

# Preparing to Teach Elementary School

## Description

The State of California offers several types of credentials to students interested in teaching. Students interested in teaching at the **elementary school** level should obtain a bachelor's degree and a [Multiple Subject Teaching Credential](#). The Multiple Subject Teaching Credential authorizes the holder to teach in a "self-contained" classroom, meaning that one teacher teaches all subjects to the same students all day.

## Duration

While the length of time for completion of a bachelor's degree may vary from student to student, the degree is typically 120 semester units and takes approximately 4-5 years to complete when enrolling full-time. In addition, a teacher preparation program takes approximately 1 year to complete.

## Multiple Subject Teaching Credential Requirements

- **Education:** A bachelor's degree or higher degree from a regionally accredited college or university.
- **Subject Matter Competence:** Can be met one of the following ways:
  - Complete a Bachelor's degree or higher in a discipline aligned with the credential. For Multiple Subject, Liberal Studies or Inter-/Multi-disciplinary Studies, with or without any focuses/concentrations in the title.
  - Pass all three subtests of the California Subject Examination for Teachers (CSET): Multiple Subjects to establish subject matter competency. The cost of the CSET varies and is \$99 per subtest if taken separately or \$247 for all subtests taken together. For more information, visit [www.ctcexams.nesinc.com](http://www.ctcexams.nesinc.com).
  - Complete an undergraduate subject matter preparation program (SMPP) focusing on Elementary Subject Matter and obtain verification of completion form. For more information and to search for a Commission-Approved Subject Matter Preparation Program, visit [www.ctc.ca.gov](http://www.ctc.ca.gov).
  - Complete college-level coursework aligned with each domain of the subject matter requirements.
  - Combining coursework and exams including SMPP, CSET, and/or college-level coursework methods.
- **RICA:** Pass the Reading Instruction Competency Assessment (RICA). The cost of the RICA is \$171. For more information, visit [www.ctcexams.nesinc.com](http://www.ctcexams.nesinc.com).
- **Provisions and Principles of the U.S. Constitution:** Complete a U.S. Constitution course (Political Science 101 at Santa Ana College) with a "C" or better or by equivalent exam.
- **Teacher Preparation Program:** Complete a multiple subject teacher preparation program, including student teaching, approved by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC). Upon completion, obtain a formal recommendation for the credential by the program sponsor. For more information and to search for a Commission-Approved Educator Preparation Program, visit [www.ctc.ca.gov](http://www.ctc.ca.gov).
- **Character and Identification Clearance:** Submit the appropriate paperwork along with fingerprints to the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC).
- **NOTE:** As of June 2024, the Basic Skills Requirement for the Multiple Subject Credential will be met by completion of a bachelor's degree.

## College Majors for Elementary Teaching

As an elementary teacher, you will need to teach many subjects, namely Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Science, Visual and Performing Arts, Physical Education, and Child Development. There are many possible majors, but it is best to major in a subject that will encompass all these areas, such as Liberal Studies. However, other majors such as Child Development, Human Services, or Psychology are also excellent pathways for elementary teaching. See a counselor for help with major selection.

## Basic Recommendations

- At Santa Ana College, take general education courses that cover subject matter areas required for elementary teaching and can help with subject matter preparation. You can easily find these by looking for "Apple Courses" on the Class Schedule.
- Seek advisement from a counselor since teacher education requirements differ at each university.
- Earn good grades. Most credential programs require a minimum 2.7 to 3.0 grade point average.
- Obtain as much experience in the classroom as possible. Stop by the SAC Service Learning Center to find out about opportunities for working with youth.
- Explore your transfer options. What kind of university suits you best?

## How to Prepare for the CSET (if applicable)

- Become familiar with content specifications and CA frameworks found at [www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/](http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/).
- Take classes that support your knowledge in each subject area.
- Choose a major that prepares you in subject matter knowledge.
- Keep your notes, exams, and papers from all subject matter classes.