Path 2: Teaching

Talk to any English teachers you know, and they’ll tell you a surprising fact about the teaching profession. They don’t teach English, they teach students! The art of teaching and the skill required in the dynamics of student interaction weigh far more heavily in this equation than love of or interest in the subject matter. The subject might be English, but the overriding concerns in this profession are conveying an appreciation of English in all its forms of expression to learners who come to the classroom with different issues, at different ages, from different lifestyles, and with dramatically different degrees of interest in the subject. With all that in the way, simply loving English yourself is not enough, although that is certainly important and desirable. How could you teach something you didn’t truly enjoy and expect not to convey that lack of interest through a mechanical approach to the subject?

Teaching is a unique art and demands skills you probably didn’t acquire in your studies of English. These skills have very little to do with your own proficiency in the subject. The world is full of skillful practitioners who, for one reason or another and often inexplicably, cannot teach someone how they do what they do. The practice of something is very different from professing it in a classroom.

For example, planning for learning outcomes is critical. Teaching English within an established curriculum may mean corresponding to state educational goals for high schools or a course outline in a college catalog. To accomplish this body of learning within a set time requires judicious planning of the material. What will be done each day? How much time will you allow between assignments or readings? Which materials will you require and
which will you only recommend? Scores of decisions must be made about how material will be introduced, presented, and ultimately delivered back to you for evaluation.

Add to this the fact that students learn in different ways. Some are auditory learners who enjoy listening and gain most of their information in this way. If they are required to take notes while listening, something may have to give, and it may be difficult for them to retain the material. For others, auditory learning is less successful, and they prefer a visual approach with board work, handouts, their own notes, diagrams, books, and many visual materials. Visual learners retain these images and can call them up to remember the material.

Others learn best by participating through reading in class, performing, team projects, and other activities that physically involve them. These are kinesthetic learners, and they are often forgotten in curriculum design and lesson planning. Professional teachers ensure that their classes satisfy the learning styles of all their students through judicious combinations of modalities in teaching. The professional teacher has analyzed his or her own teaching style and seeks to incorporate the elements that come less naturally to maximize learning by every student.

The teaching and learning that takes place in a class is not static. The classroom is an emotionally charged environment for the student and instructor that may call into play questions of self-esteem and competency. People are exploring new definitions of themselves in relation to their capabilities, values, or achievement. A good teacher understands this and encourages a risk-free environment of mutual appreciation and participation. Both teacher and student are allowed to make mistakes and move on. The teacher strives to assist in establishing congruence between the self (who we know we are right now), the ideal self (who we want to be), and the learning environment created in the classroom. The classroom should be a place where our real selves can rise up and begin to touch our ideal selves.

Any mention of competency, self-esteem, or self-worth naturally suggests the subject of grading and the evaluation teachers provide. Grades are an expected and required part of many institutional academic settings. Establishing fair and consistent standards of evaluating students and assigning grades is a significant challenge to many teachers who otherwise feel perfectly competent in the teaching role. English teachers particularly find that grading the numerous required essays is highly subjective, and they are always seeking better ways to ensure fairness in grading this kind of assignment. Students often complain about grading practices in teachers they, in every other respect, feel positive about.

The teacher of English is called on to play other roles, too. Animating the class and inspiring attention and commitment to the material are all required in teaching. Part of this is the teacher’s enthusiasm, part is teaching style, and part is effective use of ancillary materials and the ability to relate this material to a student’s life. English teachers, of course, present information and demonstrate periods, schools, and styles of particular writers or poets. They seek to raise relevant questions, prompt dialogues in the class, and develop in students the discipline of self-questioning. They clarify difficulties or obscurities in the material and draw parallels or find relationships between examples.

For a professional teacher, each class is not only an opportunity to teach the subject, English, but to teach students how to learn as well. How to question, how to record information, how to be selective, and how to retain information are ongoing lessons that take place in every classroom to some degree.

A good teacher also uses the class and the material to explain how this material reflects feelings. A teacher will share his or her own agreement with or support of ideas or emotions in the material under study. Most of all, an instructor will evaluate and by example develop the student’s capacity for self-evaluation through careful, caring feedback about both in-class and out-of-class work. The instructor’s own example of preparation, organization, personal appearance, evaluation standards, interest in his or her students, and enthusiasm will remain an example long after the memory of the actual class content has faded.

Teachers are frequently cited as important factors in students’ choice of a career. Teachers themselves often remember one or two of their own teachers who were strong influences on their decision to teach. Much of that influence is a result of teachers’ presence in the classroom. They serve as models of people enjoying what they are doing and doing it skillfully. They are professional yet remained natural and approachable. Students watch and listen to them and think, “Maybe I could do that.”

**Definition of the Career Path**

We’ll look at two possible levels of teaching English: secondary school teaching with a bachelor’s degree and college teaching, possibly with a master’s degree but more frequently requiring a doctoral degree as the essential credential.

Following graduation, certified secondary school teachers apply for advertised positions in public high schools. Teaching positions are well advertised,
and all certified teacher graduates are qualified for entry-level English teaching assignments. Usually advertisements for public school positions do not contain a lot of information. On the other hand, private/independent schools generally provide detailed information in their ads. These two recent postings are typical:

**Education—Teacher.** Regional school district in Connecticut. To teach English grades 9–12. Interested applicants are asked to send a letter of intent, résumé, copies of transcripts and certification, and three letters of recommendation.

**High School English Teacher.** We are seeking a full-time high school English teacher to begin immediately, preferably with a specialty in British literature. The job includes four sections of eleventh grade British literature, one of which is advanced placement, one honors, and two standard sections. This is a position at a prestigious independent school with relatively small classes and motivated students. Master’s recommended. Please visit our website for more information about our school, and call/e-mail us for information on how to apply.

Is it possible to teach English at the high school level without state certification and with a bachelor of arts in English? Yes, in some public school districts that have had difficulty securing teachers because of location or pay scales, provisions have been made to grant temporary certification to non-credentialed teachers. This is, however, not very common. Some private high schools also might consider a noncertified teacher, but private schools increasingly do require teaching preparation that equals or is very close to that which public schools require. In fact, at some private schools, it is not uncommon for a majority of the English teachers to have master’s degrees, and numerous large city high schools have attracted Ph.D.s as well.

A master’s degree in English literature may be helpful in securing a private school teaching position at the high school level, especially if the master’s specialty work in English corresponds to the school’s needs, for example twentieth-century British literature or early-nineteenth-century American writers.

Graduates with master’s degrees and no certification at the bachelor’s level may also find employment in junior and community college settings or special college programs for adult learners. These schools may also welcome the teacher with a master’s degree, especially if the specialty is one that corresponds to the curriculum. The following is an actual advertisement for a college-level English instructor with a master’s degree:

**English Faculty Position.** College offers two-year degree programs. Responsibilities: teach college English courses, advise students, participate in college committees and projects, participate in community activities, and continue professional growth. Requires master’s degree in English with at least eighteen graduate semester hours or quarter hours in the discipline, one or more graduate courses in composition studies, experience teaching English composition, commitment to the teaching/learning process in a two-year community college, and willingness to use technology for classroom instruction.

The doctoral degree in English opens up the world of college teaching to the prospective educator. Positions are well advertised in vehicles such as the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (chronicle.com), a weekly newspaper that reports on higher education issues and contains the most complete list available of faculty, staff, and leadership position openings for colleges and universities in the United States and some foreign countries. The following is an ad from the Chronicle that would be of interest to a new Ph.D. in English:

**Assistant Professor of English.** Tenure track in American multicultural literature. Area of specialization should be in one or more of the following: African-American literature, Latina/o or Chicana/o literature, Native American literature, Asian-American literature, or ethnic literature. Requires excellence in teaching and scholarship, as well as involvement in college and departmental service. Course load is three classes per semester. Teach surveys, specialty courses, and at least one composition course per year. Minimum qualifications: ABD in English at time of application with doctorate to be completed by August 15, 200_, plus teaching experience at college or university level with documentation of teaching success.

This ad is interesting—it allows ABD (all but dissertation) candidates to apply, but requires completion of the degree within nine months of being
hired. An earned doctorate will pay more than an ABD and will lead more directly and quickly to possible tenure and promotion. ABD candidates will also have to decide how they will finish their degree (the dissertation often being the most time-consuming aspect of earning a Ph.D.) while holding down a full-time job.

As is true in this ad, teaching freshman composition classes is generally part of the teaching load of new college English teachers. Many of these students will be taking English composition because it is a college requirement for graduation and not because they are English majors or have chosen the course. The English department performs a service to the entire college in offering this course. Generally, even senior faculty will teach at least one composition class, but as you become more senior in the faculty you can take on courses more directly related to your interests and educational background.

The ad also contains a request for documentation of teaching success. This could come from teaching assistantships done while working on the doctoral degree. Many students acquire this experience as graduate teaching assistants, part-time faculty, lecturers, or adjunct faculty at other colleges or programs.

The advertisement also calls for an area of specialization. This could be substantiated either through a transcript showing course work in one of the areas, published articles or papers on some aspect of the specialization, or recommendations from colleagues stating your expertise in one of the designated areas.

The road to a doctorate is fairly long and arduous. It is hard work. Along the way, you'll meet some wonderful people, some who’ll be friends and colleagues the rest of your life. Even colleagues separated by long distances have the opportunity to meet at conferences and symposia. You'll have opportunities to write, teach, and perhaps publish—all before you finish your degree.

Take advantage of these opportunities when you can. As the advertisement shown suggests, some of those kinds of qualifications will be asked of you. However, it is possible to become overly involved in some of these areas to the detriment of degree progress.

There has been considerable discussion in academic circles about the time to degree for students in the humanities. The median time required to complete the Ph.D. after receiving a baccalaureate degree is 11.3 years, and the time taken since starting graduate school is 9 years. For all fields of study, the median number of years to earn a Ph.D. after earning a baccalaureate is 10.1 years, and since starting graduate school is 7.5 years.

The longer time to degree for students in the humanities may have something to do with the more defined parameters of the fields of science. Science places an emphasis on correct process, formula, and execution, whereas in English, some researchers suggest, there seems to be less decision making on the part of advisers, doctoral committees, and other participants about the proper timeline for earning the degree and what needs to be accomplished during that period.

**Working Conditions**

The working conditions for teachers of English are dramatically different according to the educational setting. The high school English teacher has a full complement of classes, perhaps as many as five or six a day, and may have study hall or lunchroom supervision duties during the week, responsibility for an after-school detention center, or even a sports activity to supervise. Discipline has a major impact in the secondary classroom and is perhaps the single most dominant element of the working conditions for the secondary English teacher. Because the student population in large part is not voluntary, resistance is prevalent and acting out through poor discipline and bad behavior is common.

The effective classroom teacher is one who has successfully mastered classroom management. For many young teachers, these are the most challenging lessons in teaching, and they make for the most interesting stories as teachers grow in their profession. The balance between teaching English and classroom discipline is seldom in equilibrium and can be particularly frustrating, as when one disruptive student threatens the decorum of an otherwise studious class.

Most public high schools have fairly rigid systems for enforcing behavior norms, and the principal agents of that enforcement are the faculty. To elect high school English education as your particular arena is to challenge your ability to maintain your poise and your focus on your subject matter and your interest in training and shaping young people while at the same time administering the disciplinary elements mandated by your school. These sanctions include grades, warnings, parent conferences, detention, dismissal, and referrals to other helping agencies in or out of the school system.

The secondary teacher's workday is a full day with established starting and ending times as well as much at-home work. Perhaps among the busiest of at-home schedules are those of the English faculty. Much of English teachers' work outside the classroom involves writing assignments, and giving the valuable feedback students need on their writing involves hours of
reading and providing commentary. Staying ahead of text and book assignments is also time-consuming, as is maintaining required records of attendance, grades, warnings, progress reports, and other evaluation instruments that may be required in your school district.

High school English teachers often take on other assignments as well, such as homeroom duty, field trips, arranging for guest speakers, chaperone duties, and advising activities for yearbooks, literary journals, or clubs in the school. These can demand a great deal of time, and it is important that the teacher entering into secondary English teaching understand that these assignments are a typical part of a high school teaching professional's commitment.

A college teaching environment is significantly different from a high school setting. There is less need to appease a number of outside publics. There is no school board to satisfy; there are no parents or parent-teacher groups. The world of the college classroom is closed to outsiders. It is, in fact, rare to have a class interrupted by anyone outside of the room, so understood is this convention. Academic freedom protects the professors in large part and allows them to express themselves within their class material with far greater pointedness than is the case in high school.

Grading, evaluation procedures, numbers of tests, even the issues of whether to have textbooks and tests are entirely up to the faculty member. If the rationale supports these decisions, the administration does not interfere. An added protection is the granting of tenure to established professors who have documented significant teaching histories and excellent student reviews, publications, campus committee work, and outreach to the community. The granting of tenure gains professors an additional degree of job security and further supports their expression of academic freedom. All of these conditions make the classroom environment and the relations of faculty and students very different than what has come before in the students' education.

The teaching day in a college or university setting involves fewer class hours taught per day and per week. At an institution that focuses on faculty research, the teacher would be responsible for teaching two to three courses that each meet three to four hours per week. Schools that emphasize teaching rather than research require instructors to teach three to four courses for a total of nine to twelve hours of class meetings per week. These class hours and some mandated office hours for advising students are the principal requirements for attendance on the faculty member's part. But as the following ad makes clear, there are other expectations:

**English Department Tenure-Track Position.** Assistant, tenure track, starting fall 200_. Responsibilities: teach courses in English education, supervise student teachers, and advise students as a member of a dynamic and growing English program committed to excellent undergraduate and post-degree education. Minimum qualifications: doctorate in English, English education, or equivalent field in hand by August 200_; two years teaching experience; and ability to conduct research. Preference will be given to individuals who have experience working with student teachers in a supervisory position and demonstrate interest in working with a diverse student population.

In addition to courses and advising, scholarly research is an expectation even of those colleges for whom tenure is not based on publication. All colleges want their faculty to contribute to the scholarly dialogue in their discipline, and this is reviewed by chairs of departments and academic deans periodically throughout the instructor's career. It may be a determining element in granting tenure or promotion to a faculty member and may influence issues such as salary negotiations, merit increases, and the like.

Committee work is also important, because the faculty at most colleges are the governing and rule-making bodies who determine and vote on governance and program changes. Committee work can be issue-oriented, such as a commission on the status of women or a pay equity survey; it may be programmatic, such as a committee to study the core curriculum for undergraduates or to devise a new graphic arts major; or it may be related to credentials, as in a committee set up to prepare materials for an accreditation visit.

Some committees are permanent, such as academic standards, curriculum review, promotion and tenure, planning, and administrator review committees, though the members may change on a rotating schedule. Other groups are formed for a limited time or until completion of some task. These committees are essential and are one vehicle for guiding the direction of the school. Having the support of all the faculty and constantly fresh and interested members helps to ensure all voices are heard and many different opinions considered in making what are often far-reaching decisions.

A college day is certainly less rigid than a high school schedule, though it may be just as busy and as long. The difference in content is that for the high school teacher, much of the day and commitment is enforced and
Training and Qualifications

To teach English at the secondary level requires a bachelor's degree, completion of an approved teacher training program, and supervised practice teaching. These are the basic elements required for public teacher licensure. Each of the fifty states and the District of Columbia require licensure of public school teachers. Private schools, on the other hand, do not require licensure of their teachers.

Teacher training programs are well-defined options within the education curriculum of teacher training colleges and universities. They include a teaching practicum in which you would have the opportunity to leave campus and teach actual English classes under a supervising teacher for an academic quarter or semester. Certification in the state granting the licensure is usually part of the degree process and may include the requirement to participate in a national teacher examination process.

There need not be any mysteries surrounding your eligibility for certification in states other than the state in which you originally earn your teaching certificate. The authors of this book have found the simplest solution to be a search of the particular state’s Department of Education website. All the information you need is at your fingertips. There is an excellent website (academyploy.com/resources.cfm) that has a submenu that, in many cases, links to complete documentation provided by each state. You’ll find in searching this site that many states have nonstandard options for certification, and you’ll learn which states have reciprocal certification agreements with other states.

Another option for the individual with a degree in English who desires to teach but lacks certification would be to enroll in a conversion program at a college or university. These programs offer an opportunity to add the necessary state-mandated teaching requirements to an existing degree. Depending on your undergraduate degree and whether a change of institution is involved, this could require twelve to eighteen months of academic enrollment and, in some cases, a full two years. A good website to visit is one published by the National Center for Education, ncte.com/state-alt-contact.htm. It links you to each state’s contact for alternative teacher certification.

Such conversion programs can also exist independent of a college or university. Some are the product of a consortium of school districts, such as the Upper Valley Teacher Institute in Lebanon, New Hampshire (uvti.org). This unique teacher qualifying program takes individuals with bachelor’s degrees, many of whom have had other careers or significant work experience, and places them with master teachers in actual classrooms for a full year. Half the year is at one grade level, and the other half is with another grade. The year includes much independent work and follows a contract established at the start of the year. There may also be a requirement to participate in an associated classroom program to meet state reading certification requirements.

College and university teaching requires a completed doctorate or, in some cases, all but dissertation (ABD). Salary and assignments may be affected, however, by lack of an earned doctorate. In addition to the doctorate, there may be requirements for teaching experience, special depth of research, background in a particular genre or subject area, and some additional competencies. There is almost always the requirement of teaching basic composition classes to first- and second-year students.

Earnings

Secondary school teachers of English are paid according to the same salary schedules as other teachers in their school districts. Salaries across the nation vary depending upon location, which affects cost of living and level of support of education as reflected in the school budget. A salary survey published by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) on its website (aft.org) at the time of publication showed estimated beginning teacher salaries. Pay ranged from a high of $38,597 in Alaska to a low of $23,790 in Montana. The AFT website is an excellent source of information on all aspects of the teaching profession. Another source of information is the Education Resources Information Center (eric.ed.gov).

In some situations the first-year teacher’s inexperience can be a plus. With school budgets under terrific strain, principals, superintendents, and other hiring officials may be more attracted to a relatively inexperienced teacher who
will earn a lower salary than to an experienced teacher, perhaps with an advanced degree, who would take a larger proportion of salary funds.

The Chronicle of Higher Education's annual report on faculty salaries for 2004–05 reported that the average faculty salary for English language and literature/letters positions in four-year public institutions was $54,712, and at private institutions was $57,783. Remember that these numbers represent averages for all ranks combined, so starting salaries will be lower, and in some cases much lower, than this. Those who teach in higher education are not drawn to the work because of high pay, but one item to note for those interested in teaching English is that this discipline is among the lowest paid of all the disciplines.

Career Outlook

The career outlook for secondary school teachers of English must take into account the number of baby boomer teachers who will retire, the size of the population of secondary school students, and the geographic location of the school. Generally speaking, opportunities for English teachers are expected to be good through the year 2012, which will require less attractive school districts to offer higher pay, and in some cases signing bonuses, in order to attract teacher candidates. The reason: a significant number of teachers are expected to retire, and there will be the usual turnover among beginning teachers who leave the profession. Even with an expected smaller cohort of students to be educated, the career outlook is positive. Your willingness to relocate to a fast-growing state or region will also increase your chances of securing your first teaching position.

As for higher education and prospective teachers of English, the American Federation of Teachers describes an academic staffing crisis in terms of the availability of tenure-track faculty positions. At the time of publication, only 30 percent of the postsecondary instructional workforce were employed in full-time tenure and tenure-track positions. More than one-third of the workers were part-time/adjunct faculty, 15 percent were full-time non-tenure-track workers, and 20 percent were graduate student employees. Competition for tenure-track positions will be keen given the increasing use of non-tenure-track, part-time/adjunct, and graduate student employees. If you would like to know more about this topic, visit the American Federation of Teachers website (aft.org/topics/academic-staffing).

Strategy for Finding the Jobs: Public Schools

The four tasks outlined—surfing the Web, directly contacting schools where you would like to work, checking with your career office, and scanning relevant newspapers—provide an excellent starting point for your job search.

Surf the Web

Particular websites come and go, but the Internet will always be a good source of job postings for teaching positions. For public school jobs, check out some excellent sites: ed.gov/programs/erod/erodmap.html—simply click on a state to find links to U.S. Education Department–funded organizations that serve that state, including the state’s Department of Education. When you drill down, you will find job postings for schools throughout the state. The Academic Employment Network (academploy.com/resources.cfm) also provides access to many, many job listings.

Directly Contact Schools Where You Would Like to Work

Send a cover letter and résumé to schools where you would like to work. State departments of education publish paper and online directories of all public schools in the state, listing superintendents, principals, and principal administrators. Names, addresses, and phone numbers are regularly included in these listings. These same departments of education can provide you with similar information for the state university and technical college systems as well. Many libraries and college career counseling centers will have this same information on file.

Check with Your Career Office

College, university, and technical school career offices in your region of the state will also be on the mailing list to receive teaching vacancy announcements. Determine which schools’ job postings you can view through reciprocity agreements with your own college and make these visits part of your regular job search. You will find that you become so practiced at screening job postings that it will take very little time to quickly ascertain whether any new openings have been listed.

Scan Relevant Newspapers

The public school teacher candidate is advised to make a regular practice of scanning all newspapers advertising in and around the geographic region being
considered for teaching assignments. These newspapers need not be purchased; most libraries subscribe to a generous selection of local papers.

**Possible Employers: Public Schools**

The *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2004–05 edition*, published by the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, reports that 1.1 million of a total of 3.8 million teachers worked as secondary school teachers, and about 10 percent of these people worked for private schools. We often speak of the "hidden job market" in business to refer to the large number of positions that are filled without public notification. But in teaching, in an effort to secure the best pool of applicants as well as to respond to school boards and boards of directors, most positions are well advertised.

**Department of Defense (DOD) Schools**

Since 1946 there have been schools on U.S. military bases around the world for children of military and civilian personnel assigned overseas. About 220 schools serve this segment of U.S. public education, and courses of study, eligibility for teachers, textbooks, and programs parallel those of the public schools in the United States. Schools in the DOD system are all accredited by appropriate agencies. The program and application processes are outlined in detail on the DOD Education Activity website (dodea.edu).

**Strategy for Finding the Jobs: Private Schools**

The following two suggestions are critical in helping job seekers find employment in private schools.

**Directly Contact Schools Where You Would Like to Work**

Send a cover letter and résumé to each private school where you would like to work. Private schools are equally easy to identify through sources such as *Peterson's Guide to Independent Secondary Schools* or the *Handbook of Private Schools* published by Porter Sargents Publishers of Boston. Both of these reference books are standard fare for comprehensive reference sections of career centers and larger college libraries. The National Association of Independent Schools website (nais.org) includes a Career Center. One of the services for job seekers is a list of current job openings.

**Attend Job Fairs**

Find out about job fairs and attend as many as you can. Job fairs for private schools, both in the United States and abroad, are held year-round. Many are administered by recruiting firms. These fairs serve as an entrée into the private school system for many job seekers. To participate, you register your materials with a private school placement agency, which then provides access to a private school job fair where you can meet and interact with a number of hiring officials from a regional or national base. Your college career office can put you in touch with some of these private school recruiting firms.

**Possible Employers: Private Schools**

Accessing the private school market is a very different process from seeking a public school situation. In general, there is not a significant amount of crossover between the two systems, and teachers in the private school system tend to spend their careers in that educational environment.

Private schools list positions and send out job notices but seldom advertise in newspapers to ensure a more select pool of candidates and maintain a lower profile than their public counterparts. As tuition-driven institutions, they do not have the core franchise market that public schools automatically obtain and must seek students through reputation and advertising.

**Private Schools Abroad**

Schools abroad can be researched through directories such as *Schools Abroad of Interest to Americans*, which lists and describes seven hundred elementary and secondary schools in 150 countries that accept English-speaking students. International Schools Services provides services to more than three hundred international schools in some of the remotest locations on the globe. Their publication, the *ISS Directory of International Schools*, identifies this group of potential employers. The International Educator's Institute website (tieonline.com) also contains useful information.

**Resources for Finding Both Public and Private School Openings**

Educational Directories, a major publisher of educational resources, produces *Patterson's Elementary Education* and *Patterson's American Education* each year.
These publications list public and private elementary and secondary schools, school districts and superintendents, postsecondary schools, and others, including nursery schools, YMCA programs, and the like. Use these directories to conduct your proactive job search activities: mailing out cover letters and résumés, networking, and telephone follow-up.

In addition, review the list of professional associations for teachers of English at the end of this chapter. For several associations there is a line labeled “Job Listings”; any activities that the association undertakes to assist its members in finding employment are shown. The National Directory for Employment in Education, a publication of the American Association for Employment in Education (aace.org), contains a comprehensive registry of professionals at school systems who train, recruit, and hire teachers. Check with your college's education department and career center to find out if they make this publication available to students and alumni.

**Strategy for Finding College and University Jobs**

Acquiring a college teaching position nearly always demands that you relocate to an institution other than where you received your degree. Higher education has limited openings at any one time, and part-time work or adjunct faculty status at an institution is no guarantee of earning a full-time spot. Most departments have budget lines dedicated to full-time, potentially tenured faculty. This means that faculty who are hired in those budget lines are hired with the expectation they will become a permanent part of the faculty and earn tenure and promotion when they qualify.

Consequently, though there may be schools where you would enjoy teaching or areas of the country you would prefer, the supply and demand of college professorships clearly dictate you must follow the demand and relocate as needed.

**Go to “the Source”**

The Chronicle of Higher Education (chronicle.com) is the weekly national publication listing junior college, four-year college, and university teaching positions in English. Some of these advertisements are large display ads that detail in full the requirements and duties of the positions advertised. This publication is widely available on college campuses, and usually many offices have individual subscriptions. Your career center, department office, and college library will all have copies you can review each week. The website, though, is better than the print version because jobs are clustered on the website by type. In the newspaper edition, you must scan full pages of ads to locate the ones that interest you.

**Network with Faculty Colleagues**

Another excellent source of college-level positions will be your own faculty colleague contacts made as you pursue your advanced degree. There is a well-established network that becomes very active when schools are seeking to fill a position. This network would value the personal recommendation of a friend or former teaching associate. For this reason, it's important to ensure that your faculty mentors and colleagues are well aware of your teaching and research interests and geographic preferences so they can help move the process along if an opportunity presents itself.

**Attend Professional Meetings**

Interviews are often conducted at professional meetings, where recent job openings may be announced or posted in a conspicuous place at the registration table. As a graduate student, many of these conferences are available to you at substantially reduced fees or no fee at all. You should take advantage of them for the professional content and the opportunity to meet representatives from the departments of other higher-education institutions.

**Possible Employers: Colleges and Universities**

Some resources that can be used to identify schools if you are considering teaching English beyond high school include Peterson’s Guide to Two-Year Colleges, Peterson’s Guide to Four-Year Colleges, Peterson’s annual Graduate Guide Set (petersons.com), and the College Board’s Index of Majors and Graduate Degrees.

**Possible Job Titles**

For the professional educator, there is not wide latitude in job titles. The term teacher is so old and so esteemed that we apply it to professionals from nursery school to the most rarefied levels of postdoctoral research. All are teachers. We see variants from time to time; for example, the resource room teacher in elementary school who works individually with students experiencing difficulties in particular subjects, or the skills application teacher on the college faculty who may have a more narrowly defined teaching role than
a staff professor. To students, however, these distinctions may not loom very large, and most are made to indicate bureaucratic distinctions. The teaching role remains the same.

Bilingual teacher
Cooperating teacher
Educator
International school teacher
Resource room teacher
Substitute teacher
Teacher

Related Occupations

Teaching skills and teacher training lend themselves to innumerable occupations and are seen as universally valuable by all other employers.

The ability to explain, demonstrate, encourage, test, and spark imagination can be transferred to countless settings in business and industry. The introduction of new products, cross-training of staff, planning for change or transition, and responding to crises are all situations that call for a teacher's expertise.

Nuclear power information centers, museum programs for children, historical sites, and public relations organizations all have need of the teacher's training in presentation skills, explanation, and the ability to convey meaning.

Social service programs devote much of their mission to education in the form of new programs and information for their clients. This setting uses teachers in situations not very different from the standard classroom. The following list is a brief and general suggestion of possible related careers for the teacher.

Counselor
Education administrator
Educational consultant
Employee development specialist
Employment interviewer
Environmental educator
Hospital/community health educator
Librarian
Media relations representative

Professional Associations for Teachers of English

Finding out about and joining at least one professional association can play an important role in achieving success in your job search. There are many associations that relate to the kinds of jobs available for teachers of English. The following are some groups that can provide valuable information in terms of finding out about actual job listings or talking with members for networking purposes.

American Association for Adult and Continuing Education
4380 Forbes Blvd.
Lanham, MD 20746
aaace.org

Members/Purpose: Provides leadership in advancing education as a lifelong learning process; serves as a central forum for a wide variety of adults and continuing education special-interest groups

Training: Sponsors conferences and meetings

Journals/Publications: AAACE Online, Adult Education Quarterly, Adult Learning

American Association of Community Colleges
One Dupont Circle NW, Suite 410
Washington, DC 20036-1176
aacc.nche.edu

Members/Purpose: Administrators, students, trustees, faculty, public officials, and interested individuals from all segments of postsecondary education; seeks to clarify and help resolve critical issues in postsecondary education through conferences, publications, and special projects
Training: Hosts annual convention
Journals/Publications: Community College Journal, Community College Times
Job Listings: Website contains a Career Center Job Bank.

American Association of State Colleges and Universities
1307 New York Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20005-4701
aascu.org
Members/Purpose: Colleges and universities offering programs leading to a degree of bachelor, master, or doctor that are wholly or partially state supported and controlled
Training: Hosts annual meeting and various conferences
Journal/Publication: Biweekly e-newsletter

American Association of University Professors
1012 14th St. NW, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20005
aaup.org
Members/Purpose: College and university teachers, research scholars, and academic librarians; purposes are to advance academic freedom and shared governance, to define fundamental professional values and standards for higher education, and to ensure higher education’s contribution to the common good
Journal/Publication: Academe bimonthly magazine

American Council on Education
One Dupont Circle NW, Suite 800
Washington, DC 20036
acenet.edu
Members/Purpose: A council of colleges and universities, educational organizations, and affiliates
Journal/Publication: The Presidency magazine

American Federation of Teachers
555 New Jersey Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20001
aft.org
Members/Purpose: Represents the economic, social, and professional interests of classroom teachers; an affiliated international union of the AFL-CIO

Journals/Publications: American Educator, American Teacher, Heathwire, AFT on Campus, PSRP Reporter, Public Employee Advocate, American Academic

American Society for Training and Development
1640 King St., Box 1443
Alexandria, VA 22313
astd.org
Members/Purpose: Professional association for persons engaged in training and development for business, industry, education, and government; undertakes special research projects and acts as a clearinghouse
Training: Hosts conferences
Journal/Publication: T&D Magazine
Job Listings: Online careers job bank lists available positions

Council for American Private Education
13017 Wisteria Dr., Suite 457
Germandown, MD 20874
capenet.org
Members/Purpose: Coalition of national organizations serving the interests of private schools (K–12)
Journal/Publication: Outlook newsletter
Job Listings: Online links to private school job banks

Modern Language Association
26 Broadway, 3rd floor
New York, NY 10004-1789
mla.org
Members/Purpose: Promotes the study and teaching of language and literature
Training: Hosts annual convention
Journal/Publication: MLA Newsletter
Job Listings: Online job information list

National Association of Independent Schools
1620 L St. NW, 11th Floor
Washington, DC 20036
naisi-schools.org
Members/Purpose: Independent elementary and secondary school members; regional associations of independent schools and related associations; provides curricular and administrative research and services