

“Top Ten” (Plus Eight) Reference Checking Tips:

- 1) In education, we are all dependent of reference “reciprocity”. Most people know that we all need thorough references at some point or another from one another, so it is important to give and get thorough references.
- 2) How many references do we need to check? Three is a good number to work off of, but it depends on the nature of the position.
- 3) References are treated as confidential.
- 4) Never throw the reference under the bus.
- 5) Be explicit in the interview about the fact that references will be diligently checked.
- 6) Make sure you talk to the most recent supervisor whether or not they are listed on the application.
- 7) Sometimes people who are looking for work don’t notify their supervisor they are looking at other positions. Tell candidate that before an offer of employment can be made, we have to check with their present supervisor.
- 8) Check references that are not listed; use references listed and the connections we have in BOCES to figure out who might know or have supervised the candidate.
- 9) Google the name of the candidate or check if they have a Facebook listing.
- 10) Build rapport with the reference.
- 11) Be specific about reasons why the applicant is changing jobs.
- 12) Practice a wait time of 3-5 seconds of silence (the pregnant pause).
- 13) Always ask why the applicant is changing jobs.
- 14) It is appropriate, and often helpful, to check references prior to an interview.
- 15) Don’t do your reference check just to justify your feeling about the candidate.
- 16) The BOCES does not require written consent prior to checking references, but we can if it is needed.
- 17) If the company has a policy of not responding to reference requests, ask if this applies only to the applicant, or if there is an agreement to limit the references for this person. Offer to get a signed waiver.
- 18) Near the conclusion, ask: “Is there anything else you’d like to tell me about the candidate?”