



Teaching Abroad

Options for Early Childhood Professionals

Meredith MacMillan

In today's global society, increasing numbers of early childhood educators are making the choice to teach abroad. For professionals who are interested in contributing their talents overseas, the opportunities are as vast as they are varied. However, perusing the many teaching programs, jobs, and volunteer opportunities can be an overwhelming experience. Below is a brief overview of some of the options.

International schools

Generally speaking, international and American schools overseas are private institutions created to educate children of expatriate families. School bodies tend to be multinational and often include children from the host country. Currently there are more than 270,000 students in grades K through 12 who attend such schools worldwide. The curricula at these institutions tend to be based on models from the United States or the United Kingdom or on an international curriculum such as the IB (International Baccalaureate) Diploma Programme.

Most schools seek teachers with at least two years of experience. Job openings are not for the temporary job seeker, as schools usually offer two-year contracts. Benefits typically include a moving allowance, airline tickets or travel stipend, housing, and health insurance. While individual schools often post job openings online, many candidates opt to work with recruiting agencies that specialize in overseas teaching placements and host job fairs around the world. For more information, visit

- The International Educator—www.tieonline.com
- U.S. Department of State Office of Overseas Schools—www.state.gov/m/a/os
- University of Northern Iowa Overseas Placement Service for Educators—www.uni.edu/placement/overseas
- Council of International Schools—www.cois.org
- International Schools Services—www.iss.edu
- Search Associates—www.search-associates.com

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Department of Defense Child Development System

The Department of Defense (DoD) Child Development System is the largest employer-sponsored program in the country, serving more than 200,000 children (newborn to age 12) daily at locations worldwide. This system of care offers full-day, part-day, and hourly child care; preschools; and before- and after-school programs for school-age children.

Child development staff members are highly trained professionals dedicated to providing quality programs for the children of military and DoD personnel. Career opportunities are available worldwide for individuals interested in management positions, such as

- Child Development Center Director
- Child Development Center Assistant Director
- Training and Curriculum Specialist
- Family Child Care/Child Development Home Coordinator
- School-Age Care Program Coordinator

Employment opportunities are also available for individuals interested in working in the classroom in either the child development program or in the before- and after-school care program. For more information about available positions throughout the world, visit www.usajobs.opm.gov, www.usajobs.com, or www.armymwr.org/home/Show_file.asp?fileID=244.

For information about employment opportunities at a specific installation, visit www.militaryinstallations.dod.mil/ismart/MHF-MI and click on Civilian Personnel Office under Installation & Directories of Services.

Department of Defense Dependents Schools

The Department of Defense Dependents Schools (DoDDS) is a network of schools overseas that serve children of active military and Department of Defense civilian employees. These schools are operated by the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) (www.dodea.edu) and provide a comprehensive curriculum for students in prekindergarten through grade 12. School environments are similar to that of a U.S. public school. DoDDS also offers Sure Start, a school-readiness program for four-year-olds, modeled on Head Start.

DoDDS teachers are federal employees, and they receive benefits such as health insurance, life insurance, retirement, government housing or living quarters allowance, transportation to and from the host country, and shipment of belongings. Assignments are for one or two school years. Applicants must meet a set of general criteria and should apply by January to be considered for an upcoming school year.

Fulbright teacher and administrator exchanges

The Fulbright Teacher Exchange Program (www.fulbrightexchanges.org) provides teachers and administrators with opportunities to learn from their colleagues at host-country schools. For teachers, this involves a direct exchange with a counterpart in another country who teaches the same subject at the same grade level. Exchanges can last six weeks, a semester, or a year.

The program works differently for administrators, who are paired with an overseas counterpart whom they shadow and share duties with for three to six weeks. The two administrators exchange schools with one another, allowing each to serve as a host in her or his own country and be a guest in another country.

Early childhood program offerings are limited; however, elementary teachers can apply for exchanges in Colombia, Peru, and the United Kingdom. The application deadline is October 15.

Teaching English

There are many options for early childhood professionals interested in teaching English abroad. While a TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) or TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) certificate can prove advantageous in the hiring process, possessing one is not always necessary. Unlike DoDDS or international schools, there are several different ways one can land a job teaching English overseas. One strategy is to apply for a position through a program or organization, such as JET (The Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme) or EPIK (English Program in Korea). Another is to communicate directly with a school you are interested in. A final option, not for the faint-of-heart, is to travel to the country of interest and try to secure a job in person. For more information, visit these sites:

- Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages—www.tesol.org
- TEFL.com—www.tefl.com
- Dave's ESL Café—www.eslcafe.com
- The Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme—www.jetprogramme.org
- English Program in Korea—<http://epik.knue.ac.kr>

More programs and volunteer opportunities

- Peace Corps—www.peacecorps.gov
- WorldTeach—www.worldteach.org
- Globe Teach—www.globeteach.net
- The Council on International Educational Exchange—www.ciee.org/teach.aspx
- French Ministry of Education Teaching Assistantships Program—www.frenchculture.org/a_assistantship-program_195.cfm
- Teachers for Africa Program—www.ifesh.org

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