

JOBS

Communities - Career Stages

Home

Job Search

Virtual Career Fair

My WashingtonJobs

Advice

Communities

Career Stages

Industries

Company Research

For Employers

Help

Internships 101

INTERNSHIPS FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS

To Teach or Not to Teach: Finding an Internship

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Special to the washingtonpost.com network
April 2002

You are considering a career in teaching, but you've decided to look before you leap. A good way to learn more about teaching is do an internship at an independent school, formerly called a private school.

There are many reasons to consider an internship in this setting. First, independent schools allow you to have direct contact with a small group of students. Not only can you create an internship that is within your major, but you can also create one that is off-the-beaten track. For example, these schools often have programs in athletics and the arts and faculty members participate in these activities. You could create an internship in coaching, teaching music, or supervising the school newspaper.

Landing a teaching internship has three advantages. First, it allows you to test whether teaching is your career track. Second, it allows you to establish relationships with people who can hire or recommend you. Third, it provides you with experience that will enhance your credibility during any job search.

So, how do you seek out an internship? Some universities already have well-established links with other independent schools. Check with your career and volunteer services department, internship office or any departments that might host such programs. Many departments award academic credit for internships.

If your school doesn't have such a program, encourage them to start one and offer to be a trailblazer. Go to your department chairperson or faculty adviser and talk to him about your intentions. Check to see if any faculty members have a relationship with an independent school. If they do, use their support and guidance. If no one has an inside track for you, contact the school on your own.

If you would like to teach or tutor within your subject area, contact the department chairperson. If you know that you would like to participate in plays or musicals contact the person who directs those activities. If you are uncertain, contact the Dean of Students. He or she will be able to outline some possibilities for you.

In creating your internship, be as explicit as you can about what you

hope to learn. Arrange to have a mentor both on your own faculty and on the internship site. Set up a meeting about a month into the experience in which you, your university faculty adviser and your school mentor meet to evaluate your progress and to fine tune the internship.

During your time there, try to learn as much as you can and be as helpful as possible. If you decide that you would like to teach there, let the people in charge know of your interest. Most independent school faculty love to teach and would greatly enjoy being able to pass on their craft to a newcomer!

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