
THE NEW TEACHER PROJECT

Operations and Communications Associates

THE BIG PICTURE

The New Teacher Project (TNTP) is “a national nonprofit organization that partners with school districts, states, and other educational entities to develop programs that recruit, select, and train exceptional individuals to become teachers for high-need public schools.” It’s a great place for people who want to “make a difference.” One first jobber explains, “I had left my previous position in entry-level market research because there was no sense of purpose or employee interest, and I also did not feel as though I had much in common with many of my coworkers. When I found the position with TNTP, however, I knew almost instantly that it was an ideal match. I found my coworkers to be driven, intelligent, and genuinely concerned with the work at hand. Also, the organization worked directly to help people, not just help profits and track numbers.”

STATS

LOCATION(S) WHERE ENTRY-LEVEL EMPLOYEES WORK

“Our entry-level employees work at various locations, depending on where we have programs and openings. Sites include major metropolitan areas such as New York, New York; Washington, DC; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Baltimore, Maryland; Miami, Florida; Memphis, Tennessee; New Orleans, Louisiana; Houston, Texas; and Oakland, California.” Additional sites may be found “in states with large rural populations, such as Louisiana and Virginia.”

AVERAGE NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS EACH YEAR

TNTP receives 1,000 applications a year.

AVERAGE NUMBER HIRED PER YEAR

TNTP hires six entry-level workers a year.

ENTRY-LEVEL POSITION(S) AVAILABLE

TNTP usually hires operations and communications associates, “and sometimes other positions, as well.”

AVERAGE HOURS WORKED PER WEEK

Entry-level workers usually work forty-five to fifty hours per week.

AVERAGE STARTING SALARY

In 2005, the average starting salary was \$31,000.

BENEFITS OFFERED

TNTP has “a strong medical benefits package that vests on an employee’s first day. Medical and vision insurance are fully paid; dental coverage requires a small contribution from the employee.” Additional benefits include a 403(b) tax-free retirement plan, paid disability, paid vacation, and personal time off.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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GETTING HIRED

The New Teacher Project recruits on college campuses; the specific campuses vary annually “depending on the cities [in which] we have programs and openings.” Openings are also posted on the organization’s website. TNTP seeks “strong, critical thinkers who are committed to the organization’s mission of ensuring that all students are taught by excellent teachers [who are] achievement-oriented, productive, [and] sensitive to others.” Communication skills are also considered very important. Interviews here “can be intense. We ask in-depth questions about each candidate’s background experiences—including times [he or she has] been challenged or disappointed, not just what [he or she has] achieved, and questions with hypothetical scenarios about situations [that may arise] on the job.”

All applications begin with the submission of a resume and detailed cover letter; this is followed by “three interviews and a short project related to the work that we do.” One successful hire reports, “I was given about four days to complete the project, which asked me to analyze a set of data and make recommendations based on my findings. Afterward, I was invited for a second-round in-person interview with the director of selection and one of her supervisors. We spent a lot of time discussing the exercise I completed.”

MONEY AND PERKS

The negotiability of salaries, start dates, and other work-related details vary by position. The organization does lots of contract work; and this often allows for little flexibility in the terms of employment. Raises are awarded annually; while “entry-level employees are generally not eligible for a bonus,” occasionally “there are exceptions.” TNTP first jobbers love that “the culture here is very results-oriented and flexible, with lots of autonomy for workers. They trust you to do things in the style that makes sense for you, as long as you achieve the desired results in a timely and high-quality manner. Newbies also appreciate that because it is “a nonprofit company, TNTP is very responsive to not having typical work weeks. While some days might be very busy, when it is slow, people are very willing to let you go home early. Also, we get an amazing number of vacation days!”

THE ROPES

Formal orientation at TNTP “occurs over the course of a few weeks [and] generally includes an overview and history of the organization, an overview of benefits and policies, an in-depth overview of the particular program and the employee’s job responsibilities, and, as [may be] relevant, an overview of resources available within TNTP to help staff in their new roles (e.g., manuals, contact information for staff with similar roles in similar TNTP programs, etc.)” Training is “ongoing and informal, more a schedule of somewhat informal meetings with managers” and a “learn-as-you-go process.”

DAY IN THE LIFE

TNTP hires first jobbers for two key positions: operations associates and communications associates. Operations associates are “responsible for program logistics and materials, entering and maintaining program data, [and] coordinating special program events,” while communications associates are “responsible for delivery of accurate, timely, and courteous recruitment and/or program messages by phone, e-mail, and in-person [contact] with candidates, accepted teachers, and teachers already in the classroom.” One communications associate reports, “I am primarily focused on dealing with public interest in the program: e-mails, phone calls, public information sessions in the evenings, and creating a database to track all of this. On a typical day I arrive at 9:00 A.M. or earlier and begin by responding to any program e-mails or calls from the day before. This continues throughout the day, but my primary focus eventually switches to sending and tracking correspondence to candidates at different stages of the application process. After lunch, I generally have some candidate screenings to complete, and then I work on building the database needed to house information on selected candidates and [on] completing data requests. Finally, at least once a week, I need to spend an evening assisting or presenting at an information session [at which] the public can get a rundown of the program and ask questions.”

PEERS

“The New Teacher Project does not have a ‘cohort’ of people that comes in every year.” As a result, explains one newbie, “there is not much first-job camaraderie here. However, everyone gets along great and tends to socialize with [one another] without the boundary of ‘this is my boss/employee.’”

The organization is also a magnet for extremely bright individuals; one first jobber writes, “It can definitely be a bit daunting at times, since everyone was clearly an honors student in the past. However, everyone cares about working together.” One employee sums up, “Each person in my organization could be working for a corporation, making a ton of money, but instead [we] choose to work toward this cause. I love going in to work every day!”

MOVING ON

Those who leave The New Teacher Project generally do so to attend graduate school or to “gain different experiences elsewhere.” There is a sense among some here that “there is not much room for growth, and sometimes there is not much interaction between different contracts,” both of which present situations that may thwart ambitious careerists in their efforts to advance. The average tenure of a first jobber here is two years.

ATTRITION

About ten percent of college-grad hires leave The New Teacher Project within twelve months of arriving. Some complain about the “uncertainty” arising from contract-based programs. “Due to the fact that we are often working with the delayed budgets and number projections common in the education world,” writes an entry-level employee, “we often have to pull together quickly once our goals are set.”

BEST AND WORST

Among the most successful first jobbers at The New Teacher Project is a woman who “began working as an intern on one of our contracts right after graduation from college. It was clear from the beginning that she was a quick learner and a hard worker and was really inspired by our goals and mission. She took every opportunity to help out when she could. As a result, we offered her an operations associate position in November of that year. In that position, we saw that she consistently produced high-quality work and was highly accountable for meeting her goals and the contract’s goals. One year later, she was promoted to recruiter in our largest contract, and less than a year after that, she was promoted to director of placement, [a position in which she was charged with] coordinating a placement process for approximately 2,000 newly-recruited teachers each year.”