

Preparing to Teach Special Education

Description

The State of California offers several types of credentials to students interested in teaching. Students interested in teaching **children with special needs** should obtain a bachelor's degree and an [Education Specialist Instruction Credential](#). The Education Specialist Instruction Credential authorizes the holder to teach in the disability area of specialization listed on the credential in a variety of settings including elementary, junior high, and high schools. Specialty areas include:

- Mild to Moderate Support Needs (MMSN)
- Extensive Support Needs (ESN)
- Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)*
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH)
- Visual Impairments (VI)

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.

Education Specialist Instruction Credential Requirements

- **Education:** A bachelor's degree or higher degree from a regionally accredited college or university.
- **Subject Matter Competence*:** This requirement can be met one of the following ways and may differ depending on the teaching setting – multiple subject setting (i.e., elementary school) or single subject setting (i.e., junior high or high school):
 - Complete a Bachelor's degree or higher in a discipline aligned with the credential. For Education Specialist, degree major will be dependent on interest in teaching in a multiple subject or single subject setting.
 - Pass the appropriate California Subject Examination for Teachers (CSET) to establish subject matter competency. Those interested in teaching in a **multiple subject setting** must pass the CSET: Multiple Subjects, while those interested in teaching in a **single subject setting** must pass the appropriate CSET to establish subject matter competency. The cost of the CSET varies by examination. For more information, visit www.ctcexams.nesinc.com.
 - Complete the appropriate undergraduate subject matter preparation program (SMPP) and obtain verification of completion form. Those interested in teaching in a **multiple subject setting** should complete an SMPP focusing on Elementary Subject Matter, while those interested in teaching in a **single subject setting** should complete an SMPP focusing on the appropriate single subject area. For more information and to search for a Commission-Approved Subject Matter Preparation Program, visit 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.
- **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 an Education Specialist Instruction Credential program, approved by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC), in an education specialist specialty area. 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.
- **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 Teaching Special Education

The major you select will depend on the setting you plan to teach in – elementary, junior high, or high school. Select a major that provides the best preparation in the subject area. See a counselor for help with major selection.

Basic Recommendations

- Decide what age group you would most like to work with as this determines your pathway.
- 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?

*Verification of Subject Matter Competence is not required for the area of Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE).