

Preparing to Teach Special Education

There are several types of credentials offered by the state of California. Students interested in teaching children with special needs will earn an **Education Specialist Credential**. The person holding this credential may work with elementary, middle school or high school students. An Education Specialist Credential offers the following specializations:

- Mild to Moderate Disabilities
- Moderate to Severe Disabilities
- Visual Impairments
- Early Childhood Special Education
- Physical and Health Impairments
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Duration

While the length of time for completion of a bachelor degree may vary from student to student, the degree typically takes 4-5 years full-time to complete. A bachelor degree is between 120-124 units. In addition a professional preparation program takes about 1 year to complete, if attending school full-time.

Education Specialist Credential Requirements

- **Education:** A bachelor degree or equivalent from a regionally accredited college or university.
- **Basic Skills Requirement:** This requirement can be satisfied by passing the California Basic Skills Test (CBEST) or by considering one of the alternative options that have been approved by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC). For more information on the CBEST go to <http://www.cbest.nesinc.com>.
- **Professional Teacher Preparation:** Complete a CCTC approved single subject teacher preparation program, including student teaching.
- **Provisions and Principles of the U.S. Constitution:** Complete a U.S. Constitution course with a "C" or better (Political Science 103 at Citrus College) or equivalent exam.
- **English Language Skills:** Complete a Developing English Language Skills course, including reading requirement by successful completion of a comprehensive reading instruction course.
- **Character and Identification Clearance:** Submit the appropriate paperwork along with fingerprints to the CCTC.
- **RICA:** Pass the Reading Instruction Competency Assessment (RICA). For more information go to <http://www.rica.nesinc.com>.
- **Subject Matter Competence:**
 1. For education specialists interested in teaching in a **multiple subject setting** (K-6), there is one option:
 - Successful passage of the California Subject Matter Exam for Teachers (CSET): Multiple Subject www.scet.nesinc.com
 2. For education specialists interested in teaching in a **single subject setting** (7-12), there are two options
 - Successful completion of a Single Subject Matter Preparation Program www.fullerton.edu/cct/Single_Subj/smpp.htm (CSUF Subject Matter Programs)
 - Successful passage of the appropriate Content Subject Examinations for Teachers (CSET) www.cset.nesinc.com

College Majors for Special Education

The major you select will depend on the subject matter competence route you choose. For either route, select a major that provides the best preparation in the subject area.

Basic Recommendations

- Decide what age group you would most like to work with as each has separate pathways.
- Seek advisement 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.
- Take the CBEST as soon as you have completed your transferable level English and Mathematics courses.
- Obtain as much experience in the classroom as possible. Stop by the STEM Center (math/science) and Learning Center (all other subjects) to find out about tutoring opportunities.
- Explore your transfer options. What kind of campus suits you best?

How to prepare for the CSET?

- Become familiar with content specifications and CA frameworks (<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.