

Finding a Teaching Job in an Independent School

Finding a teaching job in an independent school is a different undertaking than the same procedure in the public schools and requires first of all an understanding of just what an independent school is, how it is organized, and how it sees itself.

Each independent school is a separate entity; it is not part of a “system” and its sole governing authority is its own board of trustees. It is therefore free to establish its own philosophy, to define its own community and set admissions standards accordingly, to design its own curriculum and administrative structure, and to hire the faculty it feels will be best suited to the atmosphere and goals of the school. In the state of Maryland, non-sectarian schools are required to be approved for operation by the Maryland State Department of Education, which has established minimum qualifications for non-public school teachers requiring only a Bachelor’s Degree. Individual schools may have additional requirements. However, qualifications are important for an independent school teacher. Independent schools do believe in professional standards and development, but think that personal and professional competency is not necessarily determined by specific course work.

Independent schools tend to expect a great deal of their teachers; they do not think kindly of the “punch-the-time clock” kind of mentality, but rather look for people who are genuinely fond of youngsters and who are enthusiastic about their fields of interest both inside and outside of the classroom. The vast majority of independent schools are small, fairly intimate communities where student-teacher ratios are low and relationships close. The environment is enriched with a great variety of extra-curricular activities (mostly teacher-run). The sense of community is strong. The pay is less than in the public schools, in some cases considerably less. But most teachers seem to feel the rewards come in the freedom to develop one’s own teaching style and in the opportunity to participate in the development of the curriculum and in the life of the school.

Because each school is an independent community, each one is different; it therefore requires some research on your part before you decide where you may “fit”. A standard resource available in the reference section of most libraries is Porter Sargent’s, *A Handbook of Private Schools*, which contains brief descriptions of hundreds of schools across the country, including size, grades covered, facilities, programs offered, etc. To learn more about each AIMS school, go to the AIMS website at www.aimsmd.org. In the list of Member Schools, you will find each school’s general information and a link to the school’s own website. Locally, it is not out of line to request brochures and to do some “word of mouth” research. *Only then* should you apply, personally and by name to the head of the school, to those schools you are interested in. The teaching market is just as tight in independent schools as it is in the public schools, and given the personal and individual atmosphere of each one of these schools, the “blanket” approach by copied form letters will get you nowhere. To show that you have taken the time to familiarize yourself with the school in question and to address yourself personally to the head of the school is your best first step.

Reference: *The Handbook of Private Schools*, published by Porter Sargent