

Top 9 Reasons

To Get Your Master of Education Degree



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Deciding to go back to school for your master's degree is a big decision.

In the education field, holding a master's degree or obtaining an advanced degree is often a common goal among teachers.



According to the Wall Street Journal,

“Of the 730,635 master's degrees awarded in U.S. colleges in 2011, about 25% were in education, the second highest percentage of any field, behind only business, according to the federal data.”

In a competitive field that is centered on learning, obtaining a master's degree makes sense for most serious educators. But fitting study into a full-time job and family life can be a challenge. Luckily, with the adoption of online learning and flexible formats coupled with educational grants and loans for teachers, obtaining an advanced degree in education has never been easier.

If you are a teacher weighing the pros and cons of advancing your education, use this eBook to examine the many benefits a Master of Education degree can offer.

Reason One

Career Advancement and Opportunity



One of the driving forces behind the obtainment of a Master of Education degree, for most teachers, is career opportunity.

In fact, in eight states, teachers are mandated to earn a master's degree in order to obtain full licensure.

Even in states where a master's is not required for full licensure, the competition for certain positions in certain school districts is so high that a master's degree becomes an unspoken pre-requisite.

Because the teaching field can be competitive, educators looking to specialize or find jobs in certain academic areas or geographies often go back to school for their master's in order to boost their chances of landing their dream job. For educators, a master's degree is not only a resume boost, it can also open the door to leadership or specialty positions within academia. Positions such as school counselor, school administrator, principal, subject area specialist and curriculum director typically always require a master's degree at minimum.

As C. Kent McGuire, dean of the Temple University College of Education, remarked in a New York Times article,

“In the district in which I serve as school board member, we typically look for teachers with advanced training (and experience). We are more likely to deploy these teachers in our most challenging or demanding assignments where a broad repertoire of teaching strategies is essential.”

It is also common for teachers to move into consultant or corporate trainer roles after a career in teaching or work as professors in community colleges, all positions that require a master's degree.

Reason Two

Salary Increase

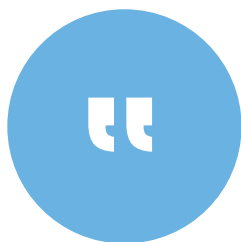


The education field is no different than any other field when it comes to salary. The higher the degree the more money you make.

According to the National Council on Teacher Quality, 15 states require that teachers receive a boost in pay for obtaining a master's degree. The average salary for a teacher in 2013-2014 was \$48,440 with a bachelor's degree and \$60,830 with a master's degree. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics this means educators with a master's degree earn 10% more than those with a bachelor's degree.



To break it down even further, it was noted in the article, *“Who Profits from the Master’s Degree Pay Bump for Teachers?”*



“Ninety-six percent of the 112 major U.S. school districts included in the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) Teacher Contract Database pay teachers with MA degrees more than those with BA degrees, with an average difference of \$3,205 in the first year of teaching, \$4,176 in the fifth year, and \$8,411 at the top of the salary schedule.” And according to the Wall Street Journal, “The nation spends an estimated \$15 billion annually on salary bumps for teachers who earn master’s degrees.”

Reason Three

Higher Education Creates Better Teachers



Probably the most important of all the reasons educators decide to get their Master of Education degree is the desire to become a better teacher.

While the salary increase and career opportunities are nice benefits, the real reason most teachers do what they do is to make a positive impact on their students - to realize that what they are learning or have learned in a master's program, when applied to the classroom, is making a noticeable and measurable difference.

Steve, a high school teacher in San Diego and former USD education student with a specialization in digital literacy, said,

“My program had a collaborative digital writing component to it that I was able to implement in the classroom. At the end, to see how the kids had benefited was tremendous. When we got the students AP history scores, it was the best year of scores yet – almost by double. All these projects really paid off. It wasn’t just about me getting my piece of paper.”

Teachers and administrators alike notice a difference when it comes to educational attainment among educators.

In Omaha, administrators have seen a noticeable difference in student performance as a result of teacher education and experience. “Rex Anderson, Gretna Public Schools’ director of curriculum, instruction and assessment, said he didn’t know that Gretna had the highest rate of teachers with master’s degrees, but he wasn’t surprised. ‘The district actively pushes its teachers to pursue advanced degrees because it makes them better teachers,’ he said. ‘Additional education is particularly meaningful for teachers who already have been working in the classroom, he said,’” according to Omaha.com.

Reason Four

Networking Opportunities Expand



Graduate school is one of the best places to connect with like-minded people from a diversity of backgrounds and to network with peers.

In many graduate programs, students choose to specialize in a particular area of focus. The benefit for students in specialized programs is being able to collaborate, discuss and debate with a group of peers who are serious and passionate about a shared field.

Not only is networking and learning from peers beneficial,

but it is the connections graduate students make with their professors that can also have life long benefits. In a strong graduate program, either in person or online, professors will be well established with a long tenure of experience in the field. Plus, they will have multiple connections of their own, that can help students looking for jobs or looking to switch districts or specialties.



Reason Five

Specialization





The beauty of a Master of Education degree and the main reason many teachers decide to obtain a masters degree in the first place is for the opportunity to focus on a particular specialization.

Not only is this appealing to teachers but specialization is a growing trend in elementary education. Many elementary schools across the country are moving towards a more specialized format akin to a middle or high school format.



The Notebook of the Philadelphia Public Schools recently wrote an article entitled,

“Changing World Demands That Teachers Have More Specialization In Early Grades.” In Glen Ellyn elementary school in Chicago an additional teacher was added to the classroom in order to have one teacher specializing in literacy and another in math. As the Chicago Tribune reported, “That means for next year [as of 2013], teachers in grades two through five, in all four schools, will become somewhat like their high school counterparts and will become experts in either literacy and social studies or STEAM instruction that includes Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math. Students no longer will have one teacher for the entire day.”



And in Atlanta, Hope Hills Principal Maureen Wheeler,

“implemented a school-wide improvement program focused on teacher training. She upended conventional classroom methods and now has teachers specialize by subject, which usually doesn’t happen until middle school. ‘It’s been a lot of hard work,’ she says,” according to Atlanta Magazine.

Going back to graduate school for teachers is where the specialization often comes into play.

With many elementary schools currently examining their strategies and structures to focus on more specialized instruction, there has never been a more opportune time for elementary school educators to obtain their masters. While specializations vary by program and university, there are some broad focus areas that are often relevant to prospective education graduate students. These include specializations in leadership and curriculum, literacy, special education, or subject-based degrees. Some degree programs may also have the option for technology and digital learning specializations, which offer teachers 21st century skills that are often in high demand within primary schools but absent from undergraduate teaching curriculums.

Reason Six

It's Affordable



Luckily for those in the teaching profession there are many grants, loans and loan forgiveness programs available.

Many of these programs are federally sponsored and funded. Examples include the Federal Pell Grant Program, the Federal Perkins Loan Program, Federal Work Study, Military Aid, Stafford Loan Forgiveness Program, Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program and the TEACH Grant Program among others. AmeriCorps and Teach for America also offer education awards and loan forbearance to teachers who have participated in their programs.

While the financial aid available to teachers spans the gamut, many of the federal loan forgiveness programs are awarded to teachers who are working in low income or high need areas. For example, the TEACH Grant awards \$4,000 a year to students working on a degree in teaching so long as they meet the following requirements (according to the Office of the U.S. Department of Education):

- Teach in a high-need field
- Teach at an elementary school, secondary school, or educational service agency that serves students from low-income families
- Teach for at least four complete academic years within eight years after completing (or ceasing enrollment in) the course of study for which you received the grant

Universities, cities and private organizations also offer a number of grants and financial aid options for teachers. Your university should be able to provide you with a list of scholarships and grants available.

To learn more about the TEACH grant and the many other federal programs available to teachers visit

<https://www.teach.org/teaching-federal-aid-programs>.

Reason Seven

Make Positive Change in the School and Community



Teachers know better than anyone else that education is the pathway to change.

Through research and in depth study in graduate school, teachers become better equipped to create real change in their schools and community. The specialized training teachers receive in graduate school often enables them to experiment with alternative approaches to learning, introduce new ideas and concepts, and offer curriculum guidance.

Not only are teachers with a master's degree often better equipped to make positive change in the school and community, but they are viewed with a greater degree of respect and authority. Many teachers also feel more confident in their given specialization due to their extensive training and consequently become better teachers.



Reason Eight

Flexible Degree Options





Thanks to the advancement of online learning, many reputable schools now offer 100% online master degree programs.

Universities understand that students looking to obtain their master's degree often work full-time and may have families as well. Some programs even require that teachers have a certain number of years of teaching experience and/or be currently teaching in order to be accepted into the program. By offering a flexible online learning environment, universities give every teacher the opportunity to pursue their degree. Plus, according to a study conducted by The Research Institute of America, e-Learning has the power to increase information retention rates by up to 60%. That means not only is online learning more manageable, it is also more effective.

Reason Nine

Reignite a Love of Learning



A teacher that doesn't love learning should probably re-consider their career choice.

After all, in academia, learning is what it's all about. Yet, no matter what the job or field, working in the same role for a number of years can cause anyone to fall into a routine, dulling creative thought and hampering innovation. By returning to school, teachers can reignite the love of learning that caused them to become teachers in the first place and find new inspiration to bring back to their classroom. As Dr. Seuss said, "Oh the things you can find, if you don't stay behind."

The University of San Diego, ranked as one of the top 100 national universities by U.S. News and World Report, offers a 100% online Master's of Education Degree with specializations in:

*Curriculum
and Instruction*

*Science, Technology,
Engineering,
Arts, and Math*

*Literacy and
Digital Learning*

*Inclusive Learning:
Special Education and
Universal Design*

School Leadership

USD offers students strong networking opportunities and experiential learning, innovative curriculum inspired by current educational scenarios, accomplished faculty with extensive experience in K-12 instruction and research and a fast track to graduation with completion possible in as little as 20 months.

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