

STEM Career Changers to Teachers: Who Ya Gonna Call?

The number of STEM occupations and job vacancies is growing in this country; it is estimated that STEM employment will grow about 13% between 2012 and 2022 (Vilorio, 2014). However, America's future graduates may not be ready to fill these positions because of the lack of certified STEM teachers in our public schools. Where best to look for these prospective teachers than in STEM corporations where many employees are ready to make a change and make a difference?

Deciding to teach and following through with that decision can be difficult. One must not only decide to change careers, but determine the best pathway to teaching and select a preparation program to acquire teaching certification. All of this takes time and money. Complicating this is the fact that each state determines its requirements for teacher certification, so information varies from state to state. Finding and understanding the needed information to make the best choice can be daunting.

Two organizations facilitate this process. First, The Center for Career Changers to the Classroom (CCCC) is a non-profit organization with the mission to connect able and committed professionals to both the appropriate education and school experiences that will assist them as they make the decision about and transition to successful careers in teaching. The Center's website contains information about the different pathways and preparation programs available by state and subject. Additionally, presentations are offered for corporations and their employees who are interested in getting more information about changing careers to teaching. Questions to consider when making the decision to teach include some of the following: Why teach now? How has teaching changed in the 21st century? What are the duties of a 21st century teacher? What are the different pathways for an individual with at least a bachelor's degree to follow to become certified to teach in the state? How do they differ? Multiple certification programs are offered by both public and private institutions in each state, and these programs differ by time, money, courses, required internships, and teaching availability. How does one determine which one is best for one's individual needs? For answers to many of these questions, visit the [Center for Career Changers to the Classroom's website](#). Specifically, go to the Teaching Certification Programs for Career Changers site and select a state in the drop-down menu or request a presentation at your workplace.

The second organization that assists career changers is the National Association for Alternative Certification (NAAC), an organization that advocates for nontraditional educator preparation leading to effective school staffing. Alternative certification programs primarily serve candidates who become the primary teachers in classrooms and schools while completing, or immediately after completing, the route to certification. The alternative pathway is typically the quickest pathway to become the teacher of record in a classroom. Each year, NAAC presents an annual conference which contains sessions on all topics related to alternative certification and presents scholarships to new teachers who have gone through an alternative preparation program. This year's conference is being held March 18-21 in Chicago.

Additionally, NAAC deals with all issues dealing with alternative certification and the career changers who become teachers through the alternative programs. These include best methods of recruiting career changers into teaching; best selection processes and how they should be used; types of support needed by new teachers who are career changers; and retention of career changers in the classrooms and in the teaching profession. To review all that [NAAC](#) has done and is doing, visit their site.

Both of these organizations exist to assist prospective career changers into teaching. Corporate assistance and financial support of them is of great value to prospective career changers. If you would like to have a speaker visit your corporation and present to a group of interested employees, contact Sheila Allen at the Center for Career Changers (sheila@ccteach.org). Questions about NAAC, its advocacy, or its annual conference can be directed to Judy Corcillo (judyc@alternativecertification.org). Affiliate membership in the organization is available to corporations and organizations for \$400 per year.

Stay tuned to future newsletters for more information about changing careers and teaching.

Vilorio, Dennis. (2014). STEM 101: Intro to tomorrow's jobs. *Occupational Outlook Quarterly*. Retrieved from <http://www.stemedcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/BLS-STEM-Jobs-report-spring-2014.pdf>.