

**Professional Investigations:**

School/District Compatibility:

As a young pre-service teacher, I am trying to not be particular when it comes to what type of school or school district I am looking for; I see upsides and downsides all types of districts, and none of the downsides would make me think twice about taking a job that was offered to me. I enjoy the resources, opportunities, and number of peers that larger districts have to offer, but I also see the value of the smaller class sizes and autonomy offered by smaller schools/districts. What I am sure of is; I want to teach in the mid-west, preferably Minnesota, and I do not want to *live* in a large city. I would not be opposed to teaching in a larger city, as long as I was able to live in a suburb and commute to work. Ideally I would like to move back to my home town and get a job teaching at the high school from which I graduated. However, I knew when I decided to become a German teacher that I would not have the luxury of being selective when it came to choosing a place to live and teach. At this point I am just looking to find a job, not worrying about where that job may take me.

Unions:

Being a pre-service teacher, I do not think I am at a point in my life where I can make an educated decision about joining a teacher's union. I am still very idealistic about my career. At this point in time I want to be a teacher for the sake of my students, and I have not thought at all about teaching being my career and the fact that I need to make money from that career. Therefore I have not put any thought into contracts or contract negotiations, and I feel like I care so much about my students that I would not want to go on strike if contract negotiations every went poorly. However, I realize that my feelings on these issues may change as I get out into the real world and have to think about things like house payments and buying my own groceries. Therefore, I will continue to keep the idea of joining a union in the back of my mind, and I will simply wait and see if my thoughts and ideas about teaching and contracts change.

Beyond Teaching German – Other Professional Possibilities:

Teaching English  
School Counseling

**Scholarly Investigations:**

Graduate Programs:

Graduate programs for education are notably different from graduate programs in the majority other disciplines, because it is impractical for future educators to go straight from receiving their Bachelor's Degree and Teaching License to a graduate program in which they receive their Master's Degree. I want to be comfortable teaching and confident in my lesson plans before I go back to school, so I am planning on waiting until I have been teaching at least two years before going back to get my Master's Degree. Therefore, when researching graduate programs, I looked only at programs that would be plausible for me to complete while I was working at a full-time teaching job. I narrowed my further by only looking at programs in Central- and Northern-Minnesota, where I am planning on teaching. I came up with three different programs, one for each possible career with which I could eventually have.

The first of these graduate programs is the most likely candidate, because it would be the most useful for me if I continue on my current track and become a classroom teacher in German. This program is a Master of World Language Instruction Program, which is offered through Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota. I am especially interested in this program because it pairs online learning during the school year with on-site observations and classes and Concordia Language Villages in Bemidji, Minnesota during the summer months. I feel a special connection to this program because I spent five summers of my youth at the German Language Village (Waldsee), and I feel like their immersion program is incredibly effective. This program is very small, with only 8-12 students per professor, which allows for more individual attention and time for all students to share their experiences. Furthermore, I feel as though their online summer courses would be entirely manageable balanced with a full-time teaching load.

The second graduate program I considered would be most useful for me if I end up teaching English in conjunction with German. This program is the Master of Education (M.Ed.)/Professional Studies Program with Interdisciplinary Focus which is offered through the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This program is designed for teachers who are teaching a number of different subjects; it is flexible and allows teachers to choose subject matter courses in two or more areas. The program includes at least 30 semester credits. These credits are a combination of core academic classes, specific subject-matter courses, and elective courses. I would be able to continue teaching while I was going through this program, because courses are offered during the summer and at off-campus sites, which may be closer to where I end up teaching.

The third graduate program I looked at is the Master of Science in School Counseling Program from Saint Cloud State University in Saint Cloud, Minnesota. This program would, obviously, be most useful for me if I decide that being a classroom teacher is not for me, or if I later get burnt out with teaching and want to try another profession but still be involved in the lives of students. This program is not as practical as the other programs, since I would have to take at least a small amount of time off from teaching to complete my coursework. However, if I became serious about wanting to change my profession and become a school counselor, taking time off from teaching would be a necessary sacrifice. This program consists of 12 credits of research courses and 46 credits of core courses followed by a counseling practicum experience and a 600-hour internship. This is definitely the most intensive of the three graduate programs, but it is also the degree that is most unlike my undergraduate degree. Choosing this graduate program would be a bigger choice than choosing either of the other two programs and it would have the potential to create a larger amount of change in my life, and I would have to be willing and able to put in the time to make that change happen.

#### Professional Associations, Conferences, and Reading:

I am already a member of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL), and wherever I end up teaching, I will definitely become a member of that state's world language association. In Iowa that association is the Iowa World Language Association (IWLA) and in Minnesota the association is Minnesota Council on the Teaching of Languages and Cultures (MCTLC). Although membership in these associations does cost around \$50 every year, it is worth the investment. When one becomes a member of one of these associations, one gets access to a plethora of useful materials and reduced rates at all of the many workshops and conferences offered by the association, and, perhaps most importantly, one becomes a member of

a community. This is especially significant for teachers, such as German teachers, who may not have any peers in their content area at their own school.

All of these associations have professional conferences at least once a year. I was lucky enough to have the chance to attend IWLA's 2007 Fall Conference, and it was a wonderful experience. I learned a lot of new information and strategies; I came away from the conference with a bag full of new materials and a head full of new ideas. Any teacher who is a member of IWLA is able to present his/her work if he/she chooses to do so. This is definitely something in which I would be interested in the future. I think that sharing your ideas and strategies with other teachers, and conversely listening to other teachers share their ideas and strategies, is one of the most important ways that teachers can learn and better themselves professionally. I will absolutely attend professional conferences when I have the chance to do so.

Many of these professional associations also provide free subscriptions to their professional journals when one become a member. For example, when one becomes a member of ACTFL one is automatically offered a subscription to *Foreign Language Annals* and *The Language Educator*. Both of these journals are wonderful resources that are committed to the improvement of language teaching and learning, and I will continue to subscribe to both journals in the future.