

Dear Dr. McEwing,

I just thought that you might like to hear my initial impression of education now that I have completed about 1/2 of a year of teaching 7th grade science. I finally accepted a position sort of out of desperation in a small college town called -----, --, which is between ----- and ----- . Rule number one - never accept a position out of desperation.

On a good note, the area is very nice and the weather is great. The cost of living is about the same as Ohio, and the people are pretty friendly - many are transplants from up north and many of the people I deal with in the community are highly educated. Many of the students have traveled extensively in the US and around the world, and many have had numerous life experiences, considering they are about 13 years old.

That being said, public education leaves a great deal to be desired here in ----- . I assume that it has always been that way and the teachers are not even aware how backward the school is and how they lack basic things that I would expect and need it order to function as a minimally successful teacher. I was somewhat aware of what I was getting into from the internet, but the reality of our teaching environment affects me in a negative fashion on a continual basis.

The first thing that completely dumbfounded me is that teachers are required to pay for all of their classroom supplies out of their own pocket, including copy paper. No chalk, no tablets, graph paper, construction paper, pencil sharpeners, scissors - the list goes on and on. I spend about \$20-40 just to maintain a bare-bones level of instruction. Toilet paper is even in short supply, the school has no hot water, and this is one of the highest rated schools in the state. Teachers have to watch their students during lunch, and even getting 5 spare minutes to use the restroom is a luxury. If you call in sick, you have to pay the substitute out of your own pocket. That blew me away.

My classroom only has one chalkboard about 6 ft across; I was told that if I buy another one that they could probably install it for me. I do not have a proper desk, and there are so many students (32) seated in the classroom I cannot use an overhead projector. There is no technology - I had planned to purchase an LCD projector to use for instruction, but there is no place to put it, and there are no locking cabinets to lock it up at night so I just write all my notes on the board for each of my four classes.

On a personal note, the students are extremely rude and cannot follow instructions. Many will not do assignments and are failing, and like I said earlier, this is a "good" school. I have 2 gifted classes, one regular class, and one inclusion class but the state does not recognize exceptional (LD) students in science or social studies, so I am stuck trying to teach a regular course of science to students who are functionally illiterate (some do not even know to hold a pencil) with severe behavior problems, and I am not doing a very good job. The principal says "I do not want to hear problems, I want to hear solutions" so that pretty much sums up the view of the school's administration when it comes to dealing with the endless problems that teachers face here on a daily basis.

The teacher turnover rate is high at this school, as it is across the state and the south. I will be leaving this district and the state for good in June. Since I am ----- years old and have invested 5 years and a small fortune in teaching, I must try once more time before I leave education for good. I guess I will try to get another position hopefully up north where education is possibly valued more. If that doesn't work out I will get a job in the service industry like everyone else.

My final two thoughts for you are as follows: 1. Education is nothing like they teach in college, although that really did not surprise me. 2. There are really not any teaching positions available unless one is willing to teach in an at-risk school and/or district and they are worse than people can imagine and I am unwilling to take that step. I know that I spent a year looking and I am not even remotely happy with the job I have. On a good note, there are only 100 days left in the school year. I guess I should have taken your advanced Foundations class - maybe that class would have prepared me better!!!

William -----