



Swiss Skiing in St. Moritz, Laax, and Andermatt



The ISS Recruiting Fair was in Atlanta, GA from Feb. 11-15, 2016

St. Sometimes *Newsletter*

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The Life and Times of an International Educator

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Am I qualified to teach overseas through ISS?

Earning a Top Position for Teaching at a AAA International School

So much to do, so little time. Completing the Swiss Experience before I leave.

I'm going to the desert again. The best thing about knowing where you are going next, is putting 120% into the job that you currently have. No more worrying about your future. Just paperwork for the next school while you whittle away what you own.

Skiing in Switzerland is World Class.

Living in Switzerland certainly helps. Let me introduce you to a few top places to ski in Switzerland. It took me two years to finally transfer into a skiing mode. It took me too long. (Story on Pg.8)

ISS ATLANTA - MY SIXTH INTERNATIONAL RECRUITING JOB FAIR

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Imagine the best case scenario... that was my 2016 Job Fair!

It's soon going to be time to move again. I participated in the most recent International School Services job fair and landed perhaps the most prestigious teaching position available at the fair.

Within this issue, I'll walk you through the step by step process as I experienced it. Let's just say it is all about networking, timing, and a whole lot of work. (cont. Pg. 2)



The Speed Dating Game for an International Teacher Contract

October - Preparing for the Fairs

Job fairs for International teaching start earlier every year. If you start in October with the following, you won't be running around looking for last minute requirements.

- * *Sign up for a Job fair. ISS, UNI, and Search are just a few available.*
- * *Notify your references now. Ask them to write a recommendation or fill out the online confidential for a fair.*
- * *Pay for TIE.online and see what's out there.*
- * *Update your CV*

Each of the job fairs has a document process and fee for joining. It's worth it to get all of your documents loaded up right away. Your goal is access to their job database and school information.

Once you have access, start taking notes and research the international schools out there. The job fairs post a lot of information for "newbies" about how the job fairs are run.

Some candidates get hired well before job fairs are held. It all depends on the amount of research you do, what you are looking for, and a little bit of luck/timing.

I did all of this the first week of October and signed up for the UNI and Atlanta ISS job fairs. Why? I really didn't know which one I would attend and I could benefit from their databases IF I LET THEM KNOW IN ADVANCE I WOULDN'T BE GOING.

The Week Before UNI

I bought tickets to Atlanta and notified UNI that I wouldn't be attending, three weeks before UNI. UNI didn't notify any of the schools, so the week before, emails started to flood in. Since I have such a strong CV, and techies are in demand right now, there must have been 20 schools asking me to interview with them at UNI. My job was to kindly respond and let them know I wasn't going to the fair. If, and only if, they were also signed up for ISS, I would also mention that I would be in the USA the following week. (notice, I ethically didn't mention the rival job fair)

My number one school this time around is Saudi Aramco, a group of six schools in Saudi Arabia that provide top education for the Aramco oil company. Matt and Stacy have been working for them since I moved to Switzerland and they love it. Did I mention they LOVE it? Saudi Aramco saw me on the UNI list and emailed me about a Skype interview!

During the five days leading up to the ISS fair, I had three hour-long interviews with Aramco schools. The head of schools, the principal, and vice principal all threw vicious questions at me. Questions that would determine if I was the quality fourth grade teacher they were looking for, the teacher that would stay ten years and change lives for the better.

Atlanta Here I Come

Have you ever emailed from 30,000ft in an airplane? I hadn't. But this time I paid for Delta's in flight access, a straight \$40. Not a bad deal considering Milan to NewYork was an eight hour flight.

Had I known the flight would be empty, I wouldn't have upgraded my seat to 13 - some kind of comfort level below business class with more leg room than coach. But it was still worth the cost.

I landed in Atlanta two hours late. The New York flight captain had pulled out of the hour-long line up for the run way and announced we had engine problems. Thankfully, after another hour on an adjacent runway, the mobile mechanics had visited us and preserved our flight. I landed safely in Atlanta just as the hotel restaurant was closing and had to settle for a bar hamburger.

Not in the ISS Job Fair

Now, if you read back into my newsletters to February 2012, you'll understand it when I say I am semi-famous at the ISS fairs. I woke up early on Friday and went downstairs to check in with the ISS registration. Surprisingly, ISS did not have me listed as a candidate. The rep at the desk says "Greg, what are you doing here? No matter, shoo! Go to the administrator sign up. It's going on right now. While you are there, I'll set up a mailbox and add you to the updated list of candidates! Go!"

I ran into Laura Light, the director of ISS Job Fairs, as I was walking the halls. Her eyes lit up and she said "Greg! What are you doing here?"

After explaining the situation, she simply said "Which school are you interested in? How can I help. Most of the school heads are at sign up. Go!" So I went.

For some reason, I really felt uncomfortable in the Administrator sign up. Sure, I was considered an Administrator candidate for IT, but I hadn't done a lot of research on other schools. (continued...)

The only school I was truly interested in besides Aramco was the International School of Grand Cayman. Emily had already talked with the school head (long story). So I went around the “Round Robin” Administrators sign up and found that school. I spent about ten minutes talking with Jeremy and set up an interview for noon in his hotel room/office. Since I felt estranged from my element, I left it at that. There were choices:

- * *Aramco might still be interested*
- * *I had a secure interview for IT at a good school*
- * *If those failed, the “round robin” started in the morning for regular candidates*

Choice #1 and #2 Materialize

On the way back to the Candidate’s room, I ran into Laura again. She was so excited about what was going on with me. Energetically, she asked “So? What’s going on? Tell me everything!” She’s the busiest person in a three mile radius and here she is, stopped dead in her tracks to help me.

I gave her a nutshell of my situation and she immediately went looking for John, the head of Aramco. (As I write this, I am still amazed at this woman!)

Per protocol, I stopped into the main ISS room to check my “mailbox”. I found a note from Aramco greeting me to the fair and asking how to get in touch with me. I shot off a quick email with my room number and cell number. My hopes started eclipsing.

Noon - Grand Cayman

Now remember, this is the day before the teacher candidate fair started. I was just there early because of my nature. I hadn’t even made the connection between my

status and the administrator pre-fair. During my interview with Jeremy, we had agreed on a time and place. His room at noon. I was sitting in the waiting chair outside of his room twenty minutes before noon. I was going through my paper CV and portfolio since he had probably not seen it yet. (Remember, I wasn’t even listed as attending.)

What a great interview. Jeremy was looking for an IT Director to keep his school growing. We traded questions and answers for an hour. He seemed genuinely interested but I left the interview knowing it would be at least until tomorrow before he had thoroughly vetted my credentials.

This was an important interview for me. There was a real chance that even after three interviews, Aramco wouldn’t hire me. I am glad that I spent them time with Jeremy. It seems like a great school.

On my way to check my “mailbox” for any communication from schools, I got a text from Tracey, the third Aramco hiring team member asking me to call. I just about dropped my phone. (it was a Minnesota number - funny)

She answered on the second ring. She asked me if I would be available for 6pm tonight. It was a problem because that was when the introduction meeting was for all candidates. I love going to these because all of the “newbies” are there asking questions to a panel of quest speakers, mediated by Laura. _____ said “Greg, that panel is really only for ‘newbies’ to the fairs. You have been to a lot of fairs.” I explained my intentions and she agreed that we would meet right after the panel discussion that night. I thought, “This could be it!”

At Your Service

One of my favorite aspects of a job fair is to help other candidates. So many random people helped me during my first job fair - at a point where I had absolutely no idea about job fairs, teaching, or interviewing

for an overseas position. Job fairs have always been a way for me to “pay it forward” and help other candidates.

I spent the afternoon drinking Chai Lattes, talking to more and more candidates, and going to school presentations. Each school was given a 30minute window to present and “sell” their school. I went to presentations about the International School of Rome, GEMS Academy in Abu Dhabi, the American School of Ecuador, and about four others.

In between the presentations, I camped out in the candidate room at a table. About six of us left our computers and materials at the same table for the entire day. One of us would stay, while the others ran off to presentations, checked their mailboxes, or interviewed. Talk about an emotional rollercoaster! At 5:45pm we all grabbed our stuff and headed up to the panel discussion. I stopped at the coffee counter and ordered my umpteenth chai.

The Panel Discussion

No wonder Tracey had agreed to push back my next Aramco interview. She was up on stage as one of the panel experts. Unbelievable.

This meeting should be required for all candidates, even if they have been to an ISS fair before. Each year, there is some small change in rules or additional technology. Laura explains the job fair process in detail and introduces the important ISS administrators in attendance. Then Laura invites all of the panel members to introduce themselves before opening up the floor for questions from the candidates.

This was my sixth job fair. I have been to UNI three times, ISS Bangkok, ISS San Francisco, and now Atlanta. The best topic I have heard at a panel meeting was at this fair. “Can you tell us a little bit about whether we need a drivers license in your countries and how to go about getting them if we do?” Golden.

Don't Take my Free Pen, Greg!

The Fourth Interview

About 7:20, I stood up to get to the Aramco room for the interview. I was a bit late, but I figured it would take Tracey a bit of time to get up there anyway.

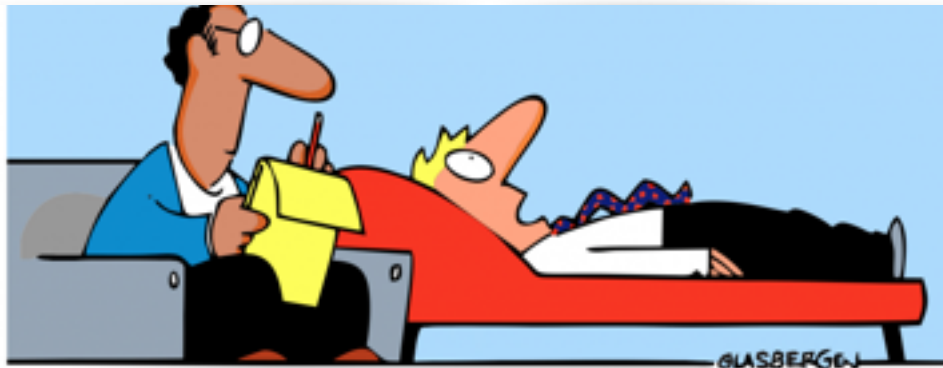
I turned around and there was John, the head of Aramco and Tracey's husband, sitting right behind me. He had his hand out and a big smile on

his face. "Hey Greg, can we just wait for Tracey before we head up to the room?" Of course I agreed.

We didn't get up to the room until about 8pm. Tracey was busy answering questions from candidates that were surrounding her.

When we got up to their corner suite, it was a mixture of extreme nervousness on my part, and warm friendliness on theirs. I really didn't

The whole reason the rep was here from Houston, was to get the paperwork in order. She got right into explaining the offer package in detail. I was intent on listening but I was continually wondering where this was going. I had already gone over the basics with the principal during the third interview and figured it was all procedure, leading up to more interviews. It went on for an hour before they left it in my court. "So, Greg, any questions?"



"I suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. Not from the war, from my last job interview."



Pens and Pencils

The ISS job fairs attract a few odds and ends advertisers. Any school that offers M.Ed. programs or overseas insurance tend to have tables on the way into the candidate rooms. The reps that go to conferences always bring handouts to advertise their companies. I know for a fact, that the reps don't like to haul all of the handouts back on the plane.

Every time I passed by the rep tables, I would take a pencil or pen. As the days went on, the reps started to joke around with me and remind me to take one. One lady even told me she would leave her remaining pencils in the ISS office for me. They are for my class! Score!

know where this was going. My guess was another series of interviews throughout tomorrow and the next day.

John mentioned that we were waiting for a finance representative to arrive and started asking about the fair and the trip. I started to feel more comfortable while we shared stories back and forth. I was telling them about collecting all of the handout pencils free pens from ISS when the financial rep entered. It was now three on one!



I simply said, "Yeah, what's the next step?" John's reply was, we want to hire you on..."

I honestly must have looked miffed because Tracey said, "so, Greg...". I looked at her and said "I was waiting for the 'but'."

John smiled and explicitly asked me to be a part of the team. I responded "Normally I sleep on a decision."

"But..." said Tracey, smiling.

"I've been thinking about this answer for the past week. Yes. I accept the 4th grade position."

John gave me an official SAES pen to sign my contract. Then he said "Give me back my free ISS pen, Greg."

I just landed a job from my first choice, on the first night of the fair.

At the Fair With Contract in Hand

I know from past experience, that early contracts can both hurt and give hope to other candidates. I decided to keep my early contract as quiet as possible. Remember, I was sitting in a room full of candidates on an emotional roller coaster. I have seen people break down psychically and physically, cry, fight with their spouse, almost pass out, and all of the opposite. However, the celebrations come a little later in the day or on day two.

This is a high stakes game. Candidates are making decisions that will affect them (and their families) for the next two or more years. In many cases, their current job is at stake. Many international candidates have already had to announce their decision for next year back in November.

I was one of the lucky ones in this respect. My current job in Switzerland was there for me when I returned if I wanted. I had secured a grace period to announce my final intention after the fair. Your job security overseas depends on your school and your personal situation. Yes, this is a high stakes dating game!

So I was quietly helping out candidates. I handed in my paper to ISS that stated I had a contract. You have to do this so ISS can take you off the "available" list for the schools. I sent emails and offered help to several people throughout the morning as they came and went from interviews. The coffee shop in the hotel lobby, upstairs, quickly learned my name and had a Chai Latte ready for me each time I stepped into line.

FACEBOOK! oh no!

Three hours later, I was up to four lattes. I went into the ISS room to show a candidate where the School Head mailboxes were, when one of the ISS reps handed me back my paper - the one where I had announced my contract to them.

She asked if I would hold it up. She took a picture and posted it on FaceBook. ISS celebrates signed contracts and mine was the first. She was flustered because when I handed it in, she had put it into a different pile, thinking I was handing in the paper with my room number and contact information on it. I was the first at the fair to land a contract. There goes my quiet reverence of landing a position.

Emily - Headmaster

Life comes in circles. I didn't think I'd see Emily (insert married name) Cave so soon again. She was at this fair to hire a slew of new Kindergarten teacher for a brand new ISS school in China.

I had found out via email just a day before leaving for Atlanta, so I

Celebrations in the Candidate Room Should be Considerate of the Emotional Roller Coaster



On my way back to the candidate room, I was stealing yet another pencil from a University table and someone slapped me on the back with a "Congratulations! I just saw it on FaceBook. Where are you going?" It was one of the other candidates that I had been helping.

And so I played the dangerous game of sitting in the candidate room. Every time someone came up to me at the table and congratulated me, I would quietly thank them and answer all of their questions.

brought her a Swatch Watch to celebrate her new Head of School position. I ran into her a few times during the fair and even had a chance to have a few drinks with her on the last night. It was great to see her! (and still a bit painful after all these years!)

My success gave me a lot of time to help others. I sent a teaching couple, currently teaching in Doha, to see Emily. She ended up hiring them. Another candidate I was helping, was struggling with several offers. I don't know if they hired her, but she was interviewing with Aramco too. I was biased and hoping she would be able to sign on with me. We'll see!

All in all, I never got to eat my steak dinner. I basically didn't make it out of the hotel where the fair was taking place. The only exception was a trip to the local mall to buy myself a victory present.

A job fair couldn't have gone better for me. If you want to know more about job fairs, you will have to read my upcoming book!

A Small World Story... Again

It was the last day of the job fair. I had helped out a lot of people and celebrated my new contract. John and Tracey were still working on candidates so I didn't get to have dinner with them. It was the third and last full day of interviewing so I decided to go shopping. I failed to mention there was a World Championship Cheerleading Convention at the hotel. I HAD to get out of the hotel. Three days straight was a bit much. Not to mention, I haven't been to the USA in a year and a half.

I strolled down to the Subway and found my way to the _____ mall. My first stop was a steak house, but I had to settle for Mexican and a beer instead. Where are all of the steak restaurants in Atlanta?



Next stop was the Apple store. It took just three minutes after entering before the Apple helper and I were standing at the Macbook Air table. As Ann entered in my credit information, she was politely asking me what brought me to Atlanta. I ended up explaining International teaching and the ISS job fair. She was genuinely interested (since the sale was finished).

All at once, the little old lady sitting across the table stopped playing with the MacBook Air on display and asked me how the fair had gone for me. It turned out, this was the wife of the ISS President. She was waiting for her iPhone to get fixed by a geek and had overheard my conversation!

My 4th iPad - The Pro

A celebratory gift to myself. I really wanted to see if my more artistic students would be able to use this monster (and the fancy stylus) for art.

Along with the keyboard, this full page sized iPad is a runner up for a laptop. Runner up for now. It's still not a replacement for the Mac. I am writing this newsletter in Pages on a Macbook Pro and still cannot imagine life without my MBP.





What do I Know?

I know I am impressed and really like my new superintendent and his wife. I know Matt and Stacey are there waiting. I know I am ready to make a lot of money. I know I am ready to teach with a professional staff that will challenge me to rise to my best. I know I'm gonna miss Switzerland.

The Saudi Aramco Expat Schools (SAES) are highly competitive to get into. I applied two separate times for two separate positions. It took me four different 1 hour interviews before I was offered a position to be a grade 4 teacher,

and that is with fifteen years of international teaching experience! This will be no cake walk. I know, based on the interview process, my new colleagues will be top in their fields. Going into this new position, I have the highest expectations I have ever had in a school environment.

How can I possibly leave beautiful Switzerland?

I know. I know. It sounds so crazy! I am leaving the most beautiful country in the world. That is my

point. "Therein, as the bards say, lies the rub!", my favorite quote from the movie *The Inside Man*. *Switzerland IS the most beautiful country. A beautiful place to live does not dictate my career choices. My current school offers a package that most teachers would accept in a heartbeat. But after working there for several years, it's time to leave. My intention was to spend three years in the classroom. At the end of those three years, unless I was offered a position in technology, my plan was to find another school. Enough said. I followed my plan. I know I'm gonna miss Switzerland.*

Getting into “Moving” Mode: still here but thinking about there



Landing Next Year’s Job in February is Great if You Handle it Right

There is so much to do, but I have a lot of time. There are a few golden Greg Rules to consider as I end my time here (Switzerland) and get ready for there (Saudi):

- * *120 % in the here and now job*
- * *don’t add, start the minimalist mindset*
- * *focus on what “They” need, stay in front of the Arrival Paperwork*
- * *Push for starting the Leaving paperwork*

I’ve done this before. I’ve succeeded in the past. The golden Greg Rules work. The first rule is listed first for a reason. I have to leave a job proud that I have done my best. So many times, I have seen leaving teachers in a shutdown mode. Things fall apart. Colleagues just say: “Oh, they don’t care. They are on their way out.” Not me. I don’t want anyone

to say that about me! This is my career. Things tend to follow you through a career.

I spent the afternoon in Lugano writing parts of this newsletter. On my way back, I stepped into a store and almost bought some cool pens for my upcoming students. I have no idea what kind of materials will be available. Almost fell into the “adding” trap. There is no sense in buying things for my new job until I have actually landed there and seen, first hand, what I will or will not have. Even little things like pens and pencils add up when you are packing a few suitcases of your life’s possessions. Every ounce of weight counts when you finally close that suitcase under the weight limit of the airlines. It’s not easy. Those were really cool pens! I bought one Left handed pen instead of the fifteen originally in my hand.

Can I Do That Here or do I Have to be Stateside?

Visas are the key here. Do I need to actually be in the states for a visa? I have started my visa process with SAES already. All of my paperwork is in, as so far as

the paperwork they have requested. Several sources have told me there is a mandatory trip to Houston for medical checkups, drug testing, and company paperwork. I asked during the interview process and sent an inquiry email, but no answer yet. It’s important for me to plan my summer.

My plan is to work at TASIS for the first part of the summer as the Robotics teacher. It would take me into the first half of July, when I plan on heading to Spain to see my niece, Lydia. She will be there on a school trip. Spain is just a hop and a skip away from Lugano. If I leave my few belongings in Switzerland, I can go see Lydia for a while before retrieving my stuff and flying to Saudi. The question remains. Can I arrange to fly from Lugano straight to Saudi?

It all depends on what SAES needs. TASIS has hired me for the summer program. If Saudi changes my plans, so be it. I’ll have to find a way. If I cannot teach for the summer and continue the Robotics that I started last year, so be it. I have the best intentions but the new contract comes first.

Keep your fingers crossed.



Swiss Skiing!

Middle School Skiing

Last year, I was sick two of the three trips for ski club. The final trip landed on one of my duty weekends. Nothing I could do about that.

This year, I let Tom Lil (Ski Club Leader) know that I wanted to be first on the list for dorm parents chaperoning trips. It worked.

We leave at 7am on a bus with a local Lugano ski club. Our MS students need a breakfast and wakeup call at 6:15. We bus anywhere from an hour to three hours to whatever mountain retreat has snow.

The kids ski all day in leveled groups with Instructors. The adults just tag along with a group. We return by 7pm.

Mountains surround us. Who would think that my first year here I wouldn't ski at all. "N.V.T.S. nuts!" (quote from *History of the World Part 1*) Perhaps I wasn't fully informed. Perhaps I just didn't know the right people. No matter. This, my final year, I have been skiing in three different modes: ski weeks, ski club with Middle School, and personal trips with the likes of Goldy.

Why didn't I just buy a ski rack and put it on the mercedes? Did I mention Sarah and Dumbass bought me out on the mercedes? They did. It made sense because we were about to pay a hefty bill for next year's taxes and a new set of tires. I still should have bought a ski rack. But Todd and Sarah don't ski. They want to. But it made a difference in what we put on the car. I'll let them keep the bike rack when I leave, but no ski rack played against the need to ski.

Here a Mountain, There a Mountain, Everywhere a Mountain

Within two hours of Lugano, by bus, there is a mountain to ski and a resort to take your money while doing it. Kim and I jump in her mini and just the other side of the Gothard tunnel is Andermatt. Head further north and you reach the world famous resorts Davos and St. Moritz. For anywhere between 65ChF and 125ChF a day, you can ride up heated chair lifts, gondolas that carry 100 people, and pay 8ChF for a Coca-cola.

There is so little time to really explore all of the ski resorts.



Laax, Klevenalpen, and Andermatt

Klevenalpen was the final trip of the year (above). The bus dropped us off in the green valley near the lake. Dressed for skiing back down, we all boarded the 100 person gondola and rode twenty five minutes up past the cloud line. It was breathtaking! The gondola was traveling at about a sixty degree angle. When we broke the cloud line, there was snow and sunshine to enjoy. Quite literally amazing.

I skied with the “expert” group led by LaLa. She is a Swiss law student for a day job. She spends her weekends as a ski instructor for the Lugano ski club. Lala is not easy to keep up with. The students really just wanted a “see you at the bottom” experience, so that is what Lala offered.

Weekend or Week

Luckily, Kim is a recent ski buff. She always needs someone to go skiing with her. No matter that she is a beginner. I still go skiing and have a relaxing day with her. Our day trip to Andermatt was a gem of day. We met up with Tanja and Mikaela, a former student.

The runs are basically blue beginner runs, at least where we were skiing. There might be more, but I am not the kind of skier that goes off on my own. If everyone else wants to stick to the blues, I stick with them.

If the sun comes out, all the better. Once in a while, there is snow-blind visibility. Yet, there were no other skiers to worry about.

The snow was fast. The runs were not easy. I’ve never had (to my memory) an official ski lesson. This was a real lesson. A swiss mountain with snow, long runs, gondolas, chair lifts, and sunshine. Add a beautiful Swiss woman as the instructor and I miss Switzerland already. I miss scuba diving, but skiing in Switzerland has been an excellent substitute.

