



Troops to Teachers

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9/30/2009 - **ELLSWORTH AFB, S.D.** -- Regional representatives for the Troops to Teacher's program visited here September 29 to discuss a teaching career with interested Airmen.

The program is designed to easily transition military members into the classroom, while assisting with the nation's demand for educators.

TTT does this by helping connect individuals with information, institutions and people who are able to help participants meet state licensure and certification requirements, and locate a teaching position, according to LeRoy Graub, Lewis and Clark Region Troops to Teachers program manager.

But TTT isn't simply a recruitment program to put teachers in classrooms. While the end result is a qualified teacher shaping young intellects, another goal is to place educators in schools where quality teachers aren't the easiest commodity to obtain.

"The mission [of TTT] is to help recruit quality teachers for schools that serve students from low-income families by assisting eligible military personnel to transition to a new career as public school teachers," said Mitch Richter, South Dakota TTT area representative.

However, one does not have to teach in a "high needs" school, defined as a school district having a 10 percent poverty level or 50 percent of the students participating in free and reduced lunch programs, to qualify for TTT.

"One of the biggest things we do is fight a wrong perception many have about Troops to Teachers," said Mr. Graub. "Many people think you have to teach in a poor or crime ridden school and that's simply not the case."

Mr. Richter agreed.

"They can apply to any school or district that has openings," he said.

However, perspective teachers could do well to consider teaching at a special needs school.

A stipend of up to \$5,000 is available to help defray the costs of earning a teaching license if a candidate commits to teach three years in a qualifying district. An award of up to \$10,000 can be received as a bonus if a teacher commits to teach for three years in a high-needs school.

Mr. Graub said TTT can refer a candidate to the state of their choice, which will explain the certification process.

TTT representatives will also advise a student on where to steer their academic coursework and assist in fitting the right degree for a military student interested in becoming a teacher. The program provides information and avenues for Airmen to obtain state certification, which all states require to teach professionally.

Some states have accelerated programs which can have someone with a degree and military training in a classroom sooner than someone taking the traditional education routes.

"Realistically, if the troop has a degree with a major in the field he wants to teach, it should take three semesters to earn the teaching certificate, including student teaching. Some programs, such as Project Select at Black Hills State, take as little as 10-months," Mr. Richter said.

Mr. Graub added that most programs for traditional students, without the advantages offered to military students through TTT, can take on average anywhere from 18-months to two years.



Troops to Teachers logo

Programs like Project Select and others fill the critical square of "student teaching" most states require before a prospective teacher can become state certified.

"Student teaching gives you practical, hands-on experience and is one of the most important things you can have on a student transcript," Mr. Graub said.

Mr. Richter said ideally, a military member should start networking with the TTT program two to three years from separation or retirement and they can help with finding a job.

"Job hunting advice is part of the [TTT] advising package," Mr. Richter said. "In addition, we make vacancies in our states visible on our Web site and through e-mails announcing the positions."

Mr. Graub said it's important to remember TTT isn't a hiring agency, but they will assist with every step they can in the hiring process.

"It's up to you to get the interview and get hired in the school," he said. "But, we'll help get you there."

More information on TTT can be obtained at the official Web site at www.proudtoserveagain.com or by calling the regional office at (866) 478-3224.