

Frequently Asked Questions about *Teach Tennessee*

What is *Teach Tennessee*? *Teach Tennessee* is a highly selective, accelerated teacher licensure program initiated in 2005 and developed by the Tennessee Department of Education. *Teach Tennessee* is a program for those with strong content knowledge who wish to teach high need subjects in math, science or foreign language in grades 7-12.

Teach Tennessee expanded in 2010 to include a new program: the *Commissioner's Fellows*. The program now includes the *Governor's Fellows* and the *Commissioner's Fellows*. To be considered for selection, both programs require a Bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited university with a minimum GPA of 3.0. Applicants must also be highly qualified by having 24 semester hours of college credit in the subject they wish to teach or a passing score on the Praxis II content knowledge exam. Coursework in education or teaching experience is not required. Teaching endorsements awarded are limited to those subject areas that are required for graduation with preference given the highest need subject areas of math, science, and foreign language. Candidates may not be enrolled in another teacher education program, currently hold a teaching license or have previously held a teaching license.

The two programs are unique in the following ways:

- 1) The *Governor's Fellows* will continue to require five years of work experience related to the high need subject area they want to teach in grades 7-12. Those selected for this program will be required to attend a twelve day Institute in June and complete 40 (clock) hours of professional development during their first year of teaching. An Individual Professional Education Plan will be written for years 2 and 3.
- 2) The *Commissioner's Fellows*, will not require five years of work experience, but will still be limited to those wanting to teach identified high need subject areas in grades 7-12. Those selected for this program will be required to attend a twelve day Institute in July. Additionally, the Fellows must attend 8 monthly Saturday sessions during the school year. An Individual Professional Education Plan will be written for years 2 and 3.

How does this program differ from other licensure programs? *Teach Tennessee* recognizes the strengths and talents that people with extensive subject matter knowledge and successful work experience possess. Building upon those qualities, the program offers an expedited way to obtain licensure by designing a customized plan based on the individual's needs.

If I do not have the 24 semester hours in the content area I wish to teach, when can I take the Praxis II Test and where can I find information about it? You may find out more about the Praxis exams at www.tn.gov/education/lic/ and www.ets.org/praxis/index



How do I become a *Teach Tennessee* "Fellow"? Those who are interested must apply to the State Department of Education and based on their successful education and work experience, be selected for the program. Note the choices to the left on this page for further application information.

How do I apply? A packet of *Teach Tennessee* application materials may be requested on this site if the candidate meets the minimum requirements.

Will the Department of Education find me a job? *Teach Tennessee* is a route to teacher licensure, **not a job placement program**. Individual school districts have the ultimate authority to employ and place their staff; however, the Department of Education will assist you in locating positions available and will notify districts that you are a *Teach Tennessee* Fellow and qualify for a Transitional License at the completion of the Summer Institute.

Must I already have a teaching job in order to qualify? No. Those who are selected to participate in the *Teach Tennessee* program will be able to apply for a job after participating in a twelve day *Teach Tennessee* Institute. Job placement is not guaranteed, so applicants are encouraged to contact the school districts where they want to teach to learn of available opportunities in advance.

When will I be notified that I have been selected? All applicants will be notified by early to mid May.

How much will the program cost? Because *Teach Tennessee* is an individualized program, and since each applicant will enter the program with varied education, work experiences and skills, program costs will vary. Participants will be expected to pay for their lodging and personal expenses while attending the *Teach Tennessee* Institute, the cost of any college credit courses and/or professional development activities they will be expected to take (no more than 12 hours of college coursework is projected), the cost of taking the Praxis exams, the background check, and professional development costs necessary to receive licensure advancement.

Will there be scholarships or assistance in paying for the costs? There are no *Teach Tennessee* scholarships.

What will the *Teach Tennessee* Institute include? The Institute will concentrate on "how" to teach. It will be intense and cover a great amount of information in a short amount of time. The program will include effective teaching strategies, state and federal requirements, planning and instruction, classroom management, and other topics to orient you to the classroom. The training is mandatory for *Teach Tennessee* participants and **no portion of the training may be missed**.

What happens after the Institute? Forty hours of professional development will be required during the first year of teaching for those in the Governor's Fellows program, and eight Saturday sessions throughout the year for those in the Commissioner's Fellows program. An Individualized Professional Education Plan (IPEP) will be written for the

Fellow following their first and second years of teaching based upon their performance in the classroom. The IPEP may require college coursework and/or additional professional development.

What if I am not selected... does that mean I can't teach in Tennessee? No. There are multiple pathways to obtaining a teaching license in Tennessee. If you are not selected for the *Teach Tennessee* program, the Department of Education's Office of Teacher Licensing can assist you in finding the route that is best for you. You may also visit the department's website at www.tn.gov/education/ for more teacher licensing information.

Once in the classroom, am I on my own? You will be the official teacher of record; however, you will have a mentor assigned to you who will support you for twenty-five days throughout the first year. The mentor will be a successful educator who will help guide you, be a sounding board and an excellent resource for you.

How do I know if teaching is right for me? If you have not been in a classroom in the last couple of years it is strongly suggested you see if teaching is a right 'fit' for you by visiting a classroom, volunteering, or talking in-depth with a current teacher and/or principal. Although *Teach Tennessee* is an expedited program into teaching, it does require a financial and time commitment that you might not want to invest in if you aren't certain of your choice. Teaching is an extremely rewarding profession in which you can make a real difference if it is right for you.

Are elementary grades, occupational areas and special education included in the *Teach Tennessee* program? At this time, *Teach Tennessee* is limited to grades 7-12 in the core academic subjects of math, science and foreign language. It is a program that focuses on the candidates' specific content knowledge in the high need areas and the expertise the candidate brings through their work experience related to that subject matter knowledge.

Will my advanced degrees count toward my certification? Your advanced degrees will increase your salary provided they relate directly to the endorsement area in which you teach and they were received from a regionally accredited college or university. Salaries vary from one school system to another based on each district's salary schedule.

Where can I find a pay scale for teaching in Tennessee? Teacher pay scales vary by local school systems. You would need to check the web site or contact the HR Department of systems where you are interested in teaching. You are strongly encouraged to investigate the teacher salaries prior to applying to *Teach Tennessee*.

Am I eligible for *Teach Tennessee* if I have previously been issued a permit and/or have substituted in schools? Yes, if you meet the criteria and are selected, *Teach Tennessee* could be an option for you.

If I have an expired license or an out of state license, may I apply for the *Teach Tennessee* program? Those holding an expired license or a license from another state

would not qualify for the *Teach Tennessee* program. Please contact the Office of Teacher Licensing for information about your license.

If I am currently enrolled in a licensing program and/or if I am teaching on a Transitional or Interim license, may I apply for *Teach Tennessee*? Those enrolled in another licensure program or holding another type license would not be considered.