

## The Hidden World of Teaching

Stephen C. Bronack, Ph.D.

Editor's Choice

January 31, 2000

Recently, I was fortunate enough to work with a wonderful group of teachers at a K-12 school, and I thought I would share the experience in this *Editor's Choice*.

I spent about 2 weeks with a group of 25 teachers, investigating the changing world of reading in the content areas. I say “changing” because we spent a lot of time thinking and talking about how the recent development of the Internet has really changed the way we approach reading content literacy—but that’s another editorial. What was, perhaps, *most* interesting about this workshop is that it occurred in Caracas, Venezuela.

I was in Caracas working with teachers from two American International Schools—[Escuela Campo Alegre](#) and [Collegio Internacional de Caracas](#). As I wandered the halls of these two beautiful schools, I thought to myself, “Geez, I would have *loved* to teach at an international school like this for a year or two when *I* first started teaching! I wonder how they all found out about this?” Well, I’m not sure how *they* found out, but I thought I’d spend a little time here telling *you* about them.

There are over 1,000 international schools around the world where teachers training in the United States (and other places) can apply for—and get—quality teaching jobs. Typically, English is the language of instruction, though this may vary from school to school. These schools are sponsored by a variety of organizations. For instance, there are over 200 schools throughout the world run by the United States [Department of Defense](#). These “DoD” schools are typically provided for children of those serving abroad in the U.S. military. The [U.S. State Department](#) sponsors another 200 or so schools. The rest are privately sponsored—a large number sponsored by American or British corporations and/or other interests. All told, there are over 50,000 teachers, administrators, and other educators working in these schools.

### **What do these schools look like?**

In many ways, these schools look like the schools we all know, though significant differences certainly exist. There are classrooms, and bulletin boards, and children of various ages and abilities, all learning and growing under the direction of qualified, dedicated teachers. From a curricular view, many schools offer courses of study one typically finds in an American or British schools. Some schools offer both American and British tracks. A large number offer the [International Baccalaureate](#) (IB) program of study for those students who are interested in attending a university after graduation.

The student body often is comprised of children from many countries other than the host country. In each classroom, for example, one might find some local children, some families who have been re-located by American (or other) companies, and children of ambassadors and other embassy workers. The faculty is likely to be an international one,

as well, with teachers from the United States, Canada, and other countries in addition to the host country.

For the vast majority of international teachers I have met, the experience is rewarding—and lucrative. International teachers can earn very high salaries—some approaching \$50,000—in certain areas of the world. For comparison, the national average in the United States is still hovering around \$38,400 per year. In addition, most schools offer benefits and perks not available in American schools. For example, most wages are tax-free and the schools pay for housing for teachers. In many schools, teachers' children can attend these schools for free.

### **Who knew?**

According to Forrest Broman, President of the International Schools Training Institute, few teachers are even aware that such a network exists. Broman points to a recent survey of in Massachusetts that found less than 2% of teachers surveyed knew *anything* about overseas schools. However, there are some good resources for those who are interested. The *International Educator* (<http://www.tieonline.com/>) offers information about the schools, as well as job postings. As I look at it today, they are advertising over 130 international schools with jobs all over the world. Another site to investigate is Overseas JobWeb (<http://www.overseasjobs.com/>) with similar resources. *Joyjobs.com* (<http://www.joyjobs.com/>) offers resources for teachers interested in finding and applying for jobs in International schools. *Search Associates* (<http://www.search-associates.com>) helps teachers find jobs overseas—for a fee—via job fairs and other resources. Apparently, job fairs are an important component of the search process, and well attended by headmasters from around the world. Over the next few months, for example, there will be International Job Fairs in San Francisco, Boston, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Minneapolis, and Anchorage. Finally, there are [internship opportunities abroad](#) for university students or recent graduates for those who might want to sample the international arena—including 5- or 10-month stints teaching English in China.

### **The World of Teaching**

With the emphasis we often place on American school systems and local educational concerns in our teacher preparation programs, it is often easy to forget that there is a world full of schools out there for us to consider. Over the past few years I have spoken with dozens of teachers who have had international teaching experience, and the message is always the same—a broader perspective on teaching, a “worldliness” they carry back to their American classrooms, an enriching personal and professional experience. Perhaps some of *you* will turn out to be the next generation of leaders in this, the hidden world of teaching.