FOOD FOR THOUGHT: How to CHOOSE where you WORK & LIVE in beautiful Colombia: BE HAPPY ABROAD!

Choose wisely—it's a teacher's market! Don't just get interviewed; YOU INTERVIEW THE SCHOOL TOO!

RANK the following five factors in order of importance when choosing your next teaching position in Colombia. You usually can't have it all in your first job!

And don't worry—anywhere you go, there will be students who need you. You don't have to struggle trying to figure out where you are needed most, because good and caring teachers are needed everywhere. ;-)

So, focus on what you will be doing outside of your classroom. Know what makes you happy in your own time and what is most important to you. Then, you can increase your likelihood of being HAPPY while teaching in Colombia, especially in your first job. Remember, once you are inside, you can begin planning your second contract, perhaps at an even more ideal location, role, or school. For now, consider the following factors and know which one(s) are the most important to you in your first "landing job." Make sense?

I also want to know your short-term and long-term goals in terms of how long you are open to staying in Colombia, as well as your career goals overall. I want to help you strategize how you can maximize your experience in Colombia to meet those goals. OK?

1. LOCATION: This could mean choosing a specific city, the size of the town, a particular climate or culture, or proximity to the ocean or mountains. Maybe you prefer the coffee region, colder vs. hotter climates, or flat vs. hilly terrain. You may even want to be near someone you already know. My advice is to choose a geographic region, not just a city, because Colombia has many three-day weekends that allow you to explore beyond your city. Keep in mind that in-country flights are very affordable, so you will have the opportunity to visit other regions as well.

2. SCHOOL CULTURE & TEAM: This could be a faith-based or non-faith-based school, or a specific academic format such as IB, Montessori, or Cambridge. It could be something you strongly prefer or dislike, or something you have a background in. Do you prefer a big school or a small school? Do you like the team and supervisor you would be working with? Do you share values? Does the school align with your career development and goals?

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: These could include tuition waivers for your children, covered flights home, a housing stipend or housing provided, re-signing bonuses, student-teacher ratios, or extracurricular opportunities such as coaching, theater, arts, debate, events, dance, or music. You might also consider what the city or region offers for you to do, existing relationships in the community, proximity to a university, upward mobility, or

anything else that might be important to you and make you happy.

4. SALARY (should be your last consideration): You may need a certain amount of monthly income to save or pay bills back home, or to maintain a standard of living you are accustomed to—or maybe salary isn't a priority for you. Keep in mind that schools paying higher salaries usually serve affluent families who can afford higher tuition. There are both positives and challenges to working in an environment that caters only to the wealthy. On the other hand, low-income families will often be far more appreciative of your teaching services. You may feel a greater sense of impact and spiritual reward at a school that might not otherwise be able to afford a teacher of your profile. Be sure you know what you are looking for and understand the type of school you are considering.

JUNIOR TEACHERS (with one year or less of full-time classroom teaching experience): Consider doing six months (one semester) as an assistant or co-teacher to gain the knowledge necessary to quickly secure a living wage. Otherwise, you may wait longer than you want to land your first teaching job. We currently have such roles in Bogotá, Medellín, and Chinchiná. These positions have stipends ranging from 0 up to 2.0M COP/month, so you should only consider them if you can afford to do so for at least one semester. In the long term, this is a strategic investment in becoming a teacher abroad and earning a living wage as soon as possible. Note that these roles require a volunteer visa, which would require you to exit and re-enter Colombia when you finish the contract. Afterward, you could return as a tourist or with a teaching contract and work visa.

LANDING JOB: This type of job allows you to be hired from abroad before leaving your home country. You would arrive in Colombia with a work visa in hand and start earning a salary immediately. The idea is that you won't need to spend your savings. We call it a "Landing Job" rather than a "Dream Job" because it often requires flexibility on salary, location, or role in exchange for a quick and easy hiring decision. You can land and work for one or two semesters, then use that time to find your real dream job—whether that means a different location, a higher salary, or your ideal role with the perfect age group. This is recommended rather than sitting in your home country waiting for your dream job, which may never come or may take longer than you want. Could you talk to one of our representatives about whether this makes sense for you?

BE HAPPY TEACHING ABROAD! Dare to seek the experience that will make you happiest. There's no point in being miserable while working abroad. I sincerely hope you don't choose your job based on salary—remember, that's not why you wanted to teach overseas in the first place.

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