



**VIRGINIA CAREER  
SWITCHER PROGRAM  
ALTERNATE ROUTE TO LICENSURE FOR  
CAREER PROFESSIONALS**

**PRESENTED TO THE  
SENATE FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
EDUCATION**

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# Virginia Career Switcher Program

## LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

- ❑ The Virginia Career Switcher Alternative Route to Licensure Program was created in response to Senate Joint Resolution 384 and the 1999 Appropriation Act (Items 127D and 129Q). The legislation was designed to provide an alternative pathway to teaching for individuals who had not completed a teacher preparation curriculum but had considerable life experiences, career achievements, and academic backgrounds that are relevant for teaching in pre-K through grade 12.
- ❑ The Virginia Career Switcher Program is authorized in Chapter 847, Item 132F and Item 135 C.33 of the 2007 Appropriation Act of the General Assembly.

## PURPOSE

- ❑ The Career Switcher Alternative Route to Licensure Program is designed to encourage individuals from various occupational and life experiences to become classroom teachers, thereby increasing the quantity and diversity of applicants to the profession.

## BACKGROUND

- ❑ The Board of Education approved a program to pilot the Career Switcher Program for military personnel beginning the summer of 2000. The Career Switcher Pilot Program for Military Personnel concluded on June 30, 2001.
- ❑ In the fall of 2001, the Board approved expanding the Career Switcher program for military personnel to other professions. This alternative route is available to career switchers who seek teaching endorsements pre-K through grade 12 with the exception of special education. Critical shortage areas in middle and secondary education are priorities for the career switcher programs.

- ❑ On November 27, 2001, the Board of Education approved the *Licensure Regulations for School Personnel* 8 VAC 20-21-01 et. seq. - Establishing a Career Switcher Alternative Route to Licensure. The regulations became effective February 13, 2002.
  - ❑ Career Switcher programs must be certified by the Virginia Department of Education. By the spring of 2004, nine education entities had been approved to provide Career Switcher programs.
  - ❑ In 2007-2008, these nine entities continue to prepare teachers through an approved career switcher alternate route to licensure program. Among the nine programs are five universities, two public school systems, one educational consortium, and the Virginia Community College System. The providers are:
    - George Mason University
    - Old Dominion University
    - Regent University
    - Shenandoah University
    - Spotsylvania County Public Schools
    - University of Virginia (Richmond Center)\*
    - Virginia Beach City Public Schools\*
    - Virginia Community College System
    - Western Virginia Public Education Consortium
- \*Note: The University of Virginia and Virginia Beach City Public Schools are not accepting new students in the program.
- ❑ Certified Career Switcher program providers are responsible for recruiting, screening, and selecting applicants based on the Board of Education requirements.

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

- ❑ The Career Switcher Alternative Route to Licensure Program is available to career switchers who seek teaching endorsements pre-K through grade 12 with the exception of special education. The programs focus on critical shortage areas in middle and secondary education.
- ❑ Individuals interested in enrolling in a Career Switcher Program must apply for admission directly to a program provider certified by the Department of Education. Each program provider establishes its fee schedule. Applicants must be able to demonstrate having met the prerequisites below and submit their applications, along with official transcripts, to the certified program provider of their choice.
- ❑ Prerequisites for the program include the following:
  - A bachelor's degree from a regionally-accredited institution;
  - Five years of professional full-time work experience or the equivalent;
  - The completion of teaching area requirements for an endorsement in a content area as set forth in the current state licensure regulations or the equivalent through verifiable experience or academic study;
  - Virginia qualifying scores on the professional teacher's examinations as prescribed by the Board of Education.

### Level I Preparation

- ❑ Level I requirements must be completed during the course of a single year and may be offered through a variety of delivery systems, including distance learning.

- ❑ Level I preparation includes the following:
  - a minimum of 180 clock hours of instruction, including field experience;
  - an intensive induction into curriculum and instruction including technology, reading, and other specific course content relating to the Standards of Learning;
  - differentiation of instruction;
  - classroom/behavior management; and
  - human growth and development.
- ❑ Career Switcher programs operate on different schedules determined by each program provider. For example, Level I instruction may be offered on nights and weekends during the academic year, eight to 10 weeks during the year, a semester, or during an intensive summer program.
- ❑ After successfully completing Level I preparation, candidates are awarded a one-year Provisional (Career Switcher) License and are expected to seek and obtain employment in a Virginia public school. If an employing educational agency recommends extending the Provisional License for a second year, the candidate will enter Level III of the program.

### Level II Preparation

- ❑ Level II preparation begins during the first year of employment, when the candidate is a teacher of record with the one-year Provisional (Career Switcher) License. A trained mentor must assist the candidate throughout the first year of employment.
- ❑ Level II preparation includes the following characteristics:
  - a minimum of five seminars that expand the intensive preparation requirements associated with instructional categories and topics;

- the five seminars include a minimum of 20 cumulative instructional hours;
  - various instructional techniques are used to implement the seminars;
  - trained mentors must be assigned to assist the candidate during the first year of employment; and
  - mentors are expected to attend the seminars along with the teachers.
- ❑ The literature suggests that effective mentoring is a significant indicator of success for career switchers. Responsibilities of the mentor include, but are not limited to, the following:
- collaborate with the beginning teacher in the development and implementation of an individualized professional development plan;
  - observe, assess, coach, and provide opportunities for constructive feedback;
  - share resources and materials;
  - share best instructional, assessment, and organizational practices;
  - share classroom management strategies;
  - share techniques for promoting effective communication; and
  - provide support and direction regarding school policies and procedures.
- ❑ If the employing educational agency, in consultation with the Career Switcher Program provider, determines that the candidate needs additional preparation after Level II, the candidate may request to have the Provisional (Career Switcher) License extended for one year to receive an additional year of Level II instruction.

- ❑ Upon successful completion of Levels I and II and submission of a recommendation from the Virginia employing educational agency, the candidate will be eligible to apply for a five-year renewable license.

Level III Preparation

- ❑ Post-Level II preparation, if required, will be conducted by the Virginia employing educational agency to address the areas where improvement is needed as identified in the candidate’s professional improvement plan.
- ❑ Upon completion of Levels I, II, and III and submission of a recommendation from the Virginia employing educational agency, the candidate will be eligible to receive a five-year renewable license.

**PROGRAM COMPLETER DATA**

The following chart lists the numbers of Career Switchers since the 2001-2002 school year who have received Eligibility Licenses.

Year	Number of Career Switchers Who Received Eligibility Licenses*
2001-2002	85
2002-2003	118
2003-2004	229
2004-2005	342
2005-2006	391
2006-2007	467

\*Please note: Effective September 21, 2007, the Eligibility License is now issued under the name of the “Provisional (Career Switcher) License.”

2007-2008 Program Enrollment

Level I Preparation Number of Career Switcher Candidates Enrolled in Level I as of January 2008	Level II Preparation Number of Career Switcher Candidates Enrolled in Level II as of January 2008
392	301

Based on information submitted by Career Switcher Program providers, projected program enrollment in Level II is 582 for the 2008-09 year. The projected funding needed for mentoring in Level II is subject to variability as individuals may become employed in a nonpublic school, decide not to seek employment the next school year, or do not become employed immediately.

**FUNDING**

- ❑ The 2007 General Assembly appropriated funding in Chapter 847, Item 135 C.33 and Item 132 F. of the Appropriation Act for the Career Switcher Program to support mentor stipends and program administration.

Item 135 C.33 specifies the following:

"This appropriation includes \$100,000 the first year and \$100,000 the second year from the general fund to provide grants to school divisions that employ mentor teachers for new teachers entering the profession through the alternative route to licensure as prescribed by the Board of Education."

Item 132 F. specifies the following:

"This appropriation includes \$240,392 the first year and \$240,392 the second year from the general fund to establish an

alternative licensure program as prescribed by the Board of Education.”

- ❑ Funding appropriated in support of the Board’s alternate route to licensure program is used to provide stipends in the amount of \$1,000 to each Career Switcher mentor.
- ❑ Once the qualifying numbers of Career Switcher mentors are determined each fiscal year and the total cost to provide the mentor grants is determined, providers are apprised of the amount per mentor for their program.
- ❑ All mentor stipend funding is contingent upon the availability of funds. In the event that available funding is not sufficient to pay the total cost of the mentor stipends, the amount of the stipends would need to be prorated across qualifying mentors. Payments to mentors may be issued in December and May of each fiscal year.
- ❑ The Governor’s introduced budget for 2008-2010 includes additional funding for mentor teachers serving Career Switcher teachers to address increases in the projected participation in fiscal years 2009 and 2010. An additional \$100,000 is included each year of the biennium.