Searching for a Teaching Position

1. Decide whether or not you want to apply for a teaching license in states in addition to Tennessee (suggested: in your home state and other state[s] in which you plan to seek a teaching position). Begin thinking about this now.

2. Research each state department of education’s website (go to www.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/licensure to see the Directory of State Departments of Education). Make a list of each state’s requirements (i.e., testing, application fee, forms to be completed [most states have one for Office of Teacher Licensure to complete for you], fingerprinting, etc.) Now is not too early to do this.

3. Determine the area of the state where you might want to teach, and the school system (s). (Each school system should have a website with detailed information about its schools.) Research the school system’s application process in terms of what needs to be done and the timing of submission of the application and beginning the interview process. Now is not too early to do this.

4. Check with the VU Alumni Office (322-3212) to ask about VU Connect and how you can make contact with VU alumni in the area(s) in which you’re interested who have offered to serve as a professional contact for fellow VU alumni. Now is not too early to do this.

   The Vanderbilt Career Center and VUconnect, Vanderbilt’s online community offer various career services to graduates including:

   - Commodore Career Connection: network with 13,000+ alumni worldwide through VUconnect online alumni community and volunteer to mentor fellow alumni and current students about your career path
   - VU Career Center Alumni Services: view and post job listings and check out upcoming career events

5. If you have family or friends in the areas of interest, make sure they know your plans to seek a teaching position there, and your timeline for readiness. Be sure to network in the schools you’re in now (both practica and student teaching). Let the Office of Teacher Licensure know if you want your name on a list, the Director can send your name to Metro’s HR. Now is not too early to do this.

6. If you have an opportunity to be in the area of the school system(s) during your breaks, take advantage of any opportunity to visit schools (introduce yourself/check-in at the main desk and ask for a tour of the school—take advantage of any opportunity to meet teachers or administrators). Take your resume and cover letter with you. Be sure to follow up your visit with a thank you note to any teacher or administrator you meet. Now is not too early to do this.

7. Order a set of transcripts from all college-level work for each state to which you will apply. Don’t open the transcript envelope so it will remain official. If you already have your bachelor’s
degree, now is not too early to do this. If you’re a VU undergrad, wait until mid-spring and be sure to specify “wait until degree is posted” when you submit the request for the transcript.

8. Send resumes and cover letters to school systems and schools that are of interest. Plan to make follow up contacts frequently to let them know you have not yet accepted a position, are still interested in the schools, etc. Keeping your name in front of the administrator will serve you well. Find out the system’s policies for requesting interviews with principals (or whoever employs teachers in the system). Find out who at the school actually does the interviews with teachers (it’s not always the principal). You COULD research addresses and names of principals, etc., now. Don’t expect, though, to get a response until late in the spring when principals have an idea about openings for the next year.

9. Determine which Peabody/A&S faculty or K-12 teachers you will ask to write recommendations. Wait until you’ve experienced student teaching mentoring to decide whom to ask.

10. Most states require a form (referred to above) entitled “College Recommendation” or “University Verification” that needs signature from a Dean of Education or a Certification/Licensure Officer. That form should be given to Office of Teacher Licensure to keep in your licensure file until program completion, at which time it can be completed and sent to you or to the state’s Department of Education. The form(s) may be given to the Office at any time.

11. Some states allow you to apply for a license when your eligibility is “pending.” Check state applications to see if there is a “pending” status you can use. If not, you will have to complete your program before you can actually apply for a license in the other state(s). Some principals won’t set up a formal interview with you until you at least have begun the process of applying for a license in the state where you’re seeking a position.

12. If you are scheduled for an interview and need formal verification of your progress toward licensure and/or Highly Qualified (HQ) status, let the Office of Teacher Licensure know so the Director can write the letter for you. The Director will first need confirmation from your program director that you are making successful progress toward program completion.

13. Within a few weeks after you have been recommended for licensure, you can track the processing of your license on the TN DOE website: https://www.k-12.state.tn.us/tcertinf. Your record there will show “pending” until the license has been issued, after which both the issue and expiration dates will be added. This website is open to the public and you may refer a principal or HR person to the website to confirm your status in Tennessee. Eventually, the website will detail your “Highly Qualified” (HQ) status, if you choose to complete the federal HQ request form during the required exit meeting the last Monday of the student teaching semester.

14. There is no limit to the number of state teaching licenses you can have at any time. Initial, full teaching licenses usually are valid for at least 5 years, but states are autonomous when it comes to licensing teachers. Be sure to inform yourself about expiration dates for the licenses you hold.
15. Please make a commitment to let us at Peabody know about your professional career. Please contact the Office of Teacher Licensure not only when you first become employed (whether in teaching or otherwise) after you leave us and then, throughout your professional life, please keep us updated whenever your status changes. As a student in a Research One university, you probably know how important data are to faculty. Particularly at this time with state and national accreditation requirements for data regarding teacher education programs, your help with keeping us updated about your professional career is more important than ever. Besides—the Peabody people who were contributors to your professional growth want to know what professional choices you make in your future! And always remember that the Peabody community will remain available for assistance whenever you need it and we can be of help!