

## What financial assistance is available?

Individuals seeking careers in special education are eligible for the financial assistance available to all students. In addition, the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), funds programs that support students becoming special educators.

## How do I know if this career is for me?

There are three things that can help you decide whether becoming a special educator is a good career option for you:

- Volunteer in a special education classroom. You will gain experience with many students and discover the skills needed to teach children with special needs.
- Complete a service-learning experience by being involved in a special education-related activity as a youth.
- Talk with special educators. Find out why they chose this profession and what they find challenging and rewarding about their work.

## I want to become a special educator. What should I do now?

TEACH California explains the credentialing process, provides financial aid information, and identifies the next steps you need to take to become a credentialed special education teacher in California. For more information, log onto [www.teachcalifornia.org](http://www.teachcalifornia.org)

Track your progress by registering in the **Career Plan** section of the **TEACH California** Web site.



Make the **difference**  
of a lifetime.  
**Teach.**

[www.teachcalifornia.org](http://www.teachcalifornia.org)

The screenshot shows the TEACH California website interface. At the top, there are navigation links: 'The 6 Steps', 'Who Are You?', 'Teacher Shortage', 'Career Plan', 'Learn More', and 'About Us'. Below this is a 'Special Education' banner with the text 'teach is your future and theirs'. The main content area features the slogan 'Make the difference of a lifetime. Teach.' followed by four green cards: 'Six Steps to Become a Teacher!', 'Make and Follow Your Career Plan', 'Find the Right Teacher Preparation Program', and 'Find Financial Aid'. Below these cards is a 'News' section with a photo of a teacher and students, and a 'Have Questions?' section with a 'Virtual Advisor' icon. At the bottom, there is a 'Find a Teaching Job!' button and a footer with copyright information and social media links.

This brochure and other teacher recruitment materials may be downloaded for free. Log on to [www.teachcalifornia.org](http://www.teachcalifornia.org), select **Learn More**, then **Recruitment Materials**.

Funds for this project come from a federal grant, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), to the California Department of Education.



# Teach Special Ed

A guide to becoming a  
**Special Education Teacher**  
in California



## What do special educators do?

Special educators provide specially designed instruction to individuals with disabilities and support to their families. Special educators assess learning abilities, adapt materials, modify curriculum, and consult with other teachers.

## Who are special education students?

These are students who require specially designed instruction because of:

- Cognitive impairments
- Learning disabilities that require specific teaching strategies
- Physical disabilities that limit mobility
- Sensory loss, such as hearing loss and vision impairments
- Emotional disorders
- Traumatic brain injury
- Autism
- Speech or language impairments
- Chronic health problems

## Where do special educators work?

One of the benefits of being a special educator is the variety of settings in which one can work, including:

- **General education.** Special educators consult, collaborate and co-teach with general education teachers and other service providers.
- **Resource or Learning Centers.** In this setting, specialized instruction is provided for part of the day, individually or in groups.
- **Self-contained classrooms.** This is a classroom specifically for children with disabilities.
- **Itinerant (traveling) teaching.**
- **Home/hospital settings.**
- **Youth authority facilities.**



## What are the credentialing requirements?

- a. Special educators are highly trained individuals who must complete a set of requirements, related to the following, in order to receive the Preliminary Education Specialist Instruction Credential:
  - i. an undergraduate degree
  - ii. a basic skills requirement
  - iii. a subject-matter competency test or completed a teacher preparation program
  - iv. a Commission-approved subject-matter program
  - v. a Reading Instruction Competence Assessment (RICA) test
  - vi. a course or examination in the U.S. Constitution
- b. The second stage is the Clear Education Specialist Instruction Credential. To obtain this, you must have completed a clear credential program through a Commission-approved Induction Program specifically for special education.
- c. Additionally, there are a number of authorizations for special education teaching one can add to an existing California teaching credential designed to broaden the teaching pool.

## What are the “areas of specialization”?

There are five types of Education Specialist Credentials:

- **Mild to Moderate Support Needs**  
Includes specific learning disabilities; mild to moderate support needs; autism; emotional disturbance; intellectual disability; multiple disabilities; orthopedic impairment; other health impairment; specific learning disability; traumatic brain injury; and authorizes service in grades K–12, transitional kindergarten, and in classes organized primarily for adults through age 22.
- **Extensive Support Needs**  
Includes autism; deafblind; extensive support needs; intellectual disability; multiple disabilities; emotional disturbance; traumatic brain injury; and authorizes service in grades K–12, transitional kindergarten, and in classes organized primarily for adults through age 22.
- **Deaf and Hard of Hearing**  
Includes deafness; hearing impairment; deafblind; autism; and authorizes service to individuals ages birth through 22.
- **Visual Impairments**  
Includes blindness; visual impairment; deaf-blindness; and authorizes service to individuals ages birth through 22.
- **Early Childhood Special Education**  
Includes the mild to moderate support needs and extensive support needs listed above; authorizes service to children ages birth to kindergarten only.

## How long will it take me to become fully credentialed?

The length of time depends on your current educational level and the type of teacher credential program you enter. The Preliminary Education Specialist Instruction Credential can be completed within one to two years if you already have your undergraduate degree and can demonstrate subject matter competency. The Clear Education Specialist Instruction Credential requirements must be completed within five years of obtaining the Preliminary Credential.