

SPECIAL EDUCATION, M.ED.

The M.Ed. program in special education is designed for certified teachers who are seeking initial or additional certification in special education. The program includes 150 hours of practicum experience.

Learning Outcomes

Learning Disabilities, Emotional/Behavioral Disorders, Mild/Moderate, Severe

- **Foundations.** Special educators understand the field as an evolving and changing discipline based on philosophies, evidence-based principles and theories, relevant laws and policies, diverse and historical points of view, and human issues that have historically influenced and continue to influence the field of special education and the education and treatment of individuals with exceptional needs both in school and society. Special educators understand how these influence professional practice, including assessment, instructional planning, implementation, and program evaluation. Special educators understand how issues of human diversity can impact families, cultures, and schools, and how these complex human issues can interact with issues in the delivery of special education services. They understand the relationships of organizations of special education to the organizations and functions of schools, school systems, and other agencies. Special educators use this knowledge as a ground upon which to construct their own personal understandings and philosophies of special education.
- **Development and Characteristics of Learners.** Special educators know and demonstrate respect for their students first as unique human beings. Special educators understand the similarities and differences in human development and the characteristics between and among individuals with and without exceptional learning needs (ELN)^{1/}. Moreover, special educators understand how exceptional conditions can interact with the domains of human development and they use this knowledge to respond to the varying abilities and behaviors of individual's with ELN. Special educators understand how the experiences of individuals with ELN can impact families, as well as the individual's ability to learn, interact socially, and live as fulfilled contributing members of the community.
- **Individual Learning Differences.** Special educators understand the effects that an exceptional condition^{2/} can have on an individual's learning in school and throughout life. Special educators understand that the beliefs, traditions, and values across and within cultures can affect relationships among and between students, their families, and the school community. Moreover, special educators are active and resourceful in seeking to understand how primary language, culture, and familial backgrounds interact with the individual's exceptional condition to impact the individual's academic and social abilities, attitudes, values, interests, and career options. The understanding of these learning differences and their possible interactions provides the foundation upon which special educators individualize instruction to provide meaningful and challenging learning for individuals with ELN.
- **Instructional Strategies.** Special educators possess a repertoire of evidence-based instructional strategies to individualize instruction for individuals with ELN. Special educators select, adapt, and use these instructional strategies to promote positive learning results in general and special curricula^{3/} and to appropriately modify learning environments for individuals with ELN. They enhance the learning of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills of individuals with ELN, and increase their self-awareness, self-management, self-control, self-reliance, and self-esteem. Moreover, special educators emphasize the development, maintenance, and generalization of knowledge and skills across environments, settings, and the lifespan.
- **Learning Environments and Social Interactions.** Special educators actively create learning environments for individuals with ELN that foster cultural understanding, safety and emotional well-being, positive social interactions, and active engagement of individuals with ELN. In addition, special educators foster environments in which diversity is valued and individuals are taught to live harmoniously and productively in a culturally diverse world. Special educators shape environments to encourage the independence, self-motivation, self-direction, personal empowerment, and self-advocacy of individuals with ELN. Special educators help their general education colleagues integrate individuals with ELN in regular environments and engage them in meaningful learning activities and interactions. Special educators use direct motivational and instructional interventions with individuals with ELN to teach them to respond effectively to current expectations. When necessary, special educators can safely intervene with individuals with ELN in crisis. Special educators coordinate all these efforts and provide guidance and direction to paraeducators and others, such as classroom volunteers and tutors.
- **Language.** Special educators understand typical and atypical language development and the ways in which exceptional conditions can interact with an individual's experience with and use of language. Special educators use individualized strategies to enhance language development and teach communication skills to individuals with ELN. Special educators are familiar with augmentative, alternative, and assistive technologies to support and enhance communication of individuals with exceptional needs. Special educators match their communication methods to an individual's language proficiency and cultural and linguistic differences. Special educators provide effective language models and they use communication strategies and resources to facilitate understanding of subject matter for individuals with ELN whose primary language is not English.
- **Instructional Planning.** Individualized decision-making and instruction is at the center of special education practice. Special educators develop long-range individualized instructional plans anchored in both general and special curricula. In addition, special educators systematically translate these individualized plans into carefully selected shorter-range goals and objectives taking into consideration an individual's abilities and needs, the learning environment, and a myriad of cultural and linguistic factors. Individualized instructional plans emphasize explicit modeling and efficient guided practice to assure acquisition and fluency through maintenance and generalization. Understanding of these factors as well as the implications of an individual's exceptional condition, guides the special educator's selection, adaptation, and creation of materials, and the use of powerful instructional variables. Instructional plans are modified based on ongoing analysis of the individual's learning progress. Moreover, special educators facilitate this instructional planning in a collaborative context including the individuals with exceptionalities, families, professional colleagues, and personnel from other agencies as appropriate. Special educators also develop a variety of individualized transition plans, such as transitions from preschool to elementary school and from secondary settings to a variety of postsecondary work and learning contexts. Special educators are comfortable using appropriate technologies to support instructional planning and individualized instruction.
- **Assessment.** Assessment is integral to the decision-making and teaching of special educators and special educators use multiple

types of assessment information for a variety of educational decisions. Special educators use the results of assessments to help identify exceptional learning needs and to develop and implement individualized instructional programs, as well as to adjust instruction in response to ongoing learning progress. Special educators understand the legal policies and ethical principles of measurement and assessment related to referral, eligibility, program planning, instruction, and placement for individuals with ELN, including those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Special educators understand measurement theory and practices for addressing issues of validity, reliability, norms, bias, and interpretation of assessment results. In addition, special educators understand the appropriate use and limitations of various types of assessments. Special educators collaborate with families and other colleagues to assure non-biased, meaningful assessments and decision-making. Special educators conduct formal and informal assessments of behavior, learning, achievement, and environments to design learning experiences that support the growth and development of individuals with ELN. Special educators use assessment information to identify supports and adaptations required for individuals with ELN to access the general curriculum and to participate in school, system, and statewide assessment programs. Special educators regularly monitor the progress of individuals with ELN in general and special curricula. Special educators use appropriate technologies to support their assessments.

- **Professional and Ethical Practice.** Special educators are guided by the profession's ethical and professional practice standards. Special educators practice in multiple roles and complex situations across wide age and developmental ranges. Their practice requires ongoing attention to legal matters along with serious professional and ethical considerations. Special educators engage in professional activities and participate in learning communities that benefit individuals with ELN, their families, colleagues, and their own professional growth. Special educators view themselves as lifelong learners and regularly reflect on and adjust their practice. Special educators are aware of how their own and others attitudes, behaviors, and ways of communicating can influence their practice. Special educators understand that culture and language can interact with exceptionalities, and are sensitive to the many aspects of diversity of individuals with ELN and their families. Special educators actively plan and engage in activities that foster their professional growth and keep them current with evidence-based best practices. Special educators know their own limits of practice and practice within them.
- **Collaboration.** Special educators routinely and effectively collaborate with families, other educators, related service providers, and personnel from community agencies in culturally responsive ways. This collaboration assures that the needs of individuals with ELN are addressed throughout schooling. Moreover, special educators embrace their special role as advocate for individuals with ELN. Special educators promote and advocate the learning and well being of individuals with ELN across a wide range of settings and a range of different learning experiences. Special educators are viewed as specialists by a myriad of people who actively seek their collaboration to effectively include and teach individuals with ELN. Special educators are a resource to their colleagues in understanding the laws and policies relevant to Individuals with ELN. Special educators use collaboration to facilitate the successful transitions of individuals with ELN across settings and services.

Early Childhood

- **Cultural Competence.** Advanced program candidates demonstrate a high level of competence in understanding and responding to diversity of culture, language, and ethnicity.
- **Knowledge and Application of Ethical Principles.** Advanced program candidates demonstrate in-depth knowledge and thoughtful application of the Code of Ethical Conduct and other guidelines relevant to their professional role.
- **Communication Skills.** Advanced program candidates possess a high level of oral, written, and technological communication skills, with specialization for the specific professional role(s) emphasized in the program. For programs for the advanced preparation of teachers, candidates meet ISTE standards. For doctoral programs, candidates are prepared to publish and present at conferences.
- **Mastery of Relevant Theory and Research.** Advanced program candidates demonstrate in-depth, critical knowledge of the theory and research relevant to the professional role(s) and focus area(s) emphasized in the program.
- **Skills in Identifying and Using Professional Resources.** Advanced program candidates demonstrate a high level of skill in identifying and using the human, material, and technological resources needed to perform their professional roles and to keep abreast of the field's changing knowledge base.
- **Inquiry Skills and Knowledge of Research Methods.** Using systematic and professionally accepted approaches, advanced program candidates demonstrate inquiry skills, showing their ability to investigate questions relevant to their practice and professional goals.
- **Skills in Collaborating, Teaching, and/or Mentoring.** Advanced program candidates demonstrate the flexible, varied skills needed to work collaboratively and effectively with other adults in professional roles.
- **Advocacy Skills.** Advanced program candidates demonstrate competence in articulating and advocating for sound professional practices and public policies for the positive development and learning of all students.
- **Leadership Skills.** Advanced program candidates reflect on and use their abilities and opportunities to think strategically, build consensus, create change, and influence better outcomes for students, families, and the profession.

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards

1. Teachers are Committed to Students and Learning.
 - a. Demonstrate an understanding of students' cognitive development and the influence of context and culture.
 - b. Foster all students' cognitive, affective, and social/cultural development, adjusting practice to meet individual needs.
2. Teachers Know the Subjects They Teach and How to Teach Those Subjects to Students.
 - a. Know subject(s) they teach.
 - b. Know students' typical understanding of subjects and how to teach subject(s).
 - c. Foster problem posing and solving.
3. Teachers are Responsible for Managing and Monitoring Student Learning.
 - a. Establish disciplined learning environment and effectively engage students using a range of appropriate teaching techniques.
 - b. Enlist expertise of others to complement own teaching.

- c. Assess individual students and whole class using multiple measures and communicate assessment/data collection to parents.
4. Teachers Think Systematically about Their Practice and Learn from Experience.
 - a. Demonstrate an experimental and problem solving approach to teaching applying theory, research, and personal experience to making decisions of practice.
 - b. Critically examine practice on an on-going basis.
 5. Teachers are Members of Learning Communities.
 - a. Work collaboratively with others, including colleagues and parents, to foster school progress and improve educational experiences in the context of the community/state and through the development of curriculum, instruction, and staff.
 - b. Use community resources to the benefit of students.

Examinations and Certification

Students must pass a comprehensive examination in the area of specialization.

Note: The M.Ed. program is not designed for initial teacher certification. Students wishing to use the M.Ed. program to add certification in an area of special education to their existing teaching certificates must meet requirements as mandated by the S.C. Department of Education. Further information may be obtained from the S.C. Department of Education or from the College of Education's Office of Students Affairs.