

# 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)
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH)
- Visual Impairments (VI)
- Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)\*

## 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.
- **Basic Skills Requirement:** Demonstrate basic skills proficiency in reading, writing, and math through one of the options approved by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC), which includes coursework (GE areas for English Composition, Math, and Critical Thinking with grades of B or better), exams (such as CBEST), or a combination of both. For more information, visit [www.ctc.ca.gov/credentials/options-bsr](http://www.ctc.ca.gov/credentials/options-bsr).
- **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):
  - 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](http://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](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.
  - 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.
- **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 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](http://www.ctc.ca.gov).
- **Character and Identification Clearance:** Submit the appropriate paperwork along with fingerprints to the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC).

## 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 and passage of the RICA is not required for Early Childhood Special Education.