

**The Georgia Troops-to-Teachers Program:
Helping To Staff Georgia's Public Schools**

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The purpose of the Georgia Troops-to-Teachers program is to recruit men and women who have served the nation as members of the Armed Forces, and who are seeking second careers, into Georgia's public schools system as teachers. The Troops-to-Teachers program was originally established in 1994 as a Department of Defense (DOD) initiative. The United States Department of Education (USDOE) and the DOD have joint responsibility for the program. The Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES) manages the daily operations of the Troops-to-Teachers program from their home office in Pensacola, Florida.

The goal of the Troops-to-Teachers program is to assist in the improvement of American education by providing mature, motivated, experienced, and dedicated teachers for the nation's classrooms. The program has three main objectives: (1) To help relieve teacher shortages, especially in math, science, special education and other high needs subject areas; (2) To provide positive role models for the nation's public school students; and (3) To assist military personnel to successfully transition to teaching as a second career (Department of Defense, 2002).

Troops-to-Teachers' funding has been appropriated for fiscal year 2002 (FY02) to provide financial assistance to eligible teacher candidates. Eligible service members may receive federal funding (1) to help them meet state certification and education requirements as teachers and (2) for agreeing to teach in "high needs" schools. Funding may be provided in the form of a stipend of up to \$5,000 to help pay for state teacher

certification costs, or a bonus of up to \$10,000 to teach in a high needs school. Placement assistance and referral services are available to help participants identify employment opportunities and teacher certification programs (Department of Defense, 2002). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 provides for the continuation of the Troops-to-Teachers program through FY06.

Troops-to-Teachers' state support offices have been established in 25 states to assist participants with certification requirements and employment leads (Department of Defense, 2002). The Georgia Troops-to-Teachers' office is located in Atlanta at Two Peachtree Street, Suite 6000. It is a unit of the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GAPSC). The Georgia Troops-to-Teachers web site contains announcements and information on state teacher job vacancies, upcoming job fairs, the GAPSC, and alternative certification programs.

The national Troops-to-Teachers web site provides information and resource links to help participants make a transition into public school education, in addition to outlining program eligibility guidelines. The national Troops-to-Teachers web site includes a job referral system that allows participants to search for job vacancies across the United States, as well as provides examples of successful résumés and other pertinent information. It is also linked to the state Departments of Education for all 50 states.

Currently, Troops-to-Teachers has assisted in the transition and placement of over 4,100 veterans into public school systems across the nation. Over 200 of these individuals are teaching in the state of Georgia. There are currently over 3,000 prospective teachers listed on the Troops-to-Teachers national database. Five hundred of

these individuals have indicated Georgia as one of their top three choices for location of employment.

Troops-to-Teachers participants come into public school education with a wide range of experience, unique backgrounds, leadership skills, and maturity that can be valuable in their new career. A national survey conducted by the National Center for Education Information (NCEI, 1998) showed the participants to be diverse, with nearly three out of 10 (29%) being an ethnic minority. In regards to gender, nine out of 10 (90%) of participants are male. This is in sharp contrast to the United States public school teaching workforce that is overwhelmingly female. Troops-to-Teachers candidates are also teaching at grade levels and in subject areas where there is the greatest demand (e.g., 45% are teaching at the secondary level; 35% at the middle/junior high school level; 20% at the elementary school level; 29% teaching mathematics; 8% teaching biology; 5% teaching chemistry; 3% teaching physics; 8% teaching physical sciences; 11% teaching general special education; and 7% teaching emotionally disturbed students).

In support of efforts at the national level, Georgia is implementing its own plan to facilitate individual's transition from the military to the classroom. The state has appointed a Troop-to-Teachers Program Manager to link veterans with and facilitate entry into alternative teacher preparation programs. The Program Manager visits each of Georgia's six major military installations monthly to meet with and counsel potential candidates for the Troops-to-Teachers program. These are exceptional men and women who chose to spend the majority of their adult lives protecting America's freedom in the military and who now have decided to help build and protect our future by working in the

classroom. They are a great source of potential teachers, role models, and mentors for the next generation of American leaders.

For further information on the Troops-to-Teachers program in Georgia, call Bill Kirkland at (800) 745-0709 or (404) 657-9055.

References

- Department of Defense/Department of Education (retrieved 2002, June 26). Troops-to-Teachers Program Overview. [online]. Available: <http://voled.doded.mil/dantes/ttt/overview.htm>
- National Center for Education Information (retrieved 2002, June 26). Profile of Troops-to-Teachers. [online]. Available: <http://voled.doded.mil/dantes/ttt/survdata.htm>