

# Teaching at the Thomas Jefferson School

## Common Questions/Concerns

### **The Thomas Jefferson School (TJS):**

We are a mid-sized, bilingual (English-Spanish), private school located in the south-central region of Chile, on the coast. We have approximately 800 students, ranging from Baby School (2 year olds) to 12th grade. There are approximately 2 classes per grade level (in the upper grades) and no more than 25 students per class (in Chile class sizes are generally around 40). The school was founded in 1992 by Dr. Gregory Trzebiatowski who currently serves as the Headmaster and Rector of the school.

### **Work Schedule:**

Teachers are at school from 7:45 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. We use a 40 hour, Monday-Friday work week, which is different than most other institutions in Chile which use a standard 44 hour work week (including Saturdays). During the school year there are approximately 10 additional activities distributed over the school year (that works out to an average of one event per month), that you are expected to attend in the evening (7:00 p.m.), such as parent meetings, the English Show, the Chilean Independence Day Celebration, the Holiday show, Senior Graduation, etc. During the year teachers enjoy Winter break (approximately 12 days), Chilean Independence Day Break (the total number of days varies, but is usually 2 to 4 days off), and a variety of other national holidays. In October we have a big "Teacher Appreciation Day" Celebration, complete with a night out for dinner and dancing.

In terms of teaching time, a little over half of your hours are spent actually teaching in front of a class (compared to other schools where a 40 hour work week means 40 hours in front of a class). The rest of your time is for preparation (e.g. grading, uploading grades and information to the electronic platform, preparing presentations), and conducting parent meetings (when necessary). It is very important to be on-time with grading, planning, and other administrative tasks. We use an online platform and parents have access 24 hours a day during the school year.

***As the Department head***, you would also have time allotted for correcting evaluations, observing and evaluating teachers, and planning for and conducting the English Department meetings.

### **Living conditions:**

We offer a room in a rent-free apartment during your time as a teacher at TJS. There may be other roommates in the apartment during that time, depending on whether there are other foreign visitors or teachers that coincide with your stay.

You will need to cover the costs of your utilities and one-third of the "common living" costs (e.g. concierge, hall lighting). This amounts to approximately \$15.000 CLP per month.

The apartment is located near the bus route that can take you to school. There is a bus that will drop you off right in front of the school. It costs about \$500 CLP per ride and takes about 25 minutes (depending on traffic).

### **Salary and Benefits:**

The base salary starts at \$600.000 CLP per month (take home pay), and can increase according to education (preference English teaching degree) and experience, as well as for responsibilities (e.g.

Department Head). Additionally, the school pays the required taxes (retirement and health care, as well as bonuses). You may also opt into the collective supplemental health care insurance, which is subsidized by the school and gives significant discounts on doctor visits and prescribed medications.

In addition to your salary, you are also entitled to reimbursement of 1 round-trip airfare to and from the US per year, for up to 3 years, as long as you are working at TJS. The ticket will be reimbursed upon completing your annual contract.

While you will not become rich on this salary, it is enough to cover the costs of living in Chile and also leave you with pocket money for travel and recreation. Considering the rent-free apartment, this is above the average salary of a Chilean teacher.

**Start time:**

Teacher orientation begins the 3rd week of February, and *classes begin the 1st week of March*. If you would like to arrive a little earlier, to have time to get settled and rested, we can coordinate to get the apartment keys to you (this is during our summer break).

**Visa Requirements:**

In order to work in Chile you must obtain a Work Visa. There are 2 options for doing this, one is to go through the process prior to your arrival via the Chilean Embassy nearest to you. The other option is to arrive on a tourist visa (for a US citizen a tourist visa lasts 3 months) and apply while you are here through the foreign affairs office "Extranjería" in Concepción (most people do the latter; the process takes about 3 months). It is important that you understand that while you are waiting for the work visa you cannot be taxed for the health care system and pension system, so you should have your own health care coverage.

**Climate/Weather:**

Concepción is located on the coast at 36° South Latitude, it is similar in climate to northern California/Southern Oregon. During the winter months it tends to be dark and rainy for several days at a time, which can be difficult for some people who are affected by the rainy season and low light. During the summer it can be warm and dry (great for camping), but rarely hot.

**School Environment:**

Our school environment is very friendly and generally very well-behaved. The children are very nice and enjoy having a positive relationship with their teachers. One notable difference with respect to US classrooms is that Chilean students tend to be physically and mentally very active in the classroom (e.g. lot's of chatting and moving around), and they are a delight to teach when you capture their interest.

The English Department staff are very supportive of each other and most have many years of experience working at TJS. There are typically 5 people in the English department (2 from the elementary area, 2 from the middle/high school area, and 1 oral English teacher). The High School Staff (which is the level where you would be working) are quite a nice group. They are motivated and have lots of innovative ideas. The frequently organize get-togethers outside of school, and they are very participative in school events (like dress-up days for the school anniversary).

For a foreign teacher interacting with parents who are concerned about their child can be a bit intimidating, especially in a second language. We recognize this and work to support our foreign

teachers by helping them respond to parent emails, accompanying them in meetings whenever necessary, and offering strategies and methodologies to help deal with parents (e.g. "have thick skin and a calm disposition", maintain frequent contact with parents when their child needs extra help or is having behavioral difficulties, ask for your Area Head to accompany you in meetings when necessary, be very clear about expectations for evaluations, provide a rubric prior to evaluating).

**Interview Process:**

Our interview process consists in the following steps:

- Pre-selection of candidates based on CV and cover letter
- Initial contact with candidate to give more information about the job and conditions (email)
- Interview with Vicerrector of Academics or Associate Rector (via Skype or in person)
- Interview with Department Head and/or Area Head (via Skype or in person)
- Psychological interview and test (via Skype or in person)
- Meeting with the Headmaster (via Skype or in person)
- Final decision and offer to selected candidate