



Troops to Teachers



Reservists and Guard members serve again with funding for certification.

By Sara Graves



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Louise Paradis, a Lt. Col. in the New Hampshire Air National Guard, relied on her military training when she started teaching computer programming and business information technology at Dover High School in 2004.

“That first year was tough,” said Paradis, a 24-year Guard veteran. “It was rewarding and challenging at the same time.”

After 2-1/2 years, Paradis was asked to head up the 22-member career technology department.

Paradis said her success could be credited to her “whole military background, being organized and being disciplined.”

“The experience in the military is a huge plus going into the classroom,” she said.

She also credits her success to the mentoring she received as part of the Troops to Teachers (TTT) program, a federal program that helps service members become teachers in their second careers.

Five years after she started teaching, Paradis was named the 2009 program Teacher of the Year for New Hampshire. “It was a great honor, and very humbling,” she said.

Military members that are in the TTT program are “making a conscious decision to teach,” said Peter E. Peters, Assistant Chief of the Troops to Teachers program. “They don’t need another job. They want to serve again.”

TTT helps eligible service members obtain teaching credentials to teach in all areas, particularly high-need subjects such as math and science.

Participants can use the program for its counseling and referral services and its financial assistance.

Under current program requirements, those eligible for the TTT elementary and secondary school teacher counseling and referral services must meet the following criteria:

Service Requirements: Active duty or Selected Reserve component personnel who:

- retired or separated with six or more years of creditable service toward retirement on or after Oct. 1, 1990, or
- separated with a service-determined physical disability on or after Jan. 8, 2002 and registered within four years after separation, or
- current members with six or more years of creditable service toward retirement. The last period of service must be classified as honorable.

Educational Requirements: Participants must hold a baccalaureate or advanced degree from an accredited institution at the time of registration and in a teacher certification program or licensed as a teacher for referral in that subject, or have the equivalent of one

year of college courses and six years of experience in a vocational or technical field.

Participants, according to eligibility and available funding, may also be eligible to receive a stipend of up to \$5,000 to help cover teaching certification costs. In order for a Guard and Reserve member to receive financial assistance, they must meet one of the four requirements below:

- RC-1: Retired from the Selected Reserve.
- RC-2: Currently serving in the Selected Reserve with 10 or more years of credible service toward retirement and commit to serving an additional three years, or until eligible for retirement.
- RC-3: Separated from the Selected Reserve due to a service-determined physical disability on or after January 8, 2002 and register with TTT within four years of separation.
- RC-4: Individuals transitioning from active duty on or after January 8, 2002, and have served six years on active duty immediately before separation,



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and commit to three years with a Selected Reserve unit. Those eligible must register with TTT within four years of separation.

TTT financial assistance can come in the form of a stipend or bonus.

Up to \$5,000 in stipend money can be used for any costs incurred in the pursuit of teacher licensure and certification. To be eligible for the stipend, the recipient agrees to teach for three years in a “high-need” school district, which is a district with “a poverty rate of at least 20 percent or at least 10,000 poor children;” or a school district where at least 50 percent of the students are eligible for the free or reduced lunch program, or has a high percentage (13.5 percent in 2010) of its students with disabilities, so long as the school district has between 10 and 20 percent of its students come from poverty-level families. Current teachers who may benefit from a TTT stipend include those not yet certified, those pursuing a new endorsement in an additional subject area, or those moving from one state to another who must complete additional certification requirements to remain employable.

In lieu of the stipend, eligible TTT participants can choose to receive a \$10,000 bonus. In return, participants agree to teach for three years in a high-need school district. To be considered high need, ten percent of a district’s students must come from families living below the poverty level. These new teachers must teach in a school where 50 percent or more of its students are eligible for the free or reduced lunch program.

Alternatively, Guard members and re-

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servists who have experience a break from teaching for a year or more due to a deployment may also qualify for a \$10,000 TTT bonus if they meet the program's eligibility requirements and return to a teaching job that meets certain high need criteria, so long as they have not previously received financial assistance from the program and they agree to continue teaching for three years in a qualifying high-need school. Teachers

should complete the TTT online registration process before deployment. Those who think they may qualify due to a previous deployment should contact their state or regional TTT office.

"If you think you might like to be a teacher, go ahead and register," Peters said. It will allow you to take advantage of the good things that might come up (in the program). There is no obligation by registering. The only obligation you

have is if you take the funding."

"It's one of the best kept secrets," said retired Guard sergeant Robert DeRosa, currently a teacher at Cambridge Public School in Massachusetts. He received a TTT stipend to help him get started as a math teacher.

"Not too many people know about the program and what it can do," DeRosa said. "Being a teacher, you affect kids' lives. That's priceless." **AF**

Post 9/11 TTT Enhancement Act

A bill approved by the U.S House of Representatives and currently before the U.S. Senate would reduce Troops to Teachers requirements for service members who are seeking a second career in teaching.

The Post 9/11 Troops to Teachers Enhancement Act introduced by Congressman Joe Courtney (D-CT), Congressman Tom Petri (R-WI), Senator John McCain (R-AZ) and Senator Michael Bennet (D-CO) reduces the length of military service requirements to include any service member who has served at least 90 days of continuous active duty since Sept. 11, 2001. For those who have not served 90 days since 9/11, the bill reduces the active duty requirement from six years to four.

"Troops to Teachers has requested that both active duty and reservists should be eligible for the same benefits after four years of service," said Joe Morgan, regional director for TTT.

The Act also expands the number of school districts for which service members may receive a stipend to teach in to any school that is in a district that receives Title I funds.

In addition, the Act creates an advisory board to help direct the program and authorizes \$50 million annually for the program for the next five years instead of the currently approved \$30 million a year.



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