Tips for the K-12 Job Search

Please make note of the following steps and resources for moving along in your search for a position in a K-12 school or district.

1) Reflect on and document your student teaching experience. Whether you are observing the classroom, facilitating groups, or preparing and teaching lessons, it is vital that you take time to think about what you have learned and how it impacts your philosophy of teaching and goals for developing as a teacher. Make sure you do this on a regular basis as this will help you to:
   - Improve your teaching and elicit helpful feedback from your supervising teachers.
   - Put together your portfolio.
   - Prepare more thoroughly for interviews and career fairs.

2) Explore and prioritize opportunities. Public, charter or private school? Urban, suburban or rural? In the Delaware Valley or not?
   - Many resources for this exploration are available on our K-12 Schools webpage at: http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/careerfields/k12education.php
   - Of course, you'll want to look at job listings on particular district or school websites, but also consider general K-12 job boards such as www.k12jobs.com or www.schoolspring.com
   - Make sure that you are flexible in what you consider and what you can offer. Plan on pursuing multiple certifications. For example, elementary education candidates should add middle years. If your focus is math, it wouldn't hurt to add science. If your focus is social studies, add English. Highlight other roles (e.g. coaching, advising, committee work) that you can play to support the students as well as the goals of the school or district

3) Build your network. Connecting with others in your profession can provide insight into what it's like to work at a particular school/district as well as how to market yourself effectively in the job search. Informational interviewing is a great way to gather advice and build your network, though it's important to remember that the purpose of this type of meeting is to gather information and advice, not ask for a job or job interview. Here are some resources to get started:
   - QuakerNet (Penn's Alumni Online Community): http://www.myquakernet.com
   - Penn Alumni LinkedIn Groups: http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/networking/linkedin.php
   - Professional Associations are also a good resource for networking.

4) Tweak your resume and cover letter. Career Services can provide critiques during appointments (call 215-898-4381 on weekdays between 9am-5pm to schedule) or via e-mail. Keep in mind that the turnaround for e-mail critiques during this busy season is 3-5 business days on average. Therefore, it is best to use the following online resources to tweak your resume format as much as possible before a critique with a counselor.
   - Teaching Resume Samples: http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/files/TeacherResumes.pdf
   - Counseling/Advising Resume Samples: http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/files/PsychResumes.pdf
   - Cover Letter Samples: http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/gradstud/coverlettersamples.php
5) Compile your recommendation letters. Interfolio (http://www.interfolio.com/) is a recommended resource for setting up a credentials file and storing your recommendation letters from supervising teachers or other field supervisors. Interfolio also offers an online portfolio system. Learn more about the process in the help section of Interfolio’s website at: http://help.interfolio.com/home

6) Attend Career Fairs. Career fairs allow you to meet a number of recruiters in one place so that you are able to offer resumes to and obtain contact information from employers of interest. Career fairs relevant to K-12 education, including Career Services’ Education and Social Services Career Day, and Delaware Valley Education Consortium’s Greater Philadelphia Teacher Job Fair (www.dvec.net) are typically held in the spring. Check the following links for updates on career fairs:

Career Services fairs: http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/careerfairs/
Other fairs: http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/careerfairs/careerfairslinks.php

7) Prepare for Interviews. The key to successful interviewing is thorough and thoughtful presentation. It is crucial that you reflect on your fieldwork as you prepare answers that reflect concrete examples of your experience.

- desire to work at a given school/district
- philosophy of teaching/counseling/education
- approach to classroom management
- highlights from working with students
- lessons that worked well
- lessons that did not work well and what you learned in the process
- approach to working with students under challenging circumstances
- approach to working with parents and families
- collaboration with other teachers
- strengths/weaknesses
- best practices

It is also extremely useful to practice interviewing. Career Services offers mock interviews as well as other tips and resources that can be found at: http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/interviewingadvice/