

# *Life After Teaching*

**More Teacher Stories & Job Spotlights**



## Welcome!

Thank you so much for downloading a second set of interviews from [www.LifeAfterTeaching.com](http://www.LifeAfterTeaching.com), the only comprehensive resource for identifying jobs that welcome teachers who are transitioning out of the classroom!

This download features five more real life interviews with teachers who have successfully transitioned out of the classroom. Then, you'll learn about the jobs those teachers transitioned into so you can see if they might be a good fit for you.

Is this the whole picture? Of course not! A list of a handful of jobs doesn't guarantee that you'll get any of them. But looking at a few viable options might just help you picture all the other options you have. And it will go a long way toward helping you identify the job descriptions and types of careers that are open to you.

Once again, thank you so much for bringing me along on your journey! Whether this is our only time together, or you download the [Life After Teaching eBook](#) to dig deep into your transition, I'm so grateful to be a part of your personal and professional growth!

Warmly,

Sarah Greesonbach



## Nicole's Real Story

*Please enjoy this interview with Nicole, a former English teacher with a Master's Degree in Social Policy who started her own fragrance and beauty supply business. And here's your only warning: get some tissues, because her story is incredibly moving!*

The short version is that Nicole left teaching for health reasons and now runs her own business. [Click here](#) to visit her website and see what she's got going on — you won't be disappointed!

### **Hi Nicole! Please describe your teaching experience and educational background.**


I taught Secondary English for ten years, and fell in love. I always enjoyed the subject matter, and wrote poetry as a hobby. I graduated with my Bachelor's Degree from SUNY Cortland in K-12 Education and English concentration. I was first hired right out of college at twenty two years of age and immediately began my Master's Degree. Teaching 8th grade English as a first year teacher was no easy feat while taking Master's Degree Classes simultaneously, but I endured.

After five years, I graduated with my Master's Degree in Social Policy. My long-term plan was to go for my Administrative Degree and eventually become Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction. I believed strongly in differentiated learning, and Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory. I adopted the motto that all students can learn if you just know how to reach them where they are. I always wanted my Administrative Degree to fall back on.

I saw several teachers who were burnt out by the job after twenty years. I saw how that could be a detriment to students, and I vowed that would never be me. After finishing my Master's Degree, I took summer work as a curriculum writer for an online educational company. I worked for that company for several years in order to establish credibility in the educational community.

### **When did you realize teaching was no longer right for you? Was there a specific moment or did it dawn on you slowly?**

My tenth year of teaching started off great. I was teaching High School English and had written a student-driven curriculum that I was passionate about. I loved changing lesson plans and unit plans to cater to the needs of my students. However, I noticed I was starting to become ill more frequently, and began experiencing chronic pain and fatigue.



My concentration failed me, and standing or sitting for long periods began to become excruciating. As a fit individual, this was new to me.

I went to a Rheumatologist and was diagnosed with Fibromyalgia. I was devastated. I tried many medications to assist me, but none worked. I began to develop chronic respiratory infections and other associated medical conditions typical of someone with Fibromyalgia. I began taking sick days, and even though I had accumulated them I was “spoken to” about using them. I felt like a complete failure, and realized that my students were suffering too. I could not keep going like this, and even though I had tenure, this was not something that was going to go away.


My Doctor informed me that if I continued to work in the school system pushing my body this way would land me in the hospital. It did. Finally at the end of the year, I retired from teaching. All of my dreams, my passions, my plans were in dust at my feet. I felt completely helpless and out of sorts. Who was I now? How would I live without doing what I love? Despite these questions, and the pain, I trusted God knew best. So I waited.

**Did you apply for jobs or jump right into entrepreneurship? If you went right to entrepreneurship, did you work it as a side hustle while you were teaching, or jump right in full-time?**

In 2012, three years after my diagnosis, I became pregnant with twins, Eve and Christian. Eve was diagnosed in utero with a condition known as Trisomy 13. She was deemed “incompatible with life”, but we disagreed, knowing that all life is precious in God’s eyes. I carried both babies to term but had an emergency C-section due to hemorrhaging. The babies and I almost lost our lives that day.

Eve was born, surprising the doctors who predicted she would not grow past five months in utero, but she passed away a day later. From there, due to the traumatic birth I developed Secondary Addison’s Disease and had to go on replacement cortisol for life. Any hopes of returning to teaching after that was gone.

Now, as the bereaved mother of Eve and a new mommy to Christian, I had to face a new diagnosis that made me more prone to infections than before. With Secondary Addison’s and Fibromyalgia not to mention the loss of my daughter, I felt lost. At the same time, I began researching ways to help myself heal.



I started making my own soap, lotions, creams, dishwashing detergent, laundry detergent and more. I realized that eliminating many of the chemicals from these items made a difference in my pain levels. I also noticed that due to my many food allergies I could not take the pain medication prescribed to me or even over the counter medication. I wondered how to control pain naturally and began researching and studying herbs and essential oils.

With God's help I created an all-natural pain rub and used it to help me sleep and deal with the chronic pain. The relief I felt was amazing. Word began to spread and I felt led to open up an Etsy shop called, [Simply Eve Fragrances](#) after my precious daughter. I began to set up a little workshop in what was supposed to be my daughter Eve's room. It was extremely difficult at first, but then the healing began to flood over me. I realized that this business was part ministry and part mission also as a percentage of the proceeds are donated to the SOFT organization (Support Organization for Trisomy 13, 18 and Related Disorders). Each new discovery became an addition to my Etsy shop, and an opportunity to bless someone.

You can read more about the full, inspiring story behind Simply Eve on Nicole's blog, [here](#).


### **What do you miss about teaching?**

When I reflect on my teaching career, I find that I miss student interaction. I didn't choose teaching as a profession JUST because I loved to write prose and poetry, and read books. I chose teaching to show students that English isn't JUST about reading and writing. It is a form of expression, and there are so many ways to engage with the world around you through the vehicle of literature.

I miss students sharing with me about their initial trepidation of English class, and how their perception completely changed because I differentiated learning. I miss the smell of the school supplies and getting to know my students collectively and as individuals. I miss watching their eyes light up the first day when telling them, "This class will be unlike any other English class you have ever taken". I miss watching them grow as students, learners, and people.

### **What do you NOT miss about teaching?**

While I miss many things, I do not miss the blame game. New York State and their standards often blame teachers for low student scores and create state initiatives without funding. Administrative pressure, and the like usually are enough to dissuade young people from entering the field of teaching.



I don't miss the parent phone calls blaming me for their teenager's missing homework, even though I personally paid for a website where students could access their grades securely, kept an online calendar, and wrote the homework on the board.

I don't miss those aspects of teaching at all, primarily because it's like a broken record that keeps playing the same old song.

### **What surprises you most about life after teaching?**

Making handmade products was never something I thought I would do. EVER. I am not crafty by nature. I love to write poetry, read books, and learn. I have always considered myself more of an academic. That is, I am more comfortable in that environment.


What is surprising to me about life after teaching is that this work I do is similar to chemistry when my background is in English. Researching the correct herbs and oils, as well as concocting recipes and finding the best-sourced ingredients gives me a rush that I never anticipated. There are so many aspects to this work from creating the recipes as I mentioned, as well as the actual fashioning of the product, and then having people email you and say, "Thank you so much, my skin never looked better," or "Your pain rub is the only thing that works and my doctor wants to try it!"

Teaching was constant interaction and I miss that, but there is a stillness that you learn to appreciate in creating. There is this silence as your mind yawns and stretches, embracing the impossibilities and grasping ideas from the edges and corners of the unknown and untraveled. Like teaching, this silence is when teachers often create their best lesson plans.

Then, similarly, there is the execution. While teaching, I executed my lesson plan with my students. Now, the execution of my product is in front of my stove. Finally, there is the assessment. As a teacher, you measure and assess whether or not your execution was successful. It is the same with the products I make. I often have testers who are more than willing to receive free products in return for their summaries and input. This assessment allows me to make changes and tweak the product to ensure its maximum success. The funny thing is that I had no expectations after teaching; I was merely surviving. Now, God has made beauty from ashes.

### **What advice would you give to a teacher who has an idea for a business but is afraid to make the leap?**

There are many brilliant teachers who define themselves by their academic prowess only. However, it is important to remember that you are more than "just a teacher," you are an innovator.



It has been said that teachers make an average of 1,500 educational decisions daily. This means you are a manager, a liaison between students and their perceptions, a creator, an author, a counselor, and a master communicator. All of these skills translate extraordinarily well outside of the classroom. It's not really a leap that you are making but rather an alternate road you are traveling. It's not really a leap that you are making but rather an alternate road you are traveling.

**What advice would you give to a teacher who is afraid to leave the familiarity of the classroom for another job?**

For the teacher facing this decision, I would say weigh it carefully. Many times, we mistake function for fabulous. Teaching must be a calling, and if you are called to do something else then heed that calling. Your education will not fail you. You have something solid you can always go back to, but this opportunity may be fleeting.

Also, ask yourself where this desire to move on comes from. Is it something that will pass? Is this desire to seek another job rooted in true dissatisfaction or is it a knee jerk reaction to something else? Choice is a beautiful thing and it was something I was not afforded. However, I am grateful for the direction that my life has taken, and I have a new passion and a new calling that I never imagined.

**Do you think teachers are more talented than they think? Why?**

Teachers are really a dedicated bunch. Who else would pay for combined seven years of education without the salary to match? Brilliant and creative people who want to make a difference, that's who. Such people are statement makers, activists, life changers and more; when they enter a room things happen.

However, with the constant criticism from our government, administrators, parents and other stakeholders, teachers begin to question their own ability. They begin to measure themselves against policies and standards that are designed to be impossible and designed for failure. Reaching and teaching countless students all day every day takes more than academic knowledge; it takes immense skill and strategy. I think teachers need to focus on measuring their success by how many lives they changed. It can certainly be a thankless job, but it is also the most rewarding.



## Job Spotlight: Project Manager

One popular go-to example of a great job for a former teacher is [“Project Management.”](#) Project management is generic term that many companies in many industries use to refer to people who manage projects. Since the term is so general, it’s easy to customize for your particular skill set once you identify the best industry for your talents.

Furthermore, the actual job of a project manager is the most similar to that of a teacher that I’ve found. Teachers are naturally excellent project managers because we’re so well trained in creating and implementing schedules, graphic organizers, and communicating frequently with key stakeholders (AKA administration, parents, students, other teachers...).

Is your interest piqued? Here’s a rundown of the important skill sets for a project management position.

### Important Skills

Project managers need to be People-people. Your job focuses on interacting with everyone involved in a given project. Depending on the industry and company, this could range from writers and graphic designers to engineers and technical writers. What matters is that you gain the respect of these teams and use their talents to finish a project for a client or internal department.

This might look like coordinating the creation of a large book or guide for a client. Or you might launch a new website, design a program, or build a building. What the project is depends on what industry you’re working in.


You’ll also need excellent customer service skills in case this is an external-facing position in which you interact with the company’s client.

### Qualifications/Education

Project managers come from many different backgrounds, which is why it is such a great fit for a former teacher.

To get the best head start, it would be great if you paid for and went through a Project Management education program such as the [Project Management Professional \(PMP\) certification](#).





However, if you are an eager learner and interview well, it should be no problem to talk your way into an entry-level project management position provided you show professionalism and a clear history of organizing and managing projects... which is exactly what you've done for all your time as a teacher!

Use online resources (such as the [PMP prep tests and resources](#)) to make sure you can talk about this field competently, and then let your natural charisma and energy lead the way in the interview.

### **Salary Ranges**

While formal education and certifications are always helpful when negotiating a salary, Project Management salaries depend mostly on experience. If you have very little experience but a lot of passion, there's no reason you shouldn't be able to talk your way into an entry-level project management position. The company gets a cheap hire, and you get to build experience. Expect to start out around [\\$48,000, depending on the industry](#). (Government contracting projects may pay more than website management projects, and so on). Once you have some practical experience, you can look for positions that pay [\\$90,000-\\$95,000](#) and break into six figures. These details will depend on the location of the company and the industry, and you should research appropriate salaries using online salary estimators.

### **Example Job Descriptions**

Here are a few random project management positions around the web so you can get a feel for what the job would be like.

- [Project Manager](#) for a major photography studio.
- [Project Manager](#) for a technology company.
- [Project Manager](#) for Walmart corporate!
- [Project Manager](#) for a business and healthcare company.



## Candice's Real Story

*Early last year, Candice emailed me with a few questions about her struggle to get through the never-ending interview process. Here's Candice's question and my advice which lead her to change her approach, get an offer, and transition out of the classroom as a talent recruiter!*

Hi Sarah,

I've read through some of your posts on LinkedIn and your site as well, and I'm wondering if you can provide me with a bit of advice.


This summer I decided to resign from my high school English position, relocate and transition to a non-instructional position in education; or at least that's what I intended to do. So far almost three months have passed and nothing solid has come from my search. I'm becoming increasingly frustrated and I just cannot seem to figure out what the issue is.

Some friends/colleagues have stated that my timing was bad due to organizational and school budgets. Others have said that maybe I did not stay in the classroom long enough, or that resigning first has created a barrier to new opportunities.

I've applied to countless positions at schools, educational organizations and even in the private sector. I've had a few face-to-face interviews, but mainly phone interviews and performance tasks. I'm also a Teach For America alum and I reached out to the local office for help and they've sent my resume and information around. That sparked about 6-7 emails and a few phone interviews, but again, nothing solid.

I'm so frustrated because it seems that I'm a great candidate for 99.99% of the roles I'm applying for, but I'm just not getting them. I can't even seem to nail the most generic of positions.

Any advice you can give me would be greatly appreciated it.



Best,  
Candice

It sounds like you have a lot of challenges that are coming to a head at the same time, and I can't imagine how frustrating/discouraging that must feel. So, first I want to encourage you to persevere! This is exactly the moment when some might feel like it's time to give up, but pushing through this will definitely lead somewhere better.

There's a simple diagnostic you can use to troubleshoot what's going on:

1. Look at the stages of job hunting
2. Find out where your stages seem to hit a wall


So, let's start with 1) finding job's you'd be willing to do, 2) getting an interview, 3) getting further in the interview process, and 4) getting an offer.

It sounds like you make it to step 2 and then things fizzle out. The good news is that it means your network and your resume are very strong! And those are often the hardest things to fix on your own, so kudos to you.

The frustrating news might be that something is happening in your interview that is not convincing people you can do the job or that you're a good fit for the position. So, 1) your resume is telling them something they don't find to be true when they meet you in person, or 2) the way you answer questions isn't quite on target.

If I were in your shoes, I would focus on remembering the questions they ask in interviews and my answers and seeing if I can tweak them to be more effective through research or self-coaching with a friend. In my case, this happens to me when I focus on being personable and sharing my wealth of experience rather than focusing specifically on the job I'm interviewing for. I wonder if that could be a challenge for you based on your very wide amount of experience (teacher, small business owner, editor, etc)?

In reality, that experience makes you a very valuable candidate, but it depends heavily on how you present it so that you don't come off as someone without a clear career path.



Finally, one major problem you're experiencing is that no one wants to hire a generic person -- they want a specialist (though I think they should, as starting with personal characteristics is important). Perhaps focus on how you can reorganize your interview to come off as more of a specialist for the position you're applying to.

Start by doing so much research before the interview that you can really give nitty-gritty examples of how you would perform on the job.

For example, when I first transitioned from teacher to writer, I didn't have a lot of experience as a writer so my interview was more about my personality and my English degree. I just happened to get lucky because they hired me based on that.

Nowadays, though, I answer questions with very specific examples about editorial schedules, writing for the Internet, and formatting for different kinds of documents. Mentioning those things within the interview helps to emphasize my skills as a specialist on the topic rather than someone with the right soft skills.

In your case, this might mean reading up on different communication practices and coming up with specific examples of the results from working with you as a communicator (or whatever industry you are trying to transition into).



## Job Spotlight: Recruiter

*Recruiting is a great field for former teachers who are self-described “People-persons.” Here’s a look at what it means to be a recruiter and how you can break into the field.*

Companies and recruiting firms hire recruiters to make sure that new hires to a company are good culture fits and well-qualified for the positions. This position works within large organizations like Apple or a school district to take care of the many responsibilities associated with finding and hiring new job candidates. A recruiter might also work with an employment placement firm or recruiting agency that places candidates in roles for large companies, such as Apple hiring a recruiting firm to fill two specific hard-to-fill roles.

### What Is Recruiting?

Recruiting is the process of writing and posting job positions on behalf of a company and screening and interviewing candidates for open job. The recruiter is not just looking for the most qualified candidate, but also the candidate with the best culture and responsibility fit for the open position. The recruiter is responsible for getting a feel for whether or not a candidate will be a good fit and whether or not a candidate has the qualifications (and experience) necessary to do the job well.


### Important Skills for Recruiting

For starters, you definitely need to be a people-person to enjoy recruiting. When you recruit for a company or on behalf of a recruiting firm, you are writing and speaking all day with new people. If you don’t enjoy that process, you won’t enjoy the job of a recruiter.

As a recruiter, you also need good analytical and critical skills to assess a resume or a job description for the kind of person you’re looking to hire. You’ll also need to make judgements about a person’s suitability for a position after reading a resume and cover letter and engaging in a 15-20 minute call.

### Qualifications/Education for Recruiting

According to most recruiter hiring websites, all you need to be a recruiter is a bachelor’s degree and a passion for networking. HR certifications or Master’s degrees do exist and could help you get a position, but many recruiters start with an unrelated background.



If you don't have specific experience recruiting (as in, you haven't been included in hiring decisions in your school) you can find ways to build and demonstrate the following skills to improve your chances of being considered for a recruiting position:

- *Budgeting and financial management* (Join a club and get a budget management position like “Treasurer”)
- *Develop, utilize, and conserve human resources* (Run a school club and make human resources decisions about leadership)
- *Develop strong recruitment packages and measure their success* (Develop and test incentives packages for behavior management within the classroom)
- *Network and speak with people in a variety of different backgrounds* (Join clubs in your area and build your network on LinkedIn)

### **Example Job Openings for Recruiting**

Here are a few example job openings for recruiting. If any of these links are broken, simply perform a search for “Recruiter” on a large job search site.

- [HR Analyst/Recruiter](#) at a hospital
- [Associate Recruiter](#) at an Investment Firm
- [Executive Recruiter](#) at a health care system
- [Technical Recruiter](#) at a San Francisco start-up



## Martha's Real Story

*Please enjoy this interview with Martha, a CPA turned Math teacher turned consultant! She brings a unique perspective to the blog because she was in the corporate world and decided to get into teaching... and then decided to go back to the corporate world.*

### **Tell me more about your teaching experience and educational background.**

I taught middle school math in Catholic school. So, you know I wasn't doing it for the money, haha! I was planning to teach high school math anywhere, but I was still taking the required classes to get certified for high school and I got a call about a middle school job, so I took it.

My overall experience was mixed. I really loved being around most of the kids and even the problem ones I could deal with, but what killed it for me was the parents. I'm sure I don't need to tell you the stories...

*[Sarah's note: You definitely don't! I got cussed out once by a parent because I took their child's cell phone away during class... she said that since she paid the bill I had no right to take it away!]*


### **Tell me more about your motivations for going into the classroom. Was the focus on not enjoying your time as a CPA, or were you more motivated by the idea of teaching?**

I was really motivated by the idea of teaching. As a student I had a love/hate relationship with schools. One of my favorite quotes is Tom Sawyer's "I never let my schooling interfere with my education." And so I thought I would help kids get an education and not just schooling.

### **When did you realize teaching was no longer right for you? Was there a specific moment or did it dawn on you slowly?**

Seeing as how I only lasted a couple of years, I'd say it dawned on me pretty quickly that teaching wasn't quite how I thought it would be. It was mostly the parents. They make it really hard sometimes.

The other thing that helped push me out the door was a new principal at the school where I was teaching. First, she didn't want 8th graders to take Algebra I anymore. I had taken Algebra I as an 8th grader and I didn't see the big deal. Then she poo-poo'd



me for being a new teacher. What happened exactly was that I had 7th grade homeroom, but the 8th grade teacher was tired of going to Disney World every year, so she asked me to trade. I didn't care either way. But the new principal said no because 8th grade is too much responsibility for a new teacher.

I felt slighted but by then I didn't even bother arguing the point; I just said bye and went back to the corporate world. It's not as if I love the corporate world, but for the money teaching is very hard work especially for a new teacher who has to come up with lesson plans every night.

**Was it difficult to leave teaching after working outside the classroom already, or was it easier to make the leap back into the world of business?**

When I made the leap back to the business world, it was easier for me, but it was still a career change because I had been working in CPA firms and I didn't want to do that any more. Also, I had been a tax accountant but tax jobs in a corporation were hard to come by.

I decided to go for a regular accounting job, but in order to earn what I had been earning in tax I had to be in a supervisory role. I was hired by a company that couldn't pay a lot, so they took a chance on me as an accounting manager even though I didn't have formal qualifications or as much experience as other candidates. I was very lucky. If they had more money, they would have hired someone else, but it worked out great for them and for me.


*[Sarah's Note: This is a great way to break into a new career! Don't work for free, but do make it clear that you're open to an entry-level salary so that you can learn on the job. More businesses than you think will be interested in getting a "deal" on a hardworking employee and giving you a chance if you're a good fit for their culture!]*

**What position do you have now?**

These days I do consulting. I've been displaced several times for corporate restructurings, mergers, moves, etc. Each time I have gone into consulting rather than settle for a quick permanent job. I'm working with a company now that could hire me full time; they are getting a feel for me and I'm getting a feel for them and we'll see how it goes. It's not just about money; I also want to work for a company that I can get behind their product and where I enjoy being around my coworkers.

**What do you miss about teaching?**





There is no job security (zip, zero, nil) in the for-profit world. But what I miss most is that I didn't have the chance to try my hand at teaching like I dreamed I would. I might have failed miserably, but it ain't like administrators have it all figured out now is it?

**What do you NOT miss about teaching?**

What else but the lack of appreciation you get from parents and administrators?

**What advice would you give to a teacher who is afraid to leave the familiarity of the classroom for another job?**

It's hard to imagine that you pick a career in your 20's and you must do it for 40 years. I think it's human nature to want to experience different things, so let yourself be human. Besides, you've already proved you can teach so if you want to go back to it later, you could.

**What surprises you most about life after teaching?**

What surprises me now....I get a chuckle every time a parent tells me how a kid is so smart and if he or she gets a bad grade it's because he or she is bored in class. It's not surprising to hear that per se, but it is surprising how many parents believe that.

**Do you think teachers are more talented than they think? Why?**

Of course teachers are more talented than they realize! It's a skill to be able to speak in front of groups. And teaching itself is a skill. You have to be willing to learn, but teachers should be able to sell that about themselves.



## Job Spotlight: Freelancing and Consulting

Freelancing and consulting are elusive jobs that many people struggle to define. These positions are the embodiment of entrepreneurship: you take essentially nothing and turn it into something that someone will give you money for. Personally, I've been freelancing since 2013 making a full time income working from home, and I still stumble over how to describe my job without saying, "Um... I write a lot."


That said, teachers have a number of the skills necessary to freelance or consult successfully — in fact, we've already featured another [English teacher turned freelance writer](#) — it's just a matter of identifying and communicating your value. If you have a gut feeling that freelancing or consulting might be a good fit for you, read on!

### What Is Freelancing and Consulting?

Freelancing is a generic term that refers to someone who does work on a project or contract basis and is not a full-time or part-time employee to any one person. Some freelancers have full-time or part-time jobs and "freelance" as a side hustle to make extra money on weeknights and weekends. Others freelance 100 percent, like me, and make a career out of it. However your workload breaks down to allow you to bring in the income you need or want is fair game in the freelance world.

Freelancing generally refers to any kind of work done on a project that will have deliverables, or actual delivered items such as a word document, image, or project. Consulting refers to the same type of work but is reserved for the process of giving advice, feedback, formal documentation, and strategy to someone in exchange for money. When done well, both of these types of work focus on the value of the results (in freelancing, the value of the deliverable; in consulting, the value of the implemented advice).

For example, I am a freelance writer and I also consult with clients regarding how to manage their digital web presence via their website and email newsletter. As a writer, I might write a blog post or an advertisement for a customer and that would result in a deliverable (a PDF or Word Document). As a consultant, I might have a 2-hr phone call about the best way to design a website, email marketing campaign, or product. Both of these jobs come from the three main parts of freelancing and consulting (establishing my expertise, finding clients, and doing good work) but neither comes from being an employee of anyone outside of myself.



You can do almost anything as a freelancer, and I really mean anything. Here's a short list of people I have met, worked with, and read about who generate an income themselves independent of a traditional employer:

- Advertising/[copywriting](#)
- Email marketing
- Graphic Design
- Photography
- Business Strategy Consulting
- [Virtual Assistant](#)
- Digital Organizer
- Curriculum Designers
- Speakers on special topics
- Software Development
- Workplace Management Consulting


The way to decide what you would do as a freelancer is to figure out your skill set (writing? taking photos? organizing people's computer files?) and identify how or why someone would pay money for you to do that.

When you think of your idea and immediately say, "But that's not realistic. How would I get health insurance?" I encourage you to change your question. **Instead of dismissing a creative vision for your future, I encourage you to ask, "How could I make that work?"** Approach this process like you would a fun, no-pressure puzzle, and you will be surprised by the path that starts to form in front of your feet.

The Internet is an amazing resource for this. Simply do a web search for your skill and start following blogs and websites that can help you learn the field and how to market yourself. Don't be intimidated by others in your field, just dive in with a low-cost, beautiful website from a company like [SquareSpace](#) or [WordPress](#) and start reading.

Here's a rundown of the important skill sets, qualifications, and resources for freelancing and consulting.

### **Important Skills for Freelancing and Consulting**



I've been working for myself as a freelance writer since 2013. The first year I [made \\$59K](#) and this year I am on track to break \$80K. But it's not easy! It's a lot of work, passion, and stamina... that I think other teachers might have, too.

[Read more about my freelance writing business in this eBook.](#)

The skills you need will definitely depend on the kind of freelancing or consulting you will do.

As a graphic designer, you'll need to know design software like Photoshop. (Download the free version and a free introductory course that you find online and try it out. If you can, invest in a copy and a course.)

As a business strategist you'll need an understanding of how businesses work and a high comfort level with talking to executives. (Find business owners in your network and meet them for coffee for free. Ask them if you can coach them for free in exchange for a referral if you do a good job, then help them however you can.)

Personally, I think there are two absolutely vital skills you must have: **resilience and organization.**


*Resilience* is necessary because the freelance life is full of ups and downs, both emotionally and financially. It took me about a year to get my finances under control and not feel stressed because I was waiting on a check. And two years in, I still have to carefully monitor my workload and stress levels or I feel anxious and overwhelmed. Also, receiving feedback from clients, day in and day out, can cause you to doubt yourself. It takes courage to accept constructive criticism and still perform at your best.

*Organization* is needed because when you freelance, you are on your own! You must live by your deadlines to prove your trustworthiness and you must have a good system for completing the work you say you'll do. I use a physical calendar and an online project management tool to keep my work organized.

You can read about a day in my life as a freelancer [here](#).

### **Qualifications/Education for Freelancing and Consulting**

One of the best things about freelancing is that the qualifications are up to you! Some freelancers make a name for themselves based on their educational experience. Others emphasize their real-world experience. What matters is that you have confidence in your knowledge in a given area and that you consistently deliver value to the people you work with.



Are you nervous about that? Don't worry! It definitely comes with time. I was very nervous about money and my skills as a writer when I first started out. But I kept at it and continued to educate myself and practice my skills, and today I am much more comfortable with what I do.

That said, to become a confident freelance writer I did use a few tools and programs that I found by reading blogs. The best one was [Brandgasm](#), which introduced me to design and copywriting. I also bought Carol Tice's [J-School](#).

### **Example Websites for Consultants and Freelancers**

Here are a few websites and portfolios of freelancers and consultants I have met in my years freelancing:

- *Freelance Writing* – Me – [www.B2BContentStudio.com](http://www.B2BContentStudio.com)
- *Graphic Design and Art* – Erika Firm – [www.ErikaFirm.com](http://www.ErikaFirm.com)
- *Virtual Assistant and Writing* – Kayla – [www.shoeaholicnomore.com/hire-me](http://www.shoeaholicnomore.com/hire-me)
- *Business Consulting* – Sweetie Berry – [www.shessothere.com](http://www.shessothere.com)
- *Business Organization* – Val Geisler – <http://www.valgeisler.com/your-perfect-process/>
- *Digital & Home Organization* – Sofia – <http://www.alifeuncluttered.com/organize-your-computer/>



## Do You Need a New Degree to Get A New Job?

Like all things career, the answer to this question is complicated and takes a little gambling. Here's what I've seen in my own job hunt and in writing about career for several years:

### *1. Yes, Hiring Managers Like Degrees*

An advanced degree will almost always help you get an interview and then possibly get the job. A degree or certification not only indicates knowledge and experience, but it also indicates commitment. That allows hiring managers feel safe knowing you're a professional.


(Keep in mind, though, that an advanced teaching degree such as a Master's in Arts in Teaching counts as an advanced degree! My husband once got the interview for an ISD job based on his Master's in Arts in Teaching degree and by doing a few of the things listed below.)

### *2. But That's Not All They Like*

...However, an advanced degree is not the only way to establish knowledge, experience, and commitment! It's just the easiest, and that's why it's so expensive (It can be done good, fast, or or cheap, but you only get to pick two, right?).

I deeply believe that anyone can put together a self-education path using free and low-cost resources online that will establish them as a professional in a given field. (See also: The Personal MBA at <http://personalmba.com/manifesto/>).

For the example of ISD, you're absolutely correct that the technologies are prohibitively expensive. But there are a few workarounds to get \*some\* experience on your resume: each of the platforms offers a free trial, so you could download one per month over the summer with a book from the library and throw yourself into creating sample lessons and learning experiences (a spec portfolio). For bonus points, you could also time the trial for when you have an interview so that you could custom create a learning experience for the company you interview with.



You could also get in touch with a nearby library or college library and see what technology they offer (for free) on their onsite computers (AKA the local library where I live has a digital media lab with a 3D printer and other crazy things I don't even know about). So... it's definitely not easy, but it's doable if you wanted to hack it.

### *3. You Can Cherry Pick Your Job Applications*

You may not qualify for a job at a company that prefers the creme de la creme experts with advanced degrees, but that's fine because you don't need a job there, you just need a job to get your foot in the door.

When you're taking the self-educated path, I would focus on smaller businesses like start-ups that want the skills but can't pay big bucks for the education and experience. They'll be more likely to 1) not care that your degree is in something related but not specific, or 2) that you created your portfolio on spec (they just want to see your work). They're also less likely to do the impersonal form application, which is a real pain and unlikely to lead to a job (the majority of people still find jobs through [good old fashioned personal acquaintances](#)).

### *4. Everyone Loves a Hard Worker*

Self-education and hard work may not be as sexy to some hiring managers as an advanced degree, but it is darn attractive to most realistic ones!

Think about it in terms of what people want to see in a job candidate. A genuine, hard-working person who is committed to ISD and can explain how his teaching career lead him to realize that he was meant to be an ISD (with a great self-made portfolio) would definitely hold sway.

Finally, I have it on good authority from a director of HR friend that a self-educated candidate who put the time into building the portfolio and could demonstrate the necessary skills for a job in his interview/portfolio/sample work would be an attractive candidate for a job.

The #1 thing is to be persistent once you know what you want. I know the process is difficult and frustrating, but "the world will get out of the way for a man on a mission!"



## Job Spotlight: Technology Integrator

*Technology integration is a great field for former teachers who love tech and talking. Here's a look at what it means to be a technology integrator and how you can break into the field.*

Technology Integrators represent a relatively new field in public school administration that focuses on the role of technology in the classroom and in curriculum. Depending on where you live, there may be new technology initiatives and there may not; this will affect the availability of technology integrator jobs in your area.

The role of a technology integrator is unique in that it transitions you out of the classroom but you're still in the public school system. Rather than teaching a classroom of students, you are teaching a room of teachers.

### What Are Technology Integrators?

Technology Integrators serve as teacher consultants around instructional technology such as laptops, Chromebooks, iPads, Google Drive, Microsoft OneDrive, Promethean boards, Smartboards, and other sources of tech in the classroom. Technology integrators do not focus on the hardware side of tech (repairing broken technology and fixing Internet issues) but rather the instructional side of how teachers can adopt new trends in technology to make their curriculum more powerful.

### Important Skills for Technology Integrators


First and foremost, technology integrators need to have a passion for technology. If electronic devices and new releases stress you out, you won't be happy keeping up with the latest trends for tech in the classroom.

You also need to be comfortable taking on a consultant role for teachers who are learning to use technology. This requires skills in interpersonal communication and presentation as you consult with teachers 1:1 and give presentations to groups of 10 or more.

### Qualifications/Education for Technology Integrators

When counties look to hire technology integrators, they often want to work with teachers who have experience in a given school system. While a degree or minor in technology or integrated technology will help you show off your qualifications for the position,





you can also show your interest in tech by building tech for your classroom such as a classroom blog, website, podcast, or Twitter account. This allows teachers from any background -- music, history, science, English -- to put in time and put themselves in a great position to transition out of the classroom.

### **Example Job Openings for Technology Integrators**

Here are a few example job openings and position descriptions for technology integration. If any of these links are broken, simply perform a search for “Public School Technology Integrator” on Google.

- [Technology Integration Specialist Department](#) in Connecticut
- [Technology Integration Specialist Department](#) in Arizona
- [Educational Technology Specialist](#) in Kansas



## Gillian's Real Story: English Teacher to Author

Welcome this real life interview from former teacher Gillian Culff! After earning her degree from Sarah Lawrence College and teaching high school English for ten years, Gillian began freelance writing, consulting, and speaking and she writes and consults full-time.

### **Please describe your teaching experience and educational background.**

I earned a B.A. in liberal arts from Sarah Lawrence College, where I studied psychology and political science and did field work in child development at the Sarah Lawrence College Early Childhood Center. However, I had no idea I was going to become a teacher and did not get any sort of teaching degree or certification.


I began teaching high school English, creative writing and Student Council in the 2004-2005 school year at a small, private school in Hawaii. I taught there for ten years. In my second year I became the yearbook advisor as well.

I loved teaching; the variety of courses I taught was great, and I enjoyed being on my feet interacting with kids a lot. I grew a lot as a teacher and an individual in those years. With no real training I figured out how to teach high school English and help students improve their writing and critical reading and thinking skills. I enjoyed reading student writing, but I hated having to put a grade on it. That has always been antithetical to my own philosophy of learning. That's why I went to a college with no grades. That part of the job always chafed at me.

### **When did you realize teaching was no longer right for you? Was there a specific moment or did it dawn on you slowly?**

I think it dawned rather slowly as I struggled to handle the ever-burgeoning load of paperwork and department work. In fact, every year, my review was excellent, but I was always given the same constructive feedback: I needed to assign more work, and I needed to turn back work to my students more quickly.

If you think about this for even a minute, you can see how these two goals are at odds with each other. Along with the grading, these two areas dogged me continually.



However, there came a moment when I realized I hadn't truly been happy for a while. I was working with a life coach to find out how I could feel more fulfilled in my life overall, and I was teaching my students a new unit I had designed on the Hero's Journey. I was standing in front of my classroom telling my students to go out and live their own hero's journey, when I realized I was no longer living mine. It was an epiphany, the classic hero's call to adventure. It finally dawned that I wasn't enjoying teaching as much anymore. I had been changing up my texts and units of study year to year, and I was still restless and a little bored, even with the teaching itself, which was the part I'd always loved.

Ironically, after years of stress and struggle—including building strong student council and yearbook programs, both of which had a steep learning curve at first—having finally arrived at a point of mastery and confidence in my abilities, I was no longer feeling challenged by the work. Simultaneously, the stress of always being behind in my grading was tipping the balance toward dissatisfaction as I realized this was not an area where I'd ever improve sufficiently to satisfy myself or others.

### **What position do you have now?**

I started my own business as a freelance writer, editor and teacher of [writing classes](#). I am working on a book and course series wherein I use ancient philosophical texts as inspiration for writing exercises to help people reflect on their lives and grow spiritually. In terms of my writing, I specialize in [profiles of people and places](#) as well as web copy.

### **Why do you think you got this job?**

I come from a family of entrepreneurs; when I was a child, my dad started a corporation that manufactured kitchen cabinet fronts using a—at that time—new laminating process. My mom had always been self-employed as a singer and in later life started teaching voice lessons. When she turned 80 she wrote a book and started a business [teaching people to overcome stage fright](#). My sister and brother-in-law have together built numerous businesses, including a dot com that was hugely successful during the bubble of the 90s, a multifaceted and highly successful and diversified real estate and property management business, and now a [web development company](#).

I felt encouraged by my life coach and my family members to take the leap. I knew my experience and expertise supported my being successful at it; just how successful would depend on my personal resources, perseverance and motivation.



## What do you miss about teaching?

I miss the daily interaction with my students and colleagues, the energy in the building, the joy of watching my students rehearse a pep rally or talent show and overall just being a part of something bigger than myself that has a culture of family. The school where I taught is a very loving place, and I will always remain in touch with many of my students and former students.

## What do you NOT miss about teaching?

I don't miss the heaps of paper work I could never seem to get a handle on or having to tell a kid that his paper was a "D" or a "C" or a "B-." Grading is so reductionist and distracts students from what really matters, which is the process of improvement. I don't miss proctoring standardized tests, but fortunately, our school had few of those, not like public schools. I think the move towards more and more testing and teaching to the test is a disaster and a completely wrongheaded approach to education.

## What surprises you most about life after teaching?

I was surprised by not only how much courage it takes to start your own business, but the continued renewed courage one needs to keep going, along with the difficulty in having to motivate oneself to go after or generate work without anyone hanging deadlines over my head.

## What advice would you give to a teacher who is afraid to leave the familiarity of the classroom for another job?

If you aren't happy and are just "phoning it in," you aren't doing yourself or your students a service.

One fear can be giving up paid summer breaks, but if you are motivated enough to build a business on your own terms, you can structure your vacations however you want or simply allow yourself more time each day so that you aren't a walking ball of stress.

Teachers need three months off because they are pushed to the brink of burnout each school year and need time to refresh and renew themselves.

But if your daily life is less stressful because you've been able to structure it that way, you don't need three months of recuperative leisure, and your work life overall feels more manageable and reasonable.



## Job Spotlight: Instructional Designer

Did you know that there's a word for teachers in the workplace? It's called "[Instructional Design](#)," and it's a great way to transition out of the classroom and into the adult education world.

Instructional designers design educational experiences for a range of audiences. The audience is usually very specific, such as "military spouses," or "IT/cloud computing customers," or "donors." They use good curriculum development practices to speak to these learners in the most effective ways, often developing PowerPoint-like visual learning experiences to go along with them.

An ISD position is best for the teacher who looooves writing curriculum and developing learning experiences but no longer wishes to present them or be in front of the classroom. As an ISD, you may present your finished project to your team or to a client, but there is usually not much actual teaching or presenting involved throughout the job.


Interested? Here's a rundown of the important skill sets for an instructional design position.

### Important Skills

Instructional designers need to understand how people learn and how to give people the best user experience (UX) when learning online. That's the most important connection between ISD and teaching. Your job focuses on building a learning experience that meets specific education requirements, just like standardized testing. You also need excellent collaboration skills because you'll be working with other people to build your curriculum, such as graphic designers and [project managers](#).

### Qualifications/Education

Personally, I think teachers are automatically qualified to be ISDs. However, there are certification and education opportunities for formalize your education such as [Walden University's MS in Instructional Design and Technology](#) and [Virginia Tech's Instructional Design and Technology Program](#). You may also be able to find online education opportunities, but be sure to work with a credited institution. You can also search [Coursera](#), a free online class tool, to find ISD-related classes. You won't get any credit, but it will look fantastic on your resume and it will allow you to try out the career before you make the leap.



Just like teaching strategies have different names, so do ISD strategies. Important ones to brush up on (or to take a certification course in) include ADDIE, Rapid Prototyping, Dick and Carey, IDLS, and more. Important ISD technologies to become familiar with (by downloading a free trial and experimenting) include Articulate, Adobe Captivate, and others. Read a great comparison of the software [here](#).

You can try to DIY your way into an ISD position by learning the specific ISD strategies used to design curriculum on your own and speaking to your experience using these strategies in the classroom. You may find that the lesson plans you have already written closely align to ADDIE, Rapid Prototyping, or Dick and Carey models, etc.

### Salary Ranges

ISDs can expect starting salaries in the area of [\\$65,000-\\$70,000 per year](#). Formal certifications, practical experience, and niche skills (say, if you specialize in reading an ESL audience, or something like that) can help your salary rise into the [\\$80,000-\\$90,000 range](#).

### Example Job Descriptions

Here are a few random project management positions around the web so you can get a feel for what the job would be like (if the links don't work, [try searching Simply Hired directly](#)).

- [Instructional Designer](#) for a health insurance company
- [Instructional Designer](#) for a software company
- [Instructional Designer](#) for a publisher
- [Instructional Designer](#) for a staffing company



## Your New Job Will Be Unique

Will you have a path out of teaching exactly like the people featured in this eBook? Definitely not! After hearing the stories of hundreds of people who leave teaching, the only consistent thing is that everyone's transition is unique.

That can be scary when you wish there was a clear path out, but I'd rather focus on the potential: your path out of teaching is so unique that it will surprise even you! It will be a product of your interests, your passions, and your experience. It will catch you by surprise, if you only keep trying.

If you're still thinking about leaving the classroom, don't let this download be the end of the road. Download the [Life After Teaching](#) eBook to get detailed advice for your resume and cover letter, as well as teacher-specific tips for the interviewing and networking process. And make sure you're active in the [Life After Teaching LinkedIn community](#).

At this point, it is my hope that you are feeling empowered, inspired, and hopeful about your future—no matter where you think it lies.

Because whether you decide to try another career or you decide to stay the course as a teacher, the goal is to choose that path from a place of power – not as a last resort because you feel trapped.

Thank you for letting me be a part of your transition journey. Being at a crossroads can be a scary, dark place, but it is also a sign that you are paying careful attention to your environment and career, which is only good news! Because whatever you do, if you do it by choice, you are already a success.

Sincerely,

Sarah Greesonbach



## Want More to Read?

If you're ready to actively begin the process of leaving teaching, there's nothing better than [Life After Teaching Job Hunt Course](#) covers all your bases. If you'd rather DIY your transition, the following books and websites will be very helpful in reinventing your career and seeing how you can apply your teaching skills to jobs outside the classroom:

### Career Transition:

[Tools for Teaching](#) by Fred Jones

[Quitter](#) by Jon Acuff

[How Will You Measure Your Life](#) by Christiansen

[The Seven Habits Of Highly Effective People](#), Stephen Covey

[Boundaries](#), Dr Townsend and Cloud

[What Color Is Your Parachute](#) by Richard N Bolles

[Working Identity: Unconventional Strategies for Reinventing Your Career](#), Herminia Ibarra

[You Majored In WHAT?](#), Katharine Brooks, PhD.

[Great Jobs For History Majors](#), Lambert & Degalan

[Strategies For Successful Career Change](#), Martha E Mangelsdorf

[The Ten Laws Of Career Reinvention](#), Pamela Mitchell

[Get The Interview Every Time](#), Brenda Green

### Online links and websites:

[Ask a Manager](#), Ashley Green

[Penelope Trunk Career Advice](#), Penelope Trunk

[High Teacher Turnover Rates are a Big Problem for America's Public Schools](#), Forbes

[Finding a Job: Who's Better than You?](#), Consumer Affairs

[Nonprofit Work: 10 Myths](#), Case Foundation

[Purdue Online Writing Lab: Resume Workshop](#), Purdue University

[44 Resume Writing Tips](#), Daily Writing Tips

[How to Write a Resume that Generates Results](#), Rockport Institute

[Resume Writing](#), Boston College