Frequently Asked Questions- Teaching at PCI

*What is the contract length if I would like to be a teacher at PCI?*

A contract goes from the beginning of September to the end of June the following year. It is for one school year, about ten months. If teachers wish they may choose to extend their contract for another one or two school-year contract, but this is not a requirement.

*What does a daily schedule look like?*

School starts at 8:30AM and teachers and staff are expected to be there at 8:00AM. The entire student body follows the same bell schedule and they take seven different classes each day. The classes range from 50 to 55 minutes in length. There is a 20-minute recess break between the second and third period. Lunch is 35-minutes and it occurs after fifth period, at 1:05PM.

There is a lunch lady that offers a plethora of snacks to students and staff at recess for 2-3Q. She also offers lunch for 15Q.

*Are teachers given a curriculum to follow?*

At PCI we follow the Common Core State Standards for curriculum. Teachers are given the books they need to teach, but are free to implement their own curriculum. PCI uses a variety of textbooks from multiple companies.

*Does PCI offer supplementary teaching materials?*

PCI has a small library and a computer lab. The PCI Wi-Fi is readily accessible and a projector always available for lessons if needed. PCI provides all of the basic school and office supplies you need, and you may also make requests for other supplies to the front office throughout the year. Some teachers bring specific items they want for their classrooms, including bulletin board materials, books, or videos, but are never required to bring their own supplies.

*How many classes does a PCI teacher teach daily?*

In the 2014-2015 cycle, each core teacher taught five classes twice per week and four the other three school days. This leaves two or three planning periods per day. In addition each teacher is expected to attend weekly teacher meetings and monthly all-staff meetings.

Non-core teachers teach one or two classes twice per week.

*Do you have to be a certified teacher to teach at PCI?*

At the moment, certification is not necessary to be a teacher at PCI. PCI has successfully worked with teachers from a variety of backgrounds and majors. However, preference is given to
candidates who have teaching experience or a teaching certificate. All teaching candidates must have a Bachelor’s degree.

**Do you have to be fluent in Spanish to teach at PCI?**
No. PCI follows a strict English Language Immersion program, and, as such, teachers are expected to only teach in English. The exception is Spanish class and some other afternoon classes, e.g. physical education, Kaqchikel, Dance, etc.

**When does the interview and hiring process begin at PCI?**
Teacher candidates are encouraged to apply whenever they are interested in teaching at PCI. Starting in January and going through the end of February, administration will know which teaching positions will and will not be available for the following year. This information is posted on the school’s website and is updated often. During this time, administration will also start interviews (usually over the phone), and will begin offering contracts.

**What compensation is provided to PCI teachers?**
Teachers receive a living stipend, which should cover housing, food, and, for some, even allows for a little traveling.

**Are there times during the school year when teachers may travel?**
Teachers may travel whenever there are no classes. There are various holidays, including Guatemalan Independence Day, All Saints Day, Thanksgiving Weekend, Christmas Break, and Holy Week, and Guatemalan Labor Day. Teachers often use their weekends and holidays to explore Guatemala and the rest of Central America. A few hot spots include Belize, El Salvador, Mexico, and places closer to Panajachel such as Xela, Rio Dulce, or Montermino. There is so much to do and see here!

**What are the demographics of PCI?**
For the 2014-2015 academic cycle, the student body of the school is 69% of Guatemalan decent and 31% international (16% United States Citizens and 15% Citizens of other countries). Our core teachers are generally American, Canadian, or from the United Kingdom, while our supplemental teachers are for the most part Guatemalan.

**Living in Pana: FAQ’s**

**How does banking work?**
Upon their arrival, teachers may decide if they want to open a bank account at the local BAM branch. This will require some time and paperwork. For the most part, teachers receive their checks and cash them. It is relatively easy to change dollars into quetzals and you can use American Debit/Credit Cards in any ATM.
What is the climate like?
Panajachel has the best weather on earth. The local weather is not hot and humid, but rather temperate and breezy. The temperature is rarely falls below 10°C (50°F) and almost never goes over 25°C (77°F). This is due to the high altitude of Panajachel’s location. During the months of May and June and August through November Panajachel experiences rain daily. The rain starts in the afternoon and stops in the evening.

What clothes should we pack?
- A rain coat and rain boots for the rainy season. (You can buy an umbrella here)
- A warm jacket for the dry season. (Some teachers also bring a hat and mittens)
- Warm pajamas, as houses here do not have heating.
- Summer clothes and swimsuits for traveling.
- 1-2 formal outfits for dinners, birthday parties, graduation, etc.
- Shoes comfortable and durable for a lot of walking and rain.
- Shoes for hiking.
- Clothes for teaching. At PCI, the faculty and staff dress casually, however always within the dress code. Jeans and a collared shirt are generally acceptable for men and women. Modesty is expected in teacher dress. (Skirts that go to the knee, shirts with straps that are at least three inches wide, close-toed shoes.)

Do teachers need to find their own housing? Where do teachers live?
Teachers do need to find their own housing, however will receive help from the school and community when they arrive. Teachers may live wherever they desire as long as they are able to make it to school at 8AM every school day. The prices of furnished apartments vary widely but are usually between Q2, 000 to Q2, 500 per month. Electricity and water is often included in the cost, depending on the place.

What kind of medical attention is available?
The school has several doctors and dentists that we recommend. Most medications are available at pharmacies without a prescription, but you will need to know the generic name rather than just the brand name. Not all drugs are available here, so it is wise to bring your own specific prescriptions.

What shots or immunizations are required to teach in Guatemala?
There is nothing that you need to get to be a teacher here. It is recommended by the North American Public Health officials that you are up to date on your Tetanus-diphtheria (Td or dT), meales-mumps-rubella (MMR), and polio boosters. They also recommend Hepatitis A and B series.
Do I need a special adapter for my electronics?
You do not need an outlet adapter for personal electronics that you bring. Curling irons, straighteners, and hairdryers are more expensive to buy here, so we recommend bringing your own if necessary. Most teachers bring personal laptops and iPods. It is generally safe to have these items, however it is not wise to flaunt them. The school has plenty of Mac computers for teachers to use in their off periods as well.

How can I access the internet?
We have wireless Internet on the entire school campus. Most homes come with an internet service that you can pay for on a monthly basis. Internet cafes are abundant and it costs approximately Q3/hour.

Can I get a cell phone?
Almost every teacher buys a pre-paid cell phone. Simple phones are about $25. You can either purchase a monthly plan or buy minutes that you add to your phone.

How do I send and receive mail/packages?
We can receive mail and packages. The national mail system for Guatemala is not very reliable and is only safe for postcards and letters, so make sure you don’t send anything of value, especially cash or checks. It can take up to one month for delivery. If you want to have something sent through this system, here is the address:

Panajachel Colegio Internacional
02 Avenida 04-33 Zona 1, Barrio Norte
07010 Panajachel, Solola, Guatemala

What is transportation like?
Panajachel is a very small town and, thus it is very walkable. It takes 20 minutes to get from one side of town to the other. In addition, there are “tuc-tucs” everywhere that charge 5Q to get you from any one place to another.

Is Panajachel a safe place to live?
Though a few teachers have been the victims of some petty crime, Pana is generally a safe place to live. Using common sense and being cautious will save you from most problems with crime: Don’t walk alone at night, don’t carry a lot of cash, and be wary of strangers.

What should I be sure to pack?
- A good Spanish/English dictionary
- Extra cash for when you come, as the first month can be financially tight.
- Rain boots, rain jacket, and a warm jacket
Most teachers bring their own laptops down for work purposes