

OPPORTUNITIES IN

Education Careers



MARJORIE EBERTS AND MARY MCGOWAN

VGM Opportunities Series

OPPORTUNITIES IN EDUCATION CAREERS

**Mary McGowan
Marjorie Eberts
Margaret Gisler**



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DEDICATION

To all the educators who have guided this generation of children through school and especially to Nancylee Buckley, Fred Chandler, and Pennie Needham, who have been outstanding teachers, counselors, and administrators.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

The three authors have collectively written twenty-six career books. They are also experienced educators with many years of teaching experience in schools from kindergarten through college. Margaret Gisler, who has taught in kindergarten, elementary school, and college, is currently working in special education. Marjorie Eberts has taught in high school and college, and Mary McGowan has taught in middle school. Marjorie Eberts and Margaret Gisler also write a syndicated education column, “Dear Teacher,” which appears in newspapers across the country. Recently, they have become the education experts on the Family Education web site.

Mary McGowan and Marjorie Eberts hold bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Stanford University. Margaret Gisler received her bachelor’s degree at Ball State University. Both Marjorie Eberts and Margaret Gisler have master’s and education specialists degrees in education.

FOREWORD

Education is arguably one of the most important and rewarding careers one can pursue in life. No one can survive in today's world without an education. With an education, people will flourish. In fact, one can say that the more education a person receives, the better he or she will succeed in a given profession or pursuit.

Education provides not only the basic skills needed for everyday activities, it also provides the highly specialized training needed in order to prepare for the complex and technical jobs and careers that sometimes seem to spring up overnight.

But apart from preparation for jobs and careers, an education offers something even more important; it helps people get more out of their lives. Teachers and others working in education-related areas are there because they understand this. They, themselves, have experienced what a good education can do for a person, and they are caring and intelligent enough to want to provide the same for others.

Are you one of these people? Do you have the desire to help people grow intellectually and make something of their lives? Do you want people to get the most enjoyment out of their lives? If so, this book is for you. We hope the information you find here starts you on a journey toward a career in education.

The Editors
VGM Career Books

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CHAPTER 1

EXPLORING THE OPPORTUNITIES IN EDUCATION

Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.

William Butler Yeats

A modern society cannot exist without education. Education helps us acquire the skills needed in everyday life from reading the newspaper to handling money. It provides us with the special training required for so many careers. And it makes our lives richer as it expands our knowledge and understanding of the world around us. While much education takes place outside of schools, teachers and schools have the major responsibility of educating people in this country, whether they are young children in preschool, college students studying for bachelor's degrees, or workers upgrading their professional skills.

THE HISTORY OF EDUCATION

In prehistoric societies, young boys and girls got their practical education in the ways to hunt, gather food, and construct shelters by working closely with those who possessed these essential skills. Formal education didn't really begin until 5,000 years ago, when a system of writing both words and numbers was invented.

Of course, education then was nothing like it is today. For one thing, it was only for boys, and it consisted largely of copying literary selections and business accounts. The first giant step forward in education occurred in ancient Greece. Boys began to study reading, writing, arithmetic, music, and dancing; however, instead of going to a school, they would go to different teachers for each subject. It was during this time that Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates emerged as great teachers and philosophers.

The first large-scale education system evolved in the ancient Roman Empire around 100 B.C. Although the system was modeled on Greek education, schooling also was provided for girls, and students learned to read and write both Latin and Greek. There was even a secondary system of schools that let boys between the ages of ten and fifteen continue their education. During the Middle Ages, the Christian church controlled most formal education. At first it was for boys intending to enter religious life, but later on schools for boys of wealthy and noble families were established at churches and monasteries.

During the 1100s, universities first emerged. In Northern Europe they were really corporations of scholars who charged a fee to educate students. In Southern Europe, the universities were guilds of students who hired the teachers. By 1500, today's great universities of Cambridge, Oxford, Paris, and Salamanca had been founded, as well as primary schools for children of the lower classes. About 1440, education was suddenly revolutionized by the invention of the printing press, which let more and more students have low-cost books.

American Education

When the colonists came to America, they set up schools like they had known in Europe. Most children, however, did not attend

school but served apprenticeships to learn a trade. The first public schools in America were established by law in Massachusetts in 1647. Both boys and girls could attend these schools. In the 1700s, secondary schools, called academies, began to appear and offer practical courses. Compulsory education was required in a few states by the late 1800s; however, it was not required in all the states until 1918. The curriculum in schools broadened in the 1900s from the 3R's to include such subjects as history, geography, and science. Today, the American education system has expanded to include preschools and kindergartens; elementary, middle, and secondary schools; community colleges, colleges, and universities; trade schools; adult education programs; and specialty schools instructing people of all ages in a variety of skills from mathematics to karate.

AN AMAZING VARIETY OF JOBS

As new inventions and technology are rapidly changing today's world, being educated is more important than ever before. Education is a career field in which individuals can make an important contribution to people of all ages. You do not have to be a teacher to work in the world of education. There are many other careers that will let you support education. Here is a quick look at the careers that will be described in this book.

Teaching Preschool to High School

Classroom teachers are the individuals who play the greatest role in passing the culture to the next generation. They introduce children in elementary school to reading, numbers, language, science, social studies, and the arts and help students in secondary

school delve more deeply into these subjects. This is an enormous profession totaling close to five million people. Not only does teaching require an ability to work with young people, it is essential for teachers who work in public schools to be licensed. You may wish to consider teaching as a career choice because it is a rewarding profession that would let you see students develop new skills and gain an appreciation of knowledge.

Teaching in Special Areas

Some children simply cannot handle school because of significant physical and/or mental disabilities. Special education teachers have the challenge of helping these students. This is a fairly new profession of approximately five hundred thousand teachers, and it is growing rapidly. There are even shortages of special education teachers in many school districts. If you decide to become a special education teacher, you will need to hold a teaching license as well as special licensure in this field.

Jobs in Advising and Counseling Students

It is important for students to get the best possible education. However, personal problems sometimes interfere. At other times, students need special information about what classes to take, what career opportunities are right for them, and what colleges are good choices for them. There are also times when students have problems with teachers, their schoolwork, or classmates. When students need advice or counseling, the individuals who help them are the school counselors, deans, psychologists, and nurses. Here is a way that you can be involved in students' education without being a teacher.

Opportunities in School Administration

Schools don't just run themselves. They need administrators to handle their day-to-day operation as well as to manage each school district. Those who work in elementary and secondary schools have a very hands-on role in the education of children and work closely with their teachers and parents. Administrators at the district level are concerned with budgets, hiring personnel, directing subject area programs, overseeing transportation, and setting the overall standards and policies of the schools under their jurisdiction. Most administrators begin their careers as teachers, although it is not essential for a great number of positions.

Jobs at Colleges and Universities

Teaching is the number-one job at all colleges and universities. Beyond choosing to teach at this level, there are opportunities for jobs as administrators and support personnel in many areas. You might want to work in the admissions office, athletic department, financial aid office, or in the public relations, budget, development, security, and buildings or grounds departments. While positions such as college or university president, dean, and department head require experience in the education arena, other jobs do not. Most individuals who work at a school, however, will have an intense interest in promoting its success.

Jobs at Trade Schools and Community Colleges

An amazing number of students now are preparing themselves for careers as unusual as acupuncturist and deep-sea diver or as common as plumber and welder at trade schools and community colleges. Here is an opportunity to be involved in teaching a subject

in which you are an expert without having to hold educational degrees or licenses. There are also jobs in the administration and operation of these schools.

Trade schools usually concentrate on teaching a particular job skill such as court reporting, hairstyling, or truck driving. On the other hand, community colleges are more like colleges and universities in that their focus is typically on offering academic courses, but they also have many programs leading to licensing or certification in a great number of careers.

Jobs with Departments of Education at Federal, State, and County Levels

Students are entitled to a free and appropriate public school education in elementary and secondary schools. While local communities exercise considerable control over their schools, county, state, and federal departments of education also play an important role. County departments of education largely provide services and information to school districts. State departments of education set broad outlines of what will be taught in the state and provide financing and services to school districts. The federal department of education distributes grant money to individuals, schools, and states; collects statistics; provides information; and makes sure that all students have an equal educational opportunity. Within all these departments of education, there are jobs for both educators and support staff.

Education Researchers and Consultants

School districts have questions: Is our new reading program effective? Has the high school block schedule plan improved students' grades. States want to know if reducing class size in the primary grades has lowered the retention rate. The federal government is eager to know if a program to serve breakfast in ele-

mentary schools has improved attendance. The answers to all of these questions about what works in education are sought by educational researchers, who are typically affiliated with universities.

When school districts, departments of education, and even parents are not sure about what to do in a given situation, they often hire educational consultants to advise them. Educational consultants perform such tasks as helping school districts select the best design for a new school, finding suitable candidates for administrative positions, and helping high school students choose an appropriate college. While being a researcher or consultant requires knowledge of the educational system, each job also requires special research and investigative skills.

Learning and Test Preparation Centers and Tutoring

Approximately 40 percent of all parents believe that their children need outside help in order to succeed in today's schools. This belief sends tens of thousands of students after school each day to learning and test preparation centers and tutors. Many learning centers are part of large national chains with positions for administrators and part-time teachers. Tutors are usually self-employed. They either have students come to their homes, or they go to the homes of their clients. Test preparation centers may be part of national chains or independent centers. They employ administrative staff as well as experts at taking college admissions tests (SAT and ACT) and various examinations to enter graduate school and certain professions.

MORE GREAT JOBS IN EDUCATION

Admittedly, being a teacher is the most popular job in education. At the same time, there are many other job options for those

who wish to have a career in education. Individuals are needed to create tests and administer testing programs. As technology comes to schools, computer experts are required to set up and run computer networks. All of the textbooks used in schools are written by authors and sold to schools by salespeople who work for large and small publishing firms. There are web companies on the Internet that provide advice to parents, students, and teachers. Librarians run school libraries. Secretaries are the heart of many schools. Plus, professional organizations and unions have large staffs serving the interests of their members. Talk to educators, and you will find even more jobs than are described in this book.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The more you know about education, the more likely you will find the appropriate niche in this very large career field. Working as a volunteer at a school or as a teacher's aide will allow you to observe many careers in education. Also, you will find the following career books helpful in your search for a job in education:

Careers in Education (VGM Career Horizons) lists dozens of jobs in the educational field, along with the education and training required for these jobs.

Real People Working in Education (VGM Career Horizons) will help you discover what it's like to work in education by reading directly about practicing professionals. It will reveal how they got started, spend their days, and feel about their work.

Resumes for Education Careers (VGM Career Horizons) will help you learn how to write a strong resume as well as see the backgrounds people are bringing to this field.

CHAPTER 2

TEACHING PRESCHOOL TO HIGH SCHOOL

Children enter preschool not knowing how to read, write, or do arithmetic and then graduate from high school many years later with a solid core of knowledge that will let them lead useful and rewarding lives. The growth of their intellectual powers has been fostered by working with teachers. The preschool teacher begins the process by teaching children to rhyme words and count; then the kindergarten teacher introduces them to letters and numbers, so they will be ready to handle first grade. With each passing year, children acquire a broader and deeper base of knowledge because teachers help them learn.

More people belong to the teaching profession than any other profession in the world. Included in this group are many well-known people. Did you realize that Bill Cosby, the television star of several shows, has a doctorate in education? While Bill was working on his doctorate, he studied the uses and effects of electronic devices, including television, on children's education. Bill is still involved in education as he uses his acting skills on television to teach young children. You may have seen him on *The Electric Company* teaching young children to read, or on *Sesame Street* teaching children to say their letters and numbers. Even his cartoons "Fat Albert" and the "Cosby Kids" have an educational message. Look