

# Equitable Access to Excellent Educators

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## Missouri S&T's Teacher Education Program

**T**eacher preparation is a critical aspect of the Missouri Equity Plan to ensure that all students have equitable access to excellent educators, particularly in urban and rural communities where there is the greatest need. This update features the teacher education program at Missouri University of Science & Technology (Missouri S & T).

Missouri S & T provides a unique, STEM-focused teacher education program. The educator preparation component offers a bachelor of arts degree in multi-disciplinary studies with elementary teacher certification in a STEM content area. In addition, elementary teacher candidates earn certification as Lead Teachers for Project Lead the Way. The university also offers secondary teacher certification in physics, chemistry, biology and applied mathematics, as well as English or social studies (psychology, history or economics).

The teacher education program at Missouri S & T was designed from scratch in response to a demand for excellent STEM educators in Missouri's schools. The program has a formal partnership with Rolla Public Schools, where pre-service teachers gain valuable clinical experiences. The program has also established a business partnership with Halliburton to purchase laptops for 5th graders participating in Project Lead the Way.

As one of two national pilot sites for the national Project Lead the Way, Missouri S & T's teacher education program houses the state's only training center for pre-service teachers seeking Project Lead the Way certification. This initiative is gaining recognition at both the elementary and secondary levels in preparing students for career and college readiness.

Although this premier STEM-focused teacher education program offers a unique opportunity to become a certified teacher, there are unique challenges such as recruiting female STEM candidates to a male-dominated campus and increasing student diversity. In order to complete the program, teacher candidates must maintain a 3.0 GPA in their content area, along with a 2.75 cumulative GPA.



STEM teacher candidates are a special breed, especially when they realize early on that educator salaries are not as competitive as those for engineers (which start at \$60,000), and they still choose a career in the field of education. What are the essential qualities that teacher candidates must exhibit to be successful in such a rigorous STEM teacher education program? According to Dr. Jana Neiss, director of the program, candidates need perseverance, grit and self-discipline.

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