Intermountain Region

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Arizona, Colorado, Montana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, Utah, Wyoming

Teacher to Ranger to Teacher

The intent of the Teacher to Ranger to Teacher program is to provide opportunities for teachers to have rich work experiences in national parks so that they can return to the classroom and share their experiences and knowledge of these American treasures with children. The program focuses on teachers from low income schools that have diverse student populations, who have had little or no experience with national parks, nor the opportunity to explore the relevance these areas can have in their lives.

Overview of Program

The challenge for the National Park Service (NPS) is to provide opportunities for all Americans to connect with their national heritage as embodied by national parks. The Teacher to Ranger to Teacher (TRT) Program focuses on children and engages teachers from low income schools (often designated as Title I) paying particular attention to school districts with diverse populations. This program offers children at these school the opportunity to connect to their national parks through their teachers.

Teacher-Rangers spend the summer working and often living in national parks. Teachers are detailed as Park Rangers to parks through an Inter-governmental Personnel Act (IPA) agreement between their public school district and the National Park Service.

The parks provide an official NPS park ranger uniform, housing, and a supplementary payment (about $300 per week) for the teachers. Teacher- Rangers perform various duties depending on their interests and the needs of the park, including developing and presenting interpretive programs for children and the general public, staffing the visitor center, developing curriculum-based materials for the park, or special projects.

During the school year, Teacher-Rangers bring national parks into the classroom by developing and presenting curriculum-based lessons that draw on their summer experience. In April, during National Park Week, Teacher-Rangers wear their NPS uniforms to school, discuss their summer as a park ranger, and engage students and other teachers in activities that relate to America's national parks.

Concepts Learned and Incorporated into the Classroom

This place-based experience provides opportunities for Teacher-Rangers to deeply connect with park resources. Exposure to our American heritage offers teachers a chance to gain a better understanding of civic engagement, of the relevance these places have for all Americans, and of the diversity of sites that have been set aside by and for the American people. They, in turn, can provide opportunities for their students and other teachers to discover their own connections to parks.

Teacher-Rangers learn about the complexities of interpreting and researching cultural and natural resources. For example, Teacher-Rangers learn how:

- the mission of the NPS focuses on both the enjoyment and preservation of natural and cultural resources for future American generations;
- national park interpretive rangers use interpretive skills to provoke and inspire resource connections for children;
- parks research and interpret American Indian heritage and regularly consult with tribes who have relationships with the park and its resources;
- a variety of park resources can be used for research, and how these resources will be used to tell complex stories from a variety of viewpoints;
- to increase their understanding of scientific research and the complex issues related to these resources;
- scientific research is applied and interpreted;
- adjacent lands that may or may not be managed under similar resource management philosophies affect park project outcomes;
- to apply National Park Service mission ethics to resource management decisions;
- the public becomes involved in the decision-making process;
- science in parks relates to urban areas and issues.

Benefits of Being a Teacher-Ranger

✓ Participating Teacher-Rangers have the opportunity to develop personal connections with national parks.

✓ Teacher-Rangers develop a wide array of teaching examples based on real life experience in parks and create "curricula enhancers" that highlight issues surrounding heritage conservation.

✓ Teacher-Rangers learn new interpretive techniques to engage children in the process of developing life-long environmental values.

✓ Teacher-Rangers return to school inspired and energized. They form life connections with national parks.

Benefits to the School District

✓ Teacher-Rangers return to school with heightened understanding of American cultural and resource issues

✓ Other district educators exposed to a Teacher-Ranger in their schools benefit from "curricula enhancers" and teaching tools learned at parks.

✓ Teacher-Rangers develop an ongoing, energizing connection with resource specialists, scientists, historians, curators and educators within the NPS and Department of the Interior.

Benefits to School Children

✓ This program provides the opportunity for children to form new connections with their nation's heritage through the experiences of their Teacher-Ranger.

✓ A variety of resource issues, based on the teacher's summer experience, are discussed in class. These might include historic preservation, fire, exotic invasive species, endangered species, air quality, water cycles and global warming.

✓ Students learn about public service, National Park careers and summer employment opportunities.

✓ Children experience and learn through the enthusiasm of a teacher who has had the opportunity to be a National Park Ranger.

✓ Through their Teacher-Ranger, children can learn about America's national parks, which are preserved for all Americans.

✓ Children who have not been able to visit a national park will have the opportunity to learn about their parks through exciting updated classroom lessons in earth science, social studies, history, math, civics, American cultures and much more.

✓ School children will be exposed to the benefits and values of stewardship, conservation and preservation which they can apply at the local, regional and national level.

How to Apply to be a Teacher-Ranger

Teachers apply to individual parks. There is no central application because each park opportunity is unique. Parks currently offering TRT summer opportunities are listed at < **http://www.nps.gov/wupa/parks-participating-in-the-trt-program.htm** >. The listings provide Teacher-Ranger work descriptions and park TRT contact information for interested teachers. Phone or email the park staff and they will provide application instructions to you. If your school district does not already have an IPA agreement (just 2 pages) with the NPS we will help guide you through the agreement process with your administrators. It is the IPA that provides an framework for supplemental pay and wearing the NPS Park Ranger uniform.

NPS TRT Contacts

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Southeast Region Contact | Melissa English-Rias, 404-507-5634 | melissa_english-rias@nps.gov

More TRT Related Websites:

- Intermountain Region TRT website: http://www.nps.gov/wupa/forteachers/trt.htm
- Teachers in Parks: http://www.nps.gov/learn/trt/
- NPS home page: http://www.nps.gov/index.htm