

PHYSICS CAREERS

High School Physics Teacher

Physics teachers help students understand this branch of science both in the classroom and in the so-called real world. To learn more about teaching physics as a career, read this interview with Linda Rush, who teaches high school physics at Southside High School in Fort Smith, Arkansas.



Linda Rush enjoys working with students, particularly with hands-on activities.

What does a physics teacher do every day?

I teach anywhere from 100 to 130 students a day. I also take care of the lab and equipment, which is sometimes difficult but necessary. In addition, physics teachers have to attend training sessions to stay current in the field.

What schooling did you take in order to become a physics teacher?

I have two college degrees: a bachelor's in physical science education and a master's in secondary education.

At first, I planned to go into the medical field but changed my mind and decided to become a teacher. I started out as a math teacher, but I changed to science because I enjoy the practical applications.

Did your family influence your career choice?

Neither of my parents went to college, but they both liked to tinker. They built an experimental solar house back in the 1970s. My dad rebuilt antique cars. My mom was a computer programmer. When we moved from the city to the country, my parents were determined that my sister and I wouldn't be helpless, so we learned how to do and fix everything.

What is your favorite thing about your job?

I like to watch my students learn—seeing that light bulb of understanding go on. Students can learn so much from one another. I hope that more students will take physics classes. So many students are afraid to try and don't have confidence in themselves.

What are your students surprised to learn about you?

My students are often surprised to learn that I am a kayaker, a hiker, and the mother of five daughters. Sometimes they forget that teachers are real people.

What advice do you have for students who are interested in teaching physics?

Take as many lab classes in college as possible. Learn as many hands-on activities as you can to use in the classroom. Also, get a broad background in other sciences. Don't be limited to only one field. I think what has helped me is that I'm not just a physics person. I have a well-rounded background, having taught all kinds of science and math classes.

