

Hi, I'm Jessica. I have worked full time in the IELP since Summer 2010. Previous to that, I was a TA in the MATESOL program starting Fall 2009.

I used to love teaching. I loved feeling that I was making a difference, learning about people, making connections, collaborating with my coworkers. My student evaluations have always been good, steadily improving over the years until I recently got many 4.9/5.0's. Students tell me they recommend me to their friends and advisors in their home countries. I worked as a Lead Teacher last year, and presented at TESOL the year previous. I tell you this so you know that I am a hard worker, dedicated to my department and my students.

However, after a few years of barely supporting myself with hardly any savings, asking my parents for help, and never taking vacations beyond Portland, I now recognize that I have three options: hurry up and marry a man who makes a lot of money; get a second job; or find another career.

The first option: I hate to feel that my job is somehow "extra" or superfluous – also, I enjoy being independent and supporting myself. That is one reason I went to graduate school, after all. Therefore, I will not get married simply for financial reasons.

The second option: Find a second job. The problem is that I don't know for how long. I would be happy to work more hours temporarily if I could know that my situation would be improved in the long run by this sacrifice. I am already working full-time (many evenings and weekends as well). I have a hard time feeling that I could maintain my quality of work at teaching if I were working a second job without time to rest. Also, as I said, I went to graduate school and have some years of experience with the expectation that I wouldn't need to work more than one job.

The final option: Find another career. Over the past years, teaching has gradually become much more effort for me, something I no longer really enjoy or look forward to. This might have something to do with the fact that I have finally recognized that teaching is in no way financially sustainable for me. So now I must start over and find a new career elsewhere, hopefully in a growing field that recognizes the contributions of its professionals.

I can't say that I represent anyone else in our department. And of course, money isn't everything. But one of the main reasons we go to work is to support ourselves, our families, and our goals. As professionals, we deserve better, and so do our students.

Thank you for reading,

Jessica Wicksnin
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