

TROOPS TO TEACHERS: Service members utilize program to help get jobs in classrooms

Have you ever considered putting the skills you've acquired defending your country back into action serving again as a teacher? If your answer is yes, then you owe it to yourself and your country to contact your state Troops to Teachers Program coordinator to find out the details of becoming a guide and role model for America's future generations.

Established in 1994 as a Department of Defense initiative and later written into the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, the Troops to Teachers program is currently managed by the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES).

Reflecting the spirit of the NCLB, the program's primary objective is to help recruit mature, self-disciplined and dedicated veterans interested in teaching in elementary and secondary public, charter and vocational schools. Focused on relieving teacher shortages, especially in the high-needs areas of math, science, special education and English as a second language, the program includes stipends up to \$5,000 to help pay for teacher certification costs or bonuses of \$10,000 to teach in high-needs, low-income schools.

Spc. Juanita Darden-Jones is an example of an Ohio National Guard member who has benefited from using the TTT program. Currently a dental technician with the Ohio Army Guard's Medical Detachment, based at Defense Supply Center Columbus, Darden-Jones is an instructor at Sinclair Community College in Dayton.

Darden-Jones was already a licensed educator when she entered the program, but she found many benefits of the program to be attractive, including resources such as the job-search assistance, guidance on obtaining teaching certification, career counseling and financial incentives.

She said she has recently been approached about becoming a mentor for other Soldiers considering a career in education. "I was excited about the task and did not hesitate to agree," Darden-Jones said, adding that she looks forward to sharing both the rewards and challenges of being an educator with other potential teachers.

The Troops to Teachers Program is not a certification/licensing program. Individuals in the program still need to become licensed teachers in the state they in which they plan to teach.

"I am a Troops to Teachers product," said retired Ohio Air National Guard Staff Sgt. Tracy Kawasaki. "I was hired six years ago to teach here at the Pickaway-Ross Career and technology Center. My primary teaching duties are to be the science and math teacher for the applied programs, (for) students who are educationally disadvantaged."

Kawasaki was a 24-year member of the Guard and also served as federal technician at the 121st Air Refueling Wing at Rickenbacker Air National Guard Base in Columbus, until he became disabled and retired.

"As I was processing out of the Guard, I became aware of the Troops to Teachers program and Ohio's Expanding the Pool of Qualified Teachers Program," Kawasaki said. "The TTT/EPQT office helped me to qualify for the funding I needed to complete my education as it related to my teacher certification. I earned my teacher certification at Wright State University and am in the master's program there."

To date, nearly 13,000 Troops to Teachers participants have been employed as teachers in public education in the United States. Since the enactment of NCLB, nearly 6,000 TTT participants have received financial assistance through the program, money that enabled them to complete any additional training and development needed to obtain licensure in their home states. To register with Troops to Teachers contact your base/post education center or download a registration

form from the TTT Home Page. Eligible active duty, National Guard and Reserve service members may register with TTT at any time. For more information, contact DANTES Troops to Teachers on the Internet at www.ProudToServeAgain.com, call toll free at 1-800-231-6242, or e-mail TTT@navy.mil. BG

Submitted by the Troops to Teachers program. Douglas Nicodemus, Adjutant General's Department Public Affairs, contributed to this report.



Juanita Darden-Jones answers student's questions and reviews materials before administering an exam to her mathematics class. Jones is an instructor at Sinclair Community College in Dayton, and a participant in the Troops to Teachers program.

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