

BECOMING A LICENSED TEACHER

IN MASSACHUSETTS

**A GUIDE FOR PEOPLE WITH
THEIR BACHELOR'S DEGREE,
BUT NOT IN EDUCATION**



Lesley
UNIVERSITY

You Are Here.

Whether you're looking to change careers or move on to something new, you know you want to become a teacher. But like any big change, you're not sure where to start. You're not sure if you have the right degree, or the right experience. Perfect. You're why we wrote this guide. It lays out the steps you need to take to become a licensed public school teacher in Massachusetts.

We interviewed current teachers to find out what they wish they'd known when they started. Working alongside graduate admissions counselors and education professionals, we've answered the most common questions. We start at the beginning of the journey, choosing your path as a teacher, and move on to finding success; attending grad school; acing your licensing exams; and finally applying for your teaching license. After reading this guide, you'll be ready to launch your teaching career.

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How Do I Find My Path?



There are several areas in the field you could pursue, each with different requirements for becoming licensed. Let's talk options.

IS TEACHING RIGHT FOR ME?

Before you decide who and what subject to teach, make sure you'd enjoy spending your days with children and adolescents. If you've never worked with young people, try volunteering, substitute teaching, or tutoring first. Talk to different teachers, too. This research can also help you think about the grades you want to teach.

WHO AND WHAT SUBJECT SHOULD I TEACH?

- **Grades PreK-6 (ages 4-12):** In the lower grades, most teachers are generalists. They teach all subjects, like math, science, reading, and writing. Exceptions might be art and music. Early childhood educators teach in grades PreK-2 and elementary educators teach in grades 1-6.
- **Grades 5-12 (ages 10-18):** In middle or high school, you teach a subject where you have expertise, such as history, math, biology, or a language. Ideally, you have a bachelor's degree in the content area in which you hope to teach. But if you don't, there are other pathways to demonstrate this content knowledge. If you can't decide what subject to teach, take free, practice licensing exams to assess your strengths and narrow your focus.
- **Special Education:** Special educators work with students with disabilities who are integrated into general classrooms, or in their own classroom. If you're considering special education, it's a good idea to have worked with people with special needs. That way, you'll know you're ready for the unique demands of the job.
- **Reading and language specialists** enhance literacy learning for all students and English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers work with English learners.

WHEN DO I CHOOSE?

Decide what level and subject you want to teach when choosing a master's degree program. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) issues teaching licenses for set grade ranges and subjects. Each teacher preparation program provides a path to a specific license.

After you earn one license, getting licenses in other subjects may be as simple as passing more exams. But oftentimes, if you change grade levels or subjects, you'll also need more coursework and/or student teaching.

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I became a teacher because I wanted to help adolescents have a better high school experience than I did while also engaging fully in my passion for literature.

NATALIE GRONDIN

High School English Teacher, Worcester, Mass.
BA English and M.Ed. Secondary Education: English

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What's The Job Market Like?



The good news is, this is a great time to launch your teaching career.



How many job openings will there be?

369,000+

Projected job openings nationwide for preschool through secondary school teachers, special education teachers, and other types of tutors, teachers, and instructors between 2019 and 2029. (1)

How many teachers work in the U.S.?

3.8+ Million

Preschool through high school teachers nationwide in 2019. (1)

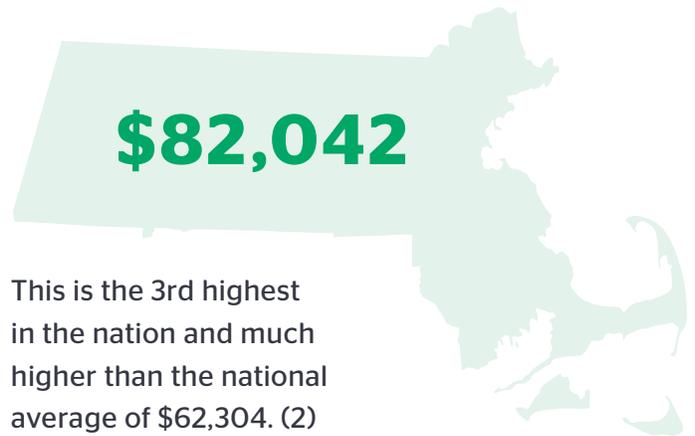
886,400

Special education and other teachers, tutors, and instructors nationwide in 2019. (1)

What's the average salary for public school teachers in Massachusetts?

\$82,042

This is the 3rd highest in the nation and much higher than the national average of \$62,304. (2)



(1) Occupational projections, 2019-29, and worker characteristics, 2019. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor. Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/emp/tables/occupational-projections-and-characteristics.htm> on May 23, 2021.

(2) National Education Association. (July 2020). Rankings of the States 2019 & Estimates of School Statistics 2020.

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I decided to become a teacher when I needed to quit a part-time coaching position to keep working at my full-time job. I realized that coaching (and working with youth) was my actual passion.

KATE HARNEY

K-1 Teacher, Lincoln, Mass.

BA Sociology and M.Ed. Elementary Education

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What Education Do I Need?



You have your bachelor's degree, but not in education. That's okay. A master's degree from a regionally-accredited institution will prepare you for a teaching career.

WHAT KIND OF MASTER’S DEGREE DO I NEED?

Look for state-approved Master of Education (M.Ed.) or Master of Arts (MA) programs leading to Initial licensure. Most Initial licensure programs are accessible to all students regardless of academic or career background. They require pre-practicums and a full-time practicum (a.k.a. student teaching) that’ll prepare you for teaching positions. Depending on the program, you may have to take a few prerequisite courses.

Becoming a reading specialist takes more time. Earn an Initial license in another program first, teach for one year, then take courses to get a reading specialist Initial license.

CAN I FIT SCHOOL INTO MY LIFE?

Not everyone can go back to school full time. But the good news is, there are options for parents, people who work, and just generally busy people. Some schools offer part-time or online programs, or off campus at a location near you. A teacher residency program—where you teach full time for a year while taking courses—is one way to fast-track your degree.

WHAT IS A PROVISIONAL TEACHING LICENSE?

A Provisional teaching license lets you teach for up to 5 years in Massachusetts schools with any bachelor’s degree from a regionally-accredited institution, along with passing the required licensing exams. To keep teaching beyond 5 years, you’ll need to begin a program leading to Initial licensure during this time.

You can pursue a Provisional teaching license through the state if you have no prior teaching experience. However, full-time teaching positions with this license are limited unless you can teach a high-need subject area. A school district that needs teachers for subjects that have shortages of licensed educators may consider hiring individuals with a Provisional license. Ideally, getting an Initial license in the area you want to teach is the path toward greater job opportunities.

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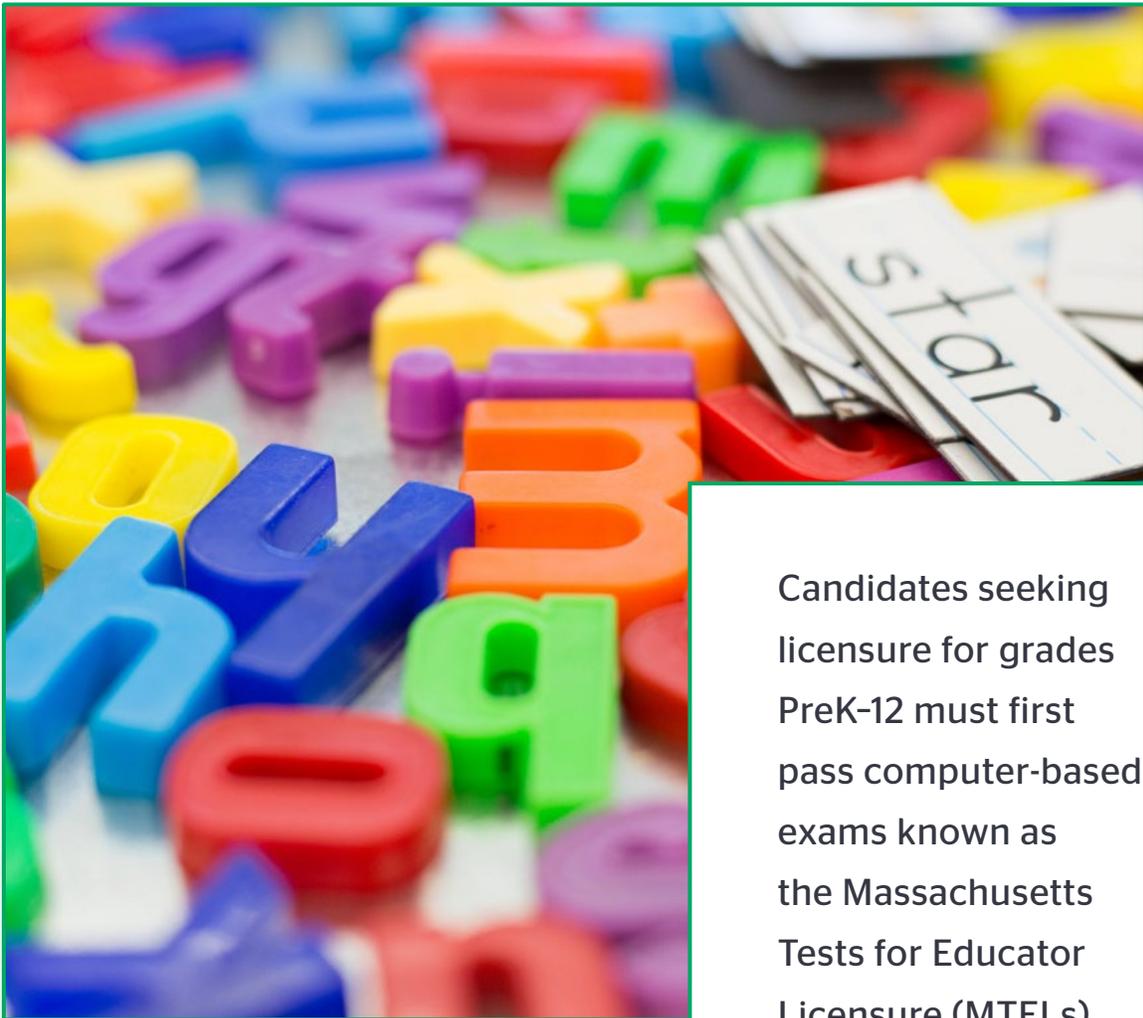
I became a teacher to help motivate students. I enjoy helping them see where they can use the content from class in their lives. This is easy because I teach statistics and they are everywhere.

JASON SYMMES

High School AP Statistics and Sports Statistics Teacher, Methuen, Mass.
BS Economics and M.Ed. Curriculum and Instruction

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What's The Deal With Licensing Exams?



Candidates seeking licensure for grades PreK-12 must first pass computer-based exams known as the Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure (MTELs).

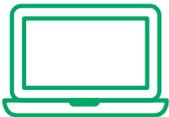


WHAT MTELS DO I TAKE?

All aspiring teachers, reading specialists, and school counselors must pass the Communications and Literacy Skills test for reading comprehension and writing. The other MTELS you'll take depend on your field. For example, to teach high school math, you'd take a math MTEL to demonstrate your competency.

There are dozens of MTELS out there, so check with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for the MTELS required for each teaching license.

doe.mass.edu/mtel



HOW DO I PREPARE FOR THE MTELS?

Find out what the graduate school's MTEL pass rates are and how they prepare students for the tests. Some schools offer MTEL prep workshops or tutoring. If you want to study on your own, the official MTEL website has free practice tests, videos, and tutorials.

mtel.nesinc.com



WHEN DO I TAKE THE MTELS?

Start taking the tests early in your program, in case you need to retake them. They're offered frequently and at several locations. You may also take some MTEL tests remotely at home. When starting a program, check the school's deadline for passing the MTELS.



I love to work with people from different cultures. I found my love for teaching while doing community service work in the Dominican Republic. I now teach special education in a dual language high school.

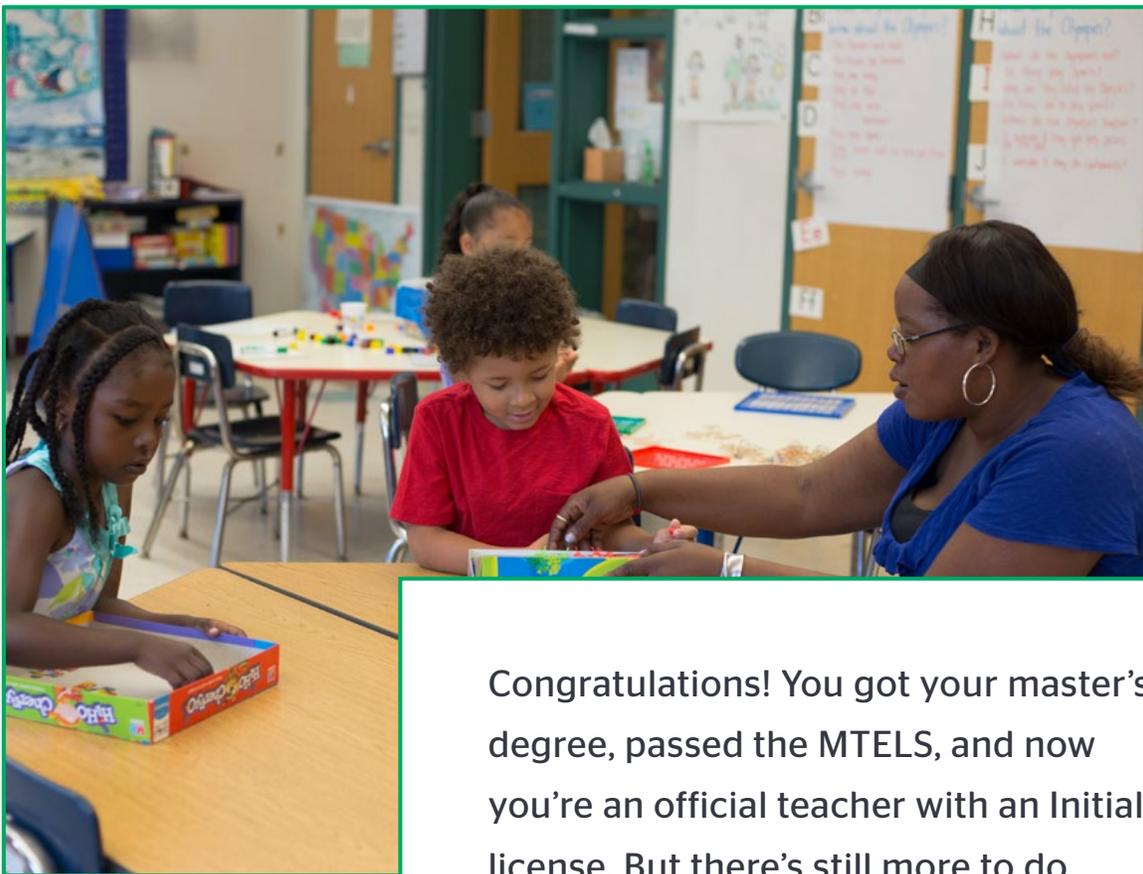
MAURICE STEIN

Grades 5-12 Special Education Teacher, Boston, Mass.

BA Psychology and M.Ed. Special Education: Moderate Disabilities (Grades 5-12)



How Do I Maintain My Teaching License?



Congratulations! You got your master's degree, passed the MTELS, and now you're an official teacher with an Initial license. But there's still more to do.

I HAVE MY INITIAL LICENSE AND MY FIRST JOB. WHAT'S NEXT?

You can teach under your Initial license for 5 years, starting the day you become the teacher of record in a Massachusetts school. Next, you'll need to advance your Initial license to a Professional license. You can do this once you have 3 years of teaching experience in your licensure area, and in one of a few ways:

- Complete an approved graduate program that will lead to a Professional license **OR** pursue the state's 12-Credit Post-Master's Option where subject matter coursework from your Initial master's degree can meet part or all of the requirements for a Professional license in that same field.

AND

- Receive 50 hours of mentoring in your school district beyond year 1. You may also need additional coursework in related subject matter.

You'll apply for your Professional license through the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

HOW DO I RENEW MY PROFESSIONAL LICENSE?

Renew your Professional license every 5 years by earning professional development points through graduate courses, continuing education, supervising a student teacher, and developing curriculum, among other activities. All Massachusetts public school educators must work with their school or district to create a professional development plan that aligns with their teaching license and needs, required professional development points, and the district's needs.

CAN I TEACH IN ANOTHER STATE?

Absolutely. Massachusetts has high standards when it comes to teacher preparation. That's why educators licensed here are eligible to teach in most other states, the Department of Defense, Guam, and D.C., though there may be some additional requirements. Always check with each state's Department of Education to see if there are any special requirements, such as coursework or exams. And know if you can pass the MTELs, you should be able to pass other state tests without a problem. Learn more: nasdtec.net/page/interstate

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I had the honor of being a student for several amazing teachers who sparked a thirst for knowledge in me, and every day I try to do the same for my students.

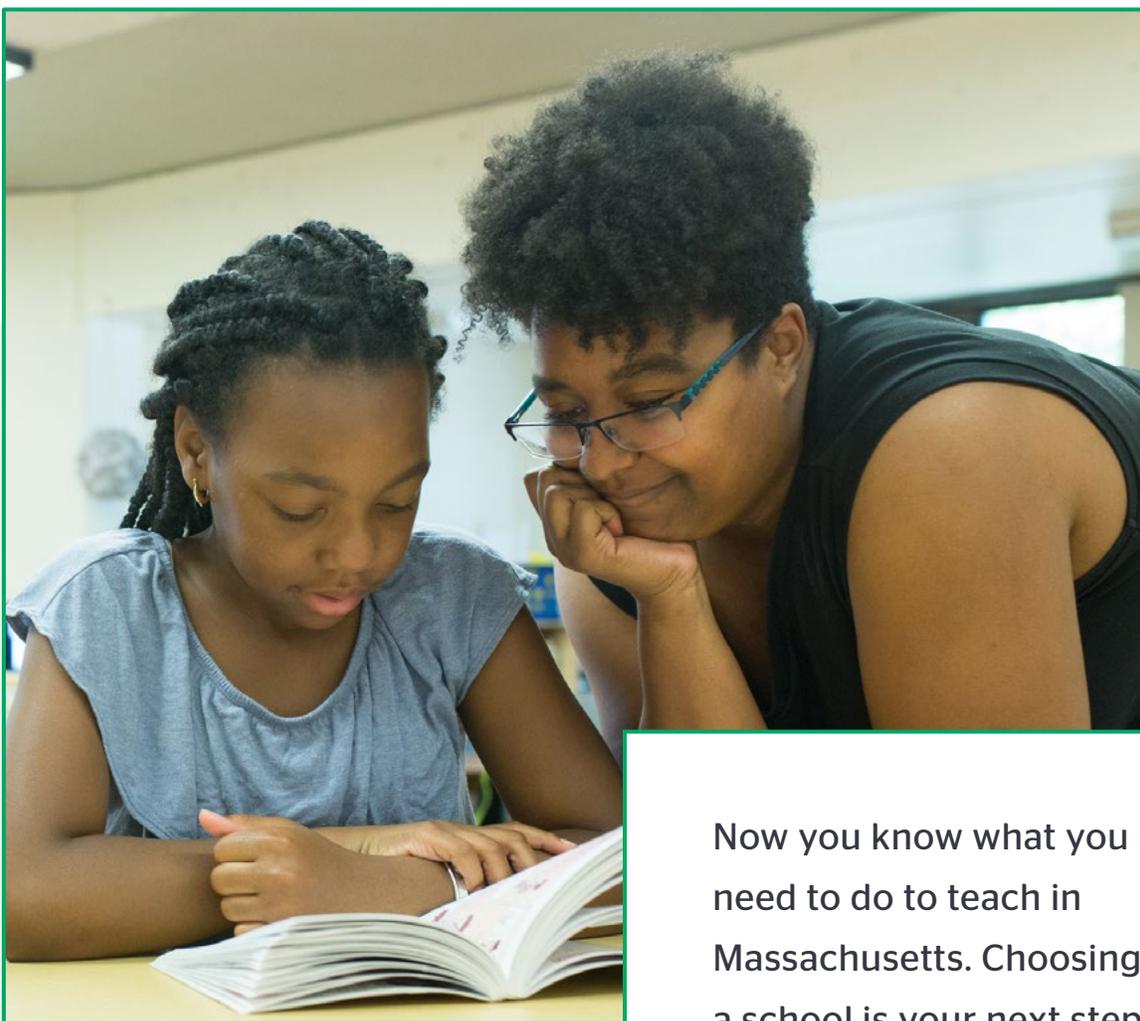
SEAN HUGHES

Middle School Social Studies Teacher, Enfield, Conn.

BS Political Science and Government, and M.Ed. Secondary Education: History

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I'M READY. HOW DO I PICK A SCHOOL?



Now you know what you need to do to teach in Massachusetts. Choosing a school is your next step.

YOU'VE DECIDED TO GO FOR IT.

All you need to do is start applying. Luckily, there are many great choices in Massachusetts. The right school for you, depends on you. School size, location, culture, and reputation are among the qualities to consider.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOL REPUTATION.

When it comes to hiring, the reputation of the school you graduate from is often the deciding factor. In fact, out of 200 Massachusetts K-12 educators surveyed, including hiring decision-makers, the majority indicated that the number one quality they care about in new teachers is that they've graduated from a school with a "longstanding tradition of preparing experts in education."

HOW REPUTATION MEASURES UP FOR MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOLS.

Here are a few great colleges and universities where you might want to start your research.

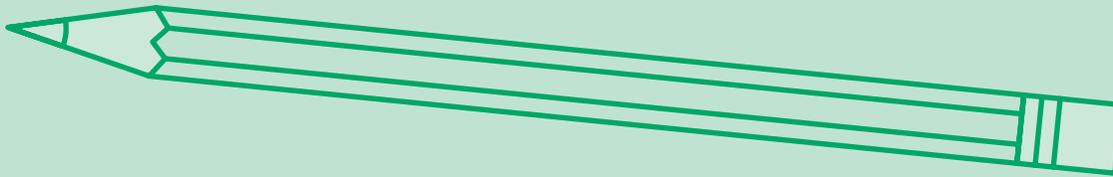
Ranking	Institution	Education Degree Power Score*
#1	Lesley University	123
#2	Boston College	121
#3	Boston University**	116
#4	Northeastern University	111
#5	Simmons College	110
#6	UMASS Boston	105
#7	Wheelock College**	103
#8	Framingham State University	97
#9	Bridgewater State University	96
#10	Westfield State University	94
#11	Salem State University	91
#12	Cambridge College	71
#13	American International College	63

SOURCE: Radius Global Market Research, 2017

- * Based on Radius GMR's proprietary methodology, an Education Degree Power Score of 100 is the average index across the 13 institutions evaluated.
- ** Since this research was completed, Wheelock College has merged with Boston University and has become the Boston University Wheelock College of Education and Human Development.

Go Forth and Teach.

We hope we've motivated you to take
the next step in launching your career.



I'M READY TO BEGIN. HOW?

Learn more about Lesley University's education programs:
lesley.edu/teacher

CONTACT US

Have we missed any questions about becoming a teacher?
Do you want to learn more about Lesley University?

Contact our graduate admissions counselors: luadmissions@lesley.edu

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