

# Finding the First (Right) Job

**Pam Stephens**

**T**hroughout your teacher preparation program, you probably often thought: Will I find a teaching job? Chances are that most graduates of accredited teacher preparation programs will indeed find jobs; however, the better question to wonder about is: Will I find the *right* teaching job?

Recall that in last month's column Joseph Campbell's idea of following your bliss was introduced. In that exercise, you were asked to identify those characteristics that define what makes you happiest. Applying this concept to a job search is invaluable. Finding the right job—one that makes you deeply happy—is integral to personal and professional success.

## Where to Begin?

Only you hold the key to discovering what makes you happy. Find a quiet place away from distractions and make a list of things that contribute to your happiness. Think about the times when you are most content and enjoy life. Your list might include people, places, events, or activities. Anything that contributes to your most profound enjoyment of life should be on the list.

Now think about those art-related ideas that move you to action. Your ideas might be as simple as showing a child how to create a secondary color or as complex as organizing a political rally for a candidate who supports the arts. Commit these ideas to paper and reflect upon them. Ask yourself: Why did I feel compelled to take action? How did I feel afterwards? How do these sorts of actions fit into the big scheme of art teaching? How will these sorts of actions define me as an art educator?

When you think about your ideal

teaching job, what does it look like? Use your imagination. Think big. Don't disqualify a dream because it seems unrealistic. Consider various circumstances where your dream teaching job could become a reality. Will your dream job be best fulfilled in a traditional or non-traditional teaching environment? In a small, rural school, or a large, inner-city school? A private school or a public school?

## Now What?

Now that you have an idea of what it is that makes you happy and you've considered the situation that would bring your ideal job to fruition, it's time to look at the practical side of the matter:

1. Do you hold the best credentials for the job you want? If not, are you willing to continue your training until you have the qualifications?
2. Are you willing to relocate to fulfill your dream?
3. Are you willing to "work your way up" if your dream job requires more experience than you have?
4. What salary and benefits do you need?
5. Be specific in your job search. Finding any job is much easier than finding the *right* job.

## The Practical Side

At this point, you should have a fairly good grasp of what teaching job will best fit your personality and life goals. It's time to begin the real job search.

Network! Make sure your univer-



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sity supervisor, cooperating teacher, and other faculty know the sort of job that you are seeking. The old adage "it's not what you know, but who you know" is applicable to this situation.

If you are not already a member of your state art education association, join now. Often members announce art teaching jobs to their colleagues before the jobs are officially posted to district or state websites.

Most states post teaching jobs on their Department of Education websites. Check the states where you would like to teach. Keep in mind that most states have reciprocal agreements and will accept your teaching credentials, although you will likely have additional coursework or tests to complete.

School districts post teaching jobs to their websites. If you have an interest in a specific district, look under "Human Resources" to find art jobs.

If you have an interest in teaching in another country, look at the Department of Defense Dependents Schools at [www.dodea.edu/home/index.cfm](http://www.dodea.edu/home/index.cfm) or the International Schools Services at [www.iss.edu/index.asp](http://www.iss.edu/index.asp)

Other websites such as the Incredible Art Department ([www.princetonol.com/groups/iad/jobs/openings.html](http://www.princetonol.com/groups/iad/jobs/openings.html)) post art teaching jobs. 

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