

An effective cover letter should answer three questions:

Why are you interested in this position?

Demonstrate that you understand the role and explain what attracted you to the opportunity.

Why do you want to work for RETSD?

Show that you have researched the Division and connect your personal values with RETSD's commitment to student success, inclusion, collaboration, and excellence.

Why are you the right candidate?

Highlight two or three key qualifications or accomplishments that directly relate to the position.

A suggested structure includes:

- Introduction
- Interest in the position
- Relevant experience and qualifications
- Why RETSD
- Closing and appreciation

Keep your cover letter to one page and tailor it to each competition.

Understanding the Interview Process

Congratulations! If you have been invited to an interview, it means the hiring committee believes you have the qualifications and potential to be successful in the position. The interview is your opportunity to bring your resume to life by sharing examples of your knowledge, skills, experiences, and accomplishments.

At River East Transcona School Division (RETSD), interviews are designed to be fair, consistent, and competency-based. Every candidate interviewing for the same position is asked a similar set of questions and evaluated using the same criteria. This ensures each applicant has an equal opportunity to demonstrate how they meet the requirements of the position.

The interview is also an opportunity for you to learn more about RETSD, the role, and the school or department. Think of it as a two-way conversation where both you and the hiring committee determine whether the position is the right fit.

Behavioural Interviewing

RETSD primarily uses behavioural interview questions.

Behavioural interviewing is based on one simple principle:

Past behaviour is one of the best predictors of future performance.

Instead of asking hypothetical questions such as:

"What would you do if..."

You will more commonly be asked questions beginning with:

- Tell us about a time...
- Describe a situation where...
- Give us an example of...
- Share an experience when...
- Walk us through a situation...

The interview panel is looking for evidence that you have successfully demonstrated the competencies required for the position.

For example, rather than saying:

"I'm a good communicator."

The committee wants to hear a real example that demonstrates your communication skills.

The STAR Method

One of the most effective ways to answer behavioural interview questions is by using the **STAR Method**. This approach helps you provide clear, organized, and complete responses.

Situation

Briefly describe the context or background.

Answer questions such as:

- Where were you?
- What was happening?

- Who was involved?

Keep this section concise—your focus should be on what you did.

Task

Explain your responsibility or the challenge you needed to address.

Examples include:

- Solving a problem
- Supporting a student
- Resolving conflict
- Meeting a deadline
- Managing competing priorities
- Leading a project

Action

This is the most important part of your answer.

Describe exactly what you did.

Use "I" statements whenever possible.

Avoid saying:

"We decided..."

Instead say:

"I met with the teacher, gathered information, developed a support plan, and implemented new classroom strategies."

The hiring committee wants to understand your individual contribution.

Include details about:

- Communication
- Decision-making
- Collaboration
- Problem-solving
- Leadership

- Organization

Result

Finish every answer by explaining the outcome.

What happened because of your actions?

Examples:

- Student engagement improved.
- Parent concerns were resolved.
- The project was completed ahead of schedule.
- Attendance increased.
- Classroom disruptions decreased.
- Relationships improved.
- New procedures were implemented.

Whenever possible, include measurable results.

STAR Example

Interview Question

Tell us about a difficult student you supported.

Situation

A Grade 4 student became frustrated during mathematics lessons and frequently left the classroom when work became challenging.

Task

As the Educational Assistant, my responsibility was to help the student remain engaged while minimizing classroom disruptions and supporting their emotional regulation.

Action

I collaborated with the classroom teacher and resource teacher to identify triggers, introduced visual schedules and choice boards, incorporated scheduled movement breaks, and consistently reinforced positive behaviours using a strengths-based approach. I also communicated regularly with the classroom team to adjust strategies based on the student's progress.

Result

Within several weeks, the student remained in class for longer periods, completed more classroom activities independently, and incidents of classroom disruptions decreased significantly. Many of the strategies were later implemented with other students in the classroom.

Aim to prepare **8–10 examples**, as many can be adapted to answer multiple questions.

Common Interview Questions

Although every interview is different, many questions are designed to assess key competencies.

Communication

Communication is essential in every position.

Sample questions include:

- Tell us about a difficult conversation you had.
- Describe a time you had to explain something complicated.
- Tell us about a misunderstanding you helped resolve.

The committee wants to hear how you listened, communicated respectfully, and achieved a positive outcome.

Teamwork

RETSO values collaboration.

Sample questions include:

- Tell us about a successful team project.
- Describe a time you worked with people who had different opinions.
- How have you contributed to a positive workplace?

Strong answers demonstrate collaboration rather than individual achievement alone.

Conflict Resolution

Conflict occurs in every workplace.

Examples include:

- Describe a disagreement with a colleague.
- Tell us about a conflict you helped resolve.
- How did you handle differing opinions?

Focus on professionalism, communication, and maintaining positive working relationships.

Avoid criticizing former employers or coworkers.

Organization and Time Management

Hiring committees want to know you can manage multiple priorities.

Examples include:

- Tell us about a time you managed competing deadlines.
- How do you organize your workload?
- Describe a particularly busy day.

Discuss how you prioritized tasks while maintaining quality.

Adaptability

Education is constantly changing.

Examples include:

- Tell us about an unexpected change.
- Describe a time you quickly learned something new.
- Give an example of adapting your approach.

Demonstrate flexibility and a positive attitude toward change.

Student Support

For school-based positions, expect questions related to supporting students.

Examples include:

- Describe a student you successfully supported.
- Tell us about helping a struggling learner.
- How do you build positive relationships with students?

Focus on maintaining student dignity, encouraging independence, and supporting inclusion.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

RETSD is committed to creating welcoming and inclusive learning environments.

Questions may include:

- How do you create an inclusive environment?
- Tell us about supporting someone with diverse needs.
- Describe how you promote respect and belonging.

Demonstrate cultural awareness, empathy, respect, and inclusive practices.

Leadership and Initiative

Leadership is not limited to supervisors.

Questions may include:

- Tell us about a time you took initiative.
- Describe improving a process.
- Tell us about solving a problem before being asked.

The committee wants to know how you contribute beyond your basic responsibilities.

Learning from Mistakes

Everyone makes mistakes.

Strong candidates demonstrate accountability and growth.

A good response includes:

- What happened?
- What did you learn?
- What did you change?
- What was the outcome?

Avoid blaming others.

Customer Service

Many RETSD positions involve supporting students, families, staff, and the public.

Questions may include:

- Tell us about exceeding someone's expectations.
- Describe helping a frustrated parent or customer.
- Tell us about delivering exceptional service.

Preparing for the Interview

Preparation is one of the most important predictors of interview success.

Before your interview:

Research RETSD by reviewing:

- The Division's Strategic Plan
- Mission, Vision, and Values
- Board priorities
- School or department website
- Recent initiatives
- Position responsibilities

Review the job posting again and highlight the key competencies.

Practice answering questions aloud.

Speak naturally.

Avoid memorizing scripts.

Instead, become comfortable telling stories about your experiences.

The Day of the Interview

- Plan to arrive **10–15 minutes early**.
- Dress professionally and comfortably.
- It is perfectly acceptable to take a few moments to organize your thoughts before responding.

Virtual Interviews

Many interviews may take place virtually.

Before the interview:

- Test your internet connection.
- Check your camera.
- Test your microphone.
- Ensure proper lighting.
- Choose a quiet location.

- Remove distractions.
- Silence phones and notifications.

Professional References

Choose references carefully.

Your references should:

- Have supervised or closely observed your work
- Be familiar with your skills and accomplishments
- Be able to provide specific examples of your performance
- Speak positively about your work ethic and professionalism

Always ask permission before listing someone as a reference.

Employment Requirements

Successful candidates will receive a conditional offer of employment.

Before employment begins, candidates may be required to provide:

- Proof of a valid Social Insurance Number (SIN)
- Criminal Record Check with Vulnerable Sector Search will be required
- Child Abuse Registry Check will be required
- Proof of education or professional certification
- Any licences or certifications identified in the posting

Submitting documentation promptly will help prevent delays in your start date.

After the Interview

Take a few minutes to reflect on your interview.

Ask yourself:

- Which answers went well?
- Which questions were more challenging?
- What would I improve next time?

Sending a brief thank-you email is optional but demonstrates professionalism and appreciation for the interview opportunity.

If you are not selected, remember that hiring decisions are based on the qualifications and experience that best match the specific needs of the position. Many successful RETSD employees applied more than once before receiving an offer. Each interview provides valuable experience and an opportunity to strengthen your skills for future competitions.

Continue learning, refining your interview techniques, and applying for positions that match your qualifications. Persistence, preparation, and professionalism will significantly improve your chances of success.