



Nov. 8, 2019

Troops to Teachers celebrates veterans teaching in NM

SANTA FE – To honor the service of New Mexico’s over 140,000 veterans, the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) is highlighting the work of military veterans who have transitioned into our state’s education workforce. On Monday, November 11th, New Mexico Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart will be personally contacting individuals participating in the state’s Troops to Teachers program (TTT), which provides professional coaching and financial support to current and former military members transitioning into the education workforce, to express gratitude for their service.

“We are proud to support transitioning service members as they prepare to enter the classroom,” said Secretary Stewart. “Leadership, organization, patience, courage – these are all skills cultivated through military service and skills needed in the classroom as well.”

A featured service member participating in NM’s TTT program is Cory Cass, who is preparing to teach middle school after leaving the Air Force.

“I chose to be a teacher as a second career because I had the opportunity to have a lot of great teachers that helped influence who I am today. I joined the Air Force after high school to help get the education and leadership skills that I wanted to bring to the classroom. In my 11 years in the Air Force, I have traveled the world, met political leaders and attended leadership courses. I’ve accomplished many goals that I set before I joined so that I could be the best teacher I can be in the classroom. Once I become a teacher, I hope that I can inspire children with the stories that I have collected in the Air Force to show them that they can accomplish any goal they dream of.”

-Cory Cass, SSgt, USAF

New Mexico is also home to many service members who have already completed their teacher certification and are now teaching in our schools. Keri Delucia is a veteran and teacher in the Alamogordo School District.

“After my time in the military, I discovered that the service aspect of a career was even more important to me. After pursuing my education, I went to rejoin the workforce. I was offered multiple jobs, but they lacked the meaning that I needed to find job satisfaction. I had little desire in the jobs related to my degree and soon realized I needed a career where I could continue to serve, as opposed to punching a clock day after day. As a teacher, I am able to fulfill this need to continue to serve my community on a local level. I think my military service and the skills I have learned in my military service have made me a better educator, especially as a kindergarten teacher – where being able to adapt and overcome, to be flexible, multitask, pay attention to detail and work well with others in a team are highly utilized in the classroom, as much as they were in my time as an aircraft mechanic.”

-Keri Delucia, Kindergarten teacher

NM began participating in TTT through a joint grant application with Colorado in 2018. NM and Colorado are now in the second year (2019-20) of the 5-year grant award. Since 2018, NM’s TTT program has grown to service over 170 active duty, veteran, retired and separated military personnel.

New Mexico utilized TTT grant funds to hire an education recruiter to provide career counseling and placement assistance for eligible members of the armed forces wishing to teach in New Mexico’s public schools. Grant money has also been used to provide eligible applicants with stipends of up to \$5,000 to cover expenses incurred in obtaining the required educational level, certification or licensing to teach in a NM public school classroom.

NM’s TTT program is also working to address our state’s critical teacher shortage by encouraging veterans to pursue teaching opportunities in geographic areas with staffing shortages.

The TTT Colorado and New Mexico programs recognize the importance of relationships with teacher candidates, school district leadership, institutions of higher education and staff at the departments of education and TTT program office. These relationships have significantly increased the number of candidate contacts and mentorship to these candidates over the last year.

TTT was established in 1994 to assist transitioning service members and veterans in beginning new careers in public, charter and Bureau of Indian Affairs schools.

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