

So you want to teach in Michigan?

A guide from an April, 2007 WMU graduate who found the dream teaching job.

1-4 Years Prior to Graduation

- Build your resume with relevant work. If you haven't already, volunteer or find a job working with youth. There are PLENTY of opportunities in Kalamazoo for this. Just to name a few: Boys and Girls Clubs, coaching at area schools, Parks and Rec., WMU Literacy Center, subbing, etc. etc. If the only experience on your resume is pre-internships and internships... forget about it, you need to stand out!
- Network, network.. You will hear it a thousand times, but there is no substitute for every time you enter a school or other situation to network professionally with as many people as possible.
- Write your resume EARLY. If you don't end up revising your resume dozens of times, it probably isn't getting into the Yes pile. Have it reviewed on campus by the Career and Student Employment office- Deveta Gardner is VERY helpful. Also obtain their Job Search manual and refer to that OFTEN.
- Take the MTTC tests ASAP. Why wait? You will need the passing scores for your job search.

The Year of Graduation

- Spend lots of spare time on your lwebfolio and hard cover portfolio. Both will be vital to the job search. Make sure you have plenty of good work samples for each Entry Level Standard. Ignore people who insist portfolios won't be looked at.
- Keep up on current issues in Education.
- Sub! Register with Kalamazoo, Allegan and Van Buren educational service agencies and choose the places you are willing to drive to. The more places where they know your name and face and story (I'm looking for a job) the better chance you will have that networking will pay off.
- Make sure you have established your References and those who will write your Letters of Recommendation.
- PUBLISH your lwebfolio (make it public) and use it as your homepage or website on your resume and any applications.
- Start filling out Online Applications when you start student teaching. They can be finalized when you are closer to being done, but it is a very tedious process, so start on them early.
- Attend all the Job Fair prep sessions and Mock Interviews that you can.

You CAN find a teaching job in Michigan!!! Here's how....

- Don't be TOO PICKY!! Determine a large area that you are interested in. The bigger the area, the better chance you will have. 3 hours away from _____ is better than across the country!
- Have all your tools finalized and polished:
 - Portfolio- Leather hardbound, neat, BEST work only. Table of contents organized around MI Entry Level Teacher Standards. Get it done early.
 - Iwebfolio- burned onto CD's: After finalizing, view it online and click on the name of the portfolio, this will allow you to download it. It will be a .zip file. Unzip it to its own folder. Burn the folder onto CDs. Use jewel cases and CD labels. These can be handed out at the job fair and put in with application materials thru the mail. Get it done early.
 - Resume- Electronically it is a .pdf. Make it specific to each district. Proof read 100's of times. Stand out in some way- but professionally. Resume paper.
 - Cover Letter- Write and re-write several versions. Have them proof-read lots of times. Choose the best one that will fit the district you are contacting. Include the internet address for your professional portfolio (Iweb). Speak to the district specifically throughout the letter. Highlight your professional experiences and desires. Refer to the Job Search manual for tips and a list of verbs. Save as a .pdf. Use matching resume paper when printing.
 - References- Just like letters, get as many as you can so you can choose specifically for each district. Make it a .pdf file if sending electronically. Match it to your resume. The Job Search manual shows how to set it up.
 - Letters of Recommendation- Get as many as you can. Make Copies. Use a higher standard paper than normal (but not necessarily matching the resume paper) when you copy them. Choose the best 3 you want to send to each district, depending on their needs and profile. Scan to .pdf.
- All word documents should be made into .pdfs. Don't attach .doc files onto online applications or emails. This will ensure your electronic communications will look 100% professional. There are programs that allow you to "print" them into .pdf format. You can download a 30 day free trial of Acrobat Professional. Another is CutePDF Writer.
- Go to the Job Fair with a war-zone mindset. You will wait in line. It will be hot. Interviewers will seem uninterested. If you talk to every district from MI, chances are at least a handful of those districts will have openings posted later in the year. The fact that you waited in their line will stand out in a cover letter. See the Job Search manual for other tips. Ultimately, this is what got me a job.
- You can electronically apply to hundreds of districts in MI, even before jobs are posted. Establishing these contacts early will allow you much more time to send out hard copies to the districts that only want snail-mail submissions. This will take some work. Here are the websites you will need.
 - www.mireap.net – Dozens of districts use this for their application process, or at least to screen candidates.
 - www.greatschooljobs.com/main.asp?site=MI – Sponsored by the MI Association of School Boards. Dozens of districts will post openings on this site, most will still require you to submit interest via snail mail, but filling out the application is still a must.
 - <http://new.oakland.k12.mi.us/Employment/OaklandHumanResourcesConsortium/tabid/146/Default.aspx> - or- search for "Oakland Human Resources Consortium" – Apply to all the districts in Oakland County with one application.

- <http://www.geneseeisd.org/hrs/jobs.htm> - Apply to all the districts in Genesee County with one application.
 - <http://www.generalasp.com/home/clients.asp> - This is a list of all the districts in MI who use the Applitrack format. I.E.- All of Genesee and Oakland Counties and many more. Once you fill out an application, you can import the main data to every new district you sign up with! (Just use the same e-mail) That is as easy as it will get.
 - <http://www.schoolstreamk12.com/client.htm> - This is a list of all the districts who use the School Stream format for online apps. Unfortunately, the data cannot be imported and therefore you will have to manually complete the app. for each district you want to have your name at.
- Copy and paste everything you fill out for Online Applications onto one or more word documents so that you don't have to continuously answer questions like "What makes a great teacher".
 - Keep track of all the districts you have applied for so you can easily update or check their website.

Find Openings

- Probably 80-90% of MI districts post their openings online. Finding them is the tricky part. Use the following sites and check weekly, some are only posted for a few days due to the high volume of inquiries.
 - Continually check the Oakland and Genesee Consortiums.
 - Continually check the MIREAP and GreatSchoolJobs websites.
 - Check the districts you have online applications for.
 - Use http://michigancounselor.net/Educational_Job_Search_Michigan.html as your source for all other districts. Most links work, but if they don't, it at least gives you the district names to Google. Some sites you will have to search for where they post their jobs at- try 'Administration', 'HR', 'Links', etc.
 - <http://www.crcmich.org/Links/isd.html> - Links to MI Intermediate School Districts.
 - <http://imel.mel.org:8080/mer/MER--JobListings.php> - Michigan E-Library Job Search listings. Many broken links here, otherwise would be a nice format (by region)
 - <http://www.muskegon-isd.k12.mi.us/jobs/employment-listing/> - Muskegon ISD also posts all the districts' openings.
- Use some type of systematic approach to continuously search and record the results of your search. There will be some weeks where you will find 20 jobs and others where you will find 2. Start looking regularly in May and don't stop until you have a job.
- Interested in a district that doesn't post online? Call them! -or- Go "door to door!" An administrator told me that nothing can beat putting a handshake and a face to a name.

Apply

- Send your materials to as many places as possible, taking great care that each "package" is completely professional and seamless. Make each district believe that you want to teach there more than anywhere.
- Send e-mails to Athletic Directors/Head Coaches if you want to coach, let them know what kind of teaching job you are looking for and how interested you are in their programs. Attach a coaching resume as a .pdf. Send thank you messages for any response.
- Contact band directors, drama leaders, etc. Whatever is your specialty, contact that person in the district and let them know your interest. They may mention you to the principal and that may get you a second look.

- Use computer generated labels for return address and also for the district.
 - An 8 ½ by 11 envelope with a resume, cover letter, references, 3 letters of rec., a 90-day letter and an Iwebfolio CD/jewel case costs about \$1.38 to mail. It will add up quickly!
 - Include your 90-day letter when you get it, and scan it to .pdf.
 - Have copies of your MTTC scores ready if they ask for it, and scan it to .pdf.
 - Obtain your Official Transcript ASAP, and scan it to .pdf.
 - Follow-up 1-2 weeks after you apply. You will only talk to a secretary, but finding out if they have called people for interviews yet will give you an idea if you still have a chance or not. Also in small districts these secretaries may be helping to make decisions about hiring.
 - Keep applying. It will likely take DOZENS of applications before you hear something back.
 - Practice answering the interview questions that are given out during your Ed classes or Seminars (or online or in the Job Search manual). During 6 hours of interviews I only heard 2 questions that weren't on those lists.
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- The first interview you get might not be the job for you. You will know when it is the right fit for you and for the district. Make them believe it, too.

Update: 8/9/07- A district just called me for an interview. Also, there are shuffling taking place in my district right now as well, so more hiring will take place. Don't give up in July! Follow-up with districts because these things do still happen in August!

There are jobs out there in our great state. Be the teacher who finds one. By following these steps (and many, many other extra efforts) you give yourself a really great shot. Good luck!

Go Broncos!!