

Troops to Teachers

Getting Started



So, now that you've decided to teach as a second career - how do you get there from here? This may help you "get started."

Note: If you have a couple of years to go before you will actually retire/separate, now is the time to get started. Many certification programs can take as much as two years to complete. Plan ahead and start now!

I. Basic decisions

- Find out if you really want to be a teacher.
 - If you have not been in a public school classroom within the last 2-3 years, you don't really know what you are getting into. Before you invest a lot of time and money, find out the extent of the challenge involved in being a teacher in the public school system.
 - Get in a classroom and see if you "fit" by visiting, volunteering or even teaching on an informal basis. **This concept cannot be overemphasized!!**
 - Many on-line sites offer suggestions about how to be an effective substitute teacher. Search for "substitute teachers" using Internet search engines to locate ideas and tips.
 - Meet with a school principal and request a working relationship with a teacher in a specific subject area.
 - Once you've tested your resolve in an actual classroom setting and find that teaching is still for you, refine your goal into a definite plan of action.
- *Decide what state you want to live and teach in.* At the very least, narrow your decision down to two states. Remember that certification programs and requirements vary greatly from state to state. You don't want to waste your time certifying to teach in one state and then change your mind after investing all of that time and effort!
- *Decide what city or town you want to live in.* Consider your personal preferences as to population density: urban vs. suburban vs. rural, etc. You will want to find out what school districts and learning institutions are available to you in your new home. At some point you will have to take classes to complete requirements for a certification program. Check out driving distances!
- *Practical-personal issues to consider:*
 - Availability of teacher preparation programs: Some states have programs requiring less credit and time in the classroom.
 - State residency: You may have to pay out-of-state tuition rates for college credit.
 - Financial support: Some states offer free tuition for returning military if they are residents (normally based on residency at the time of enlistment).
 - Availability of jobs: Not just teaching jobs for yourself, but job potential for your spouse.
 - Cost and availability of housing.
 - Tax liabilities: State personal income tax, high property taxes, etc.
 - Availability of medical support: Are there hospitals within easy driving distance?
 - Closeness to family: Many military personnel have aging parents that may require frequent visits.

- Personal interests and hobbies: Boating, fishing, shopping, hiking, movies, dining, etc.
 - Decide what you want to teach.
 - Select a subject area, for example, English, history, vocational education. Keep in mind that **Math, Science and Special Education** remain the subjects in greatest demand.
 - Select a teaching level (elementary, middle school, high school).
 - What certificate will you pursue? Teaching certificates are issued by the states generally by subject area and level, such as high school math, middle school science or elementary school, or grades K-6. A general decision is sufficient at first, such as math at the high school level. However, this may have to be refined further, such as Calculus at 11-12th grades. Math, Science and Special Education are the subjects with the greatest demand. Make this decision from a lifetime career standpoint – make sure your choice will lead to adequate employment opportunities.
 - Remember: Not all states have all types of vacancies. Consider more than one state to improve your odds.
 - Depending upon your educational background, job experiences, and a school district's needs, you might be able to obtain an emergency certification to teach while you work on a permanent certification. Do not underestimate your qualifications. Also, if you worked in a technical specialty during your previous career, you may wish to look at certification in a vocational field. Requirements for this type of teaching are based more on skill levels than college degrees. This does not mean an absence of required academic credit; the academic part comes into play after the skill level in consideration.
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II. Start gathering information:

- *From the State TTT Office or State Department of Education in which you want to teach:*
 - Acquire a current teaching pay scale for your state of choice. Obtain specific district pay info as needed. You may not be able to live on the starting pay!
 - Information on positions available in the area you plan to move to and how to find out about job vacancies.
 - Information on positions available in the area you plan to move to.
 - Get a listing of all of the school districts available in your new home area.
 - For information about a specific state, try searching "state education office" using Internet search engines.
 - Contact your [State TTT Office](#) for additional help.
- *From the state certification agency, obtain:*
 - Detailed information on types of certificates available: including substitute teaching.
 - Specific state requirements for the type of teaching certificate you want.
 - Information on what type of transcript will be required to perform an evaluation of your educational background.
 - Find out what the evaluation will cost.
 - Find out how long it will take to complete the evaluation.
 - A listing of educational institutions in the state which have approved teacher preparation programs.
 - Information on "alternative teaching certificate" if it is available in the state you have contacted. This is a certificate a local education agency can issue to an individual as a full time teacher without previously being certified to teach. Some states call alternative options "provisional or emergency certification or internships."

- *From the Chamber of Commerce:*
 - Quality of life information about the area you plan to move to including maps, lists of businesses, schools, malls, etc. Your local Chamber of Commerce can also provide contact information for the chapter in the area in which you plan to live.
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III. Research basic job vacancy potential

- Throughout the process, keep accurate records.
 - Persons you have contacted.
 - Which offices you have contacted.
 - Phone numbers, fax numbers and email addresses.
 - Dates on which actions were completed (or promised).
 - Examine the job potential to better identify what certification you might pursue.
 - Introduce yourself to the district (1) in person if at all possible, (2) by phone, (3) by letter or (4) by email.
 - Introduce the TTT program, emphasizing the maturity, life experience, training, and motivation of participants. If the district is not aware of the program have them contact us at 1-800-231-6242.
 - Inquire about current and future positions available.
 - If you are interested, ask about substitute teaching positions and pay.
 - Follow up contacts with a thank you letter.
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IV. Start gathering basic college/university certification program info

- Ask the institution for the details of their program(s):
 - Are the courses offered at times when you can attend?
 - Cost per credit hour for tuition.
 - Cost and type of fees.
 - Average time needed to complete the program.
 - Transcripts and records needed to apply to the program and application procedures.
 - Is there a POC on the campus familiar with the TTT program?
 - Financial aid available for potential teachers.
 - **Note:** Certification program costs and completion times will vary. When possible, compare and contrast all of the institutions available in your area before making a final commitment.
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V. Now take these actions:

- TTT has a network of more than thirty [TTT state offices](#) covering forty-four states. Contact them first for advice and review your decisions with the applicable TTT state office.
- Have your transcripts evaluated by the appropriate office at your institution of choice.
- If you have decided which program to attend, sign up!

- If you are already a registered TTT participant, complete your stipend application. This includes informing us as to what program you are attending, when it starts, ends, type of certification you will obtain, at what level (elementary, secondary, middle) etc. We will put this information into your file for potential employers to review.
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VI. For personnel still in the Service

- If you want to get started right away and you have sufficient time to take courses needed to fulfill some portion of the requirements for your program, and you are not in the same state as the institution which will be granting your final certification, you should:
 - Work with your education center or Navy College counselor to develop a course of action and a degree plan. If already a degree holder, develop a plan to become certified in desired subject and level. **Note:** Holding a degree in education does not necessarily equal teacher certification.
 - Investigate education-related programs available from institutions serving your installation.
 - Carefully coordinate and document all course work. Insure that all of your acquired credit will transfer to the institution in the state to which you plan to move.
 - Before signing up and paying for courses (in your current state) have the degree or certification granting institution in the state to which you are moving validate the transferability of credits toward your program.
 - Have the institution provide you with written documentation, with the appropriate official's signature.
 - Don't waste time and money on courses that will not help you to complete your program!
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VII. Some Final Thoughts

- Do the research necessary to become a teacher before “jumping into” a degree program or course of studies.
 - Seek resolution of any unsolved problems with the TTT home office in Pensacola.
 - Keep good notes/records of everything related to your pursuit.
 - Good luck in your endeavor!
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