



TEACHER SPECIAL EDUCATION

JOB DESCRIPTION

Special education teachers work with children and youths who have a variety of disabilities. The majority of special education teachers work with children with mild to moderate disabilities, using the general education curriculum, or modifying it, to meet the child's individual needs. Most special education teachers instruct students at the elementary, middle, and secondary school level, although some teachers work with infants and toddlers. The various types of disabilities that qualify individuals for special education programs include specific learning disabilities, speech or language impairments, mental retardation, emotional disturbance, multiple disabilities, hearing impairments, orthopedic impairments, visual impairments, autism, combined deafness and blindness, traumatic brain injury, and other health impairments.

EXPERIENCE & SKILLS

Special education teachers must be patient, able to motivate students, understanding of their students' special needs, and accepting of differences in others. Teachers must be creative and apply different types of teaching methods to reach students who are having difficulty learning. Essential Skills:

- Creativity
- Organizational skills
- Communication Skills
- Motivate others
- Administrative & recordkeeping
- Patience

EDUCATION & TRAINING

All 50 States and the District of Columbia require special education teachers to be licensed. In some States, special education teachers receive a general education credential to teach kindergarten through grade 12. These teachers then train in a specialty, such as learning disabilities or behavioral disorders. Many States offer general special education licenses across a variety of disability categories, while others license several different specialties within special education. For traditional licensing, all States require a bachelor's degree and the completion of an approved teacher preparation program with a prescribed number of subject and education credits and supervised practice teaching. However, many States require a master's degree in special education, involving at least 1 year of additional course work, including a specialization, beyond the bachelor's degree. Often a prospective teacher must pass a professional assessment test as well. Some States have reciprocity agreements allowing special education teachers to transfer their licenses from one State to another, but many others still require that experienced teachers reapply and pass licensing requirements to work in the State.

SALARIES

Salaries vary depending on work setting, years of experience, specialty and region or state.

Entry level: \$35,970	Preschool, Kindergarten, Elementary	Secondary Schools: \$45,700.
Average: \$44, 476	School : \$43,570	Private school teachers make less than
Experienced: \$57,253	Middle School: \$44,160	\$46,597

EMPLOYMENT & ADVANCEMENT PROSPECTS

Employment of special education teachers is expected to increase 18-26% for all occupations through 2014. Although student enrollments are expected to grow only slowly, additional positions for these workers will be created by continued increases in the number of special education students needing services, by legislation emphasizing training and employment for individuals with disabilities, and by educational reforms requiring higher standards for graduation. In addition to job openings resulting from growth, a large number of openings will result from the need to replace special education teachers who switch to teaching general education, change careers altogether, or retire. At the same time, many school districts report difficulty finding sufficient numbers of qualified teachers. As a result, special education teachers should have excellent job prospects.

RELATED OCCUPATIONS

- Counselors
- Occupational therapists
- Social workers
- Psychologists

REFERENCES

The Council for Exceptional Children, 1110 N. Glebe Road, Suite 300, Arlington, VA 22201-5704. Internet: <http://www.cec.sped.org>

National Center for Special Education Personnel & Related Service Providers, National Association of State Directors of Special Education, 1800 Diagonal Road, Suite 320, Alexandria, VA 22314. Internet: <http://www.personnelcenter.org>

