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Howard L. Simon Religious Liberty Project

February 25, 2014

John Wm. Covington, Chancellor
Education Achievement Authority
300 River Place, Suite 2300
Detroit, MI 48207

Re: Ensuring that teachers and students of all religious backgrounds are
welcome in the Educational Achievement Authority

Dear Dr. Covington:

A teacher called the American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan late last week to draw our attention to an Educational Achievement Authority (EAA) job announcement for preschool teachers. When the caller claimed that the EAA posting encouraged individuals to apply only if they could teach in a “Christian setting,” we thought it must be a crank call because surely no school administrator would think that it was appropriate to teach public school students in a religious setting.

However, much to our dismay, we learned that the caller was, in fact, correct. The job announcement for preschool teachers at Bethune School, Law Academy and Brenda Scott Academy clearly states:

Teachers are responsible for implementing a developmentally appropriate early childhood education curriculum in a Christian setting.


See job announcement attached as Exhibit A; also available at http://michigan.gov/documents/ea/Preschool_Teachers_441799_7.pdf (last accessed on Feb. 24, 2014).

There is no principle more fundamental to American public education than the requirement that schools be welcoming of all students and teachers regardless of religious or racial background. Our Constitution wisely requires schools to remain neutral in matters of religion. When a school favors one religion over another, or religion over non-religion, those students and teachers who do not subscribe to the favored religion are made to feel like they do not belong. As the Supreme Court has stated, “[s]chool sponsorship of a religious message is impermissible because it sends the ancillary message to members of the audience who are nonadherents ‘that they are outsiders, not full members of the political community, and an accompanying message to adherents that they are insiders, favored members of the political community.’” *Sante Fe Independent School District v. Doe*, 530 U.S. 290, 309 (2000), quoting *Lynch v. Donnelly*, 465 U.S. 668, 699 (1984).

I hope that you will respond to this letter by explaining that the use of the “Christian setting” language was somehow a mistake and that you will change the job description right away. Even if it was a mistake, however, we are distressed by how many EAA administrators and staff must have read the job announcement without thinking it was wrong or demanding that it be changed. Moreover, we wonder how many excellent teachers who are Muslim, Jewish or not religious read the job description and decided not to apply because they believed they were not wanted. Indeed, how many top notch teachers who are Christian decided not to apply because they thought it was improper to teach public school students in a religious environment?

Please write back to assure us that you will immediately post a new job announcement. The first step in any effort to improve public schools must be to create a welcoming, inclusive environment where all backgrounds are respected.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. J. Steinberg", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Michael J. Steinberg, Legal Director
American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan
2966 Woodward Avenue
Detroit, Michigan 48201
msteinberg@aclumich.org



Pre-School Teacher

The Education Achievement Authority of Michigan is a new statewide school system that is responsible for the lowest 5 percent of performing schools in the state of Michigan that are not achieving satisfactory results on a redesign plan or that are under an Emergency Manager. It is designed to provide a new, stable, financially responsible set of public schools that create the conditions, supports, tools and resources under which teachers can help students make significant academic gains. It will first apply to underperforming schools in Detroit in the 2012–2013 school years and will be expanded to include low performing schools throughout Michigan as new schools are assigned by the Michigan Department of Education.

JOB TITLE: Pre-school Teacher

REPORTS TO: Building Principal

SUMMARY

The EAA of Michigan is seeking a highly qualified and high effective lead Preschool Teachers in three of its direct run elementary schools: **Bethune, Law and Brenda Scott**. Teachers must have professional standards in working with children, parents and staff. Candidates should be familiar with State of Michigan Licensing Rules. Teachers are responsible for implementing a developmentally appropriate early childhood education curriculum in a Christian setting. Applicants must be able to communicate well with parents, co-workers and children. Additionally, applicants should be reliable, responsible, energetic and compassionate.

Duties and Responsibilities:

- Essential duties shall include, but are not limited to:
- Maintain a working knowledge of expected performance standards, especially related to child development and its integration within the early childhood curriculum and assessments, and systems utilized within the program.
- Maintain primary responsibility for the lesson planning, environment, data collection and record keeping associated with highest quality developmental/educational programming for the preschool aged children in his/her center based classroom.
- Maintain primary responsibility for the effective involvement of teaching team partners within the planning, provision, coordination, data collection and record keeping associated with highest quality early childhood center based programming.
- Conduct ongoing diagnosis, observation, and review of all children enrolled in the program; including documentation of such in CMS with ongoing anecdotal records for each child.
- Participate in Enrollment Screens
- Attend and implement Individualized Education Plan's as recommended by EAA Special Education staff.
- Meet with Early Childhood Specialists as needed to ensure quality programming for special needs students.
- Schedule four (4) parent/family activities with educational/literacy focus.

- State Pre-K teachers Schedule three (3) home visits and one conference in addition to initial conference at screening for the purpose of: 1) orienting the parent/child to the program, reviewing the child's and or family's needs, and assessing the developmental goals for each child; 2) discussing the child's developmental progress toward meeting specific goals and the essential outcomes for each child and to plan ways the parent can assist with learning; 3) evaluating the program with the parent and discussing placement for the following year. These will be conducted within the allotted time, and according to the outlined expectations, as defined within the annual program calendar.
- Maintain up to date progress documentation in CMS.
- Maintain an ongoing home-school communication system/newsletter that provides updates on classroom happenings/activities/lessons and relationships to essential outcomes.
- Coordinate the ordering and inventory of all supplies and special equipment for use in the classroom.
- Attend all staff meetings, trainings, and other scheduled program activities relevant to the child development needs of enrolled children.
- Assist in the ongoing monitoring and assessment of the entire program and provide input into the planning for continuous improvement.
- Design and/or assist in the development of required forms and/or record keeping systems and maintain files of required records, reports, and program information.
- Complete all required reports and records on time, and submit them on time and in a professional manner.
- Arrange for classroom facilities and substitutes as required.
- Work closely with the other preschool teachers and with the district kindergarten teachers in the coordination of philosophy, materials, and proper sequencing of skills development.
- Be responsible for the professional effectiveness of the classroom teaching team.
- Maintain a continuous updating of knowledge and experience related to early childhood best practices, child development stages, High/Scope, and other related areas.
- Maintain educational and health credentials and files as necessary.

Other Required Skills

- able to communicate effectively (language skills).
- ability to work with mathematical concepts (mathematical skills).
- able to define problems, collect data, establish facts, and draw valid conclusions (reasoning skills).
- physically able to successfully perform the essential functions of the job (physical demands). Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

Required Qualifications

- a valid Michigan teaching certificate with an Early Childhood Education (ZA) or Early Childhood-General and Special Education (ZS) endorsement; or
- a valid Michigan teaching certificate with a valid child development associate credential (CDA); or

- a bachelor's degree in child development or early childhood education with specialization in preschool teaching. The transcript will document a major, rather than a minor, in child development.

FILING DEADLINE:	Posted until filled
SALARY:	Commensurate with experience.
LENGTH OF WORK YEAR:	220 days pro-rated based on number of days after being hired
EFFECTIVE DATE:	Immediately

METHOD OF APPLICATION:

All interested candidates should submit a letter of application and current resume to:

Dr. H. MiUndrae Prince
Associate Chancellor, Human Capital, Equity and Accountability
Education Achievement Authority of Michigan
300 River Place, Suite 3600
Detroit, MI 48226
by e-mail to mprince@eaaofmichigan.org

Candidates may also send resumes directly to building principals.