

College of Education
& Human Development

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK

for the

SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

Educational Psychology

Special Education Program • 2014-2015

Table of Contents

	Page
PROGRAM DESCRIPTION	4
Overview and General Information.....	4
Special Education Purpose, Philosophy, Rationale, and Objectives	4
Purpose of the Special Education Program	4
Philosophy of the Special Education Program	5
Rationale.....	5
Program Objectives	6
Professional Expectations of Special Educators	7
Developing the Special Educator	8
MEETING PROGRAM OBJECTIVES	10
Guidelines for Admission and Retention	10
Application to the Special Education Program	10
Acceptance to the Special Education Program.....	12
Retention in the Special Education Program.....	13
Grades.....	13
Completion of core classes.....	14
Prerequisite teaching skills	15
Professional conduct.....	15
Advising	12
W Courses	16
Field-based experiences.....	16
Field-based competencies	16

Review Process	17
Dismissal Process.....	18
Voluntary.....	18
Involuntary	19
Timelines for review	20
Special Education Undergraduate courses and prerequisites.....	21
FIELD EXPERIENCES IN SPECIAL EDUCATION	22
Philosophy	22
Goals of the Special Education Field Experience	22
Transportation.....	22
Field Experience by Block.....	22
STEPS IN PROGRAM COMPLETION.....	25
Degree Planning	22
Admission to Teacher Education.....	26
Admission to Student Teaching.....	27
Qualifying for Certification	27
Completion of Requirements for Graduation.....	27
Certification Statement.....	28
Special Education Program Sequence of Activities.....	29
RESOURCES (links to program materials and information).....	30
STUDENT COUNCIL FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN	31

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Overview and General Information

Welcome to the Special Education teacher preparation program. This handbook provides you important information concerning the program and options within the program. Upon receipt of this handbook, if you have any questions concerning the program, contact the student advisor for special education. In addition, you are expect to sign the statement available to you on-line at mycehd.tamu.edu to acknowledge that you have received, read, and understood the contents of this handbook.

Throughout your program of study, it is imperative that you keep the advisor informed of any changes in your legal name, address, or telephone number. As a student in the Special Education Program, you are required to provide an e-mail address through the Texas A&M University e-mail system. All program changes, notices, and updates will be disseminated to students through your Texas A&M University e-mail account. This means that you must check this account regularly throughout each semester. This year there is a transition to gmail for TAMU students. Please note that while your 'tamu' address (netid@tamu.edu) can be forwarded to another email. You also need to either consolidate your TAMU gmail account with another account or check the TAMU account regularly. Checking program-generated email is an essential professional practice to avoid missing important information or deadlines.

Since an individual is granted a teaching certificate by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) only upon the recommendation of a Texas teacher preparation institution, such as Texas A&M University, the institution is legally required to maintain records showing that each applicant it recommends has met all the requirements. As a student, you are expected to assume the responsibility for attending to details associated with the program requirements and deadlines explained in this handbook.

Special Education Purpose, Philosophy, Rationale, and Objectives

Purpose of Special Education Program

The purpose of degree programs in Special Education is to prepare professional educators to teach students with disabilities in grades EC (Early Childhood) through grade

12. This program prepares professional educators to become critical consumers of research and practitioners utilizing best practices throughout their careers.

Philosophy of Special Education Program

The Special Education Program at Texas A&M University is designed to prepare educator practitioners to serve as skillful, ethical, and caring professionals. We take a broad, non-categorical view of disability, and include in our training knowledge and skills relevant to meeting the needs of those students classified as "at-risk", "low-performing" and English Language Learners (ELL) as well as those identified as having disabilities. Access by students with special needs to the full continuum of services individual needs can be met is strongly supported. This is coupled with the belief that students should participate in the general education curriculum to the maximum extent that is determined to be beneficial. Preservice educators in the Special Education Program at Texas A&M University possess an understanding of and a respect for the ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity of the students, families, and communities in which they may work.

The Special Education Program at Texas A&M University shares a commitment to the effective implementation of evidenced-based practices and procedures in several avenues. This evidenced-based practice includes identification of students with special needs as well as instructional planning, implementation, and progress evaluation to meet the diverse needs of these individuals. Collaboration and partnership with the parents and other professionals are valued. Since we can expect continued change in the nature of special education in the future, we also assist our students in developing key skills in critical self-judgment and program evaluation to ensure their ability to continue to develop as effective professionals after leaving the University.

Rationale

The Special Education Program faculty, in collaboration with professional educators, health and human services agencies, community members, school representatives, and parents believe in their ability to develop a preparation program that will meet the needs of students with disabilities and their families. This program recognizes the diversity of students, families, environments, and abilities that are present in the schools today.

Program Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the program, the students will be able to accomplish the tasks or behaviors listed in each of the foundation areas.

Foundations	Tasks or behaviors
Development and Characteristics of Learners	Demonstrate respect and appropriate responses to varying ability and behaviors of diverse students based on knowledge of development and exceptionality
Individual Learning Differences	Provide appropriate individualized instruction through actively seeking how language, culture, and family background impact individuals with exceptionalities
Instructional Strategies	Select, adapt, and use evidence-based instructional strategies that individualize instruction and modify environments to develop, maintain, and generalize critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills for students with exceptional needs
Instructional Planning	Design systematic instruction that includes individual or group goals and objectives based on students' learning needs; implement best practices for teaching; consider linguistic factors; and work with students and relevant stakeholders to develop individualized transition plans
Assessment	Select reliable and valid formal and informal assessment tools that meet students' educational and behavioral needs; make educational decisions based on assessment results; adjust instruction or make modifications to enable students to access the general education curriculum and participate in statewide assessments
Professional Practice	Become lifelong learners and stay current with evidence-based practices; display respectful attitude in all settings with colleagues, students and families; demonstrate sensitivity toward cultures and diversity; ensure confidentiality; and submit paperwork in a timely manner
Learning Environment and Social Interactions	Collaborate with general educators, paraprofessionals, and the community to create motivating learning environments that foster active engagement in learning and respect for diversity in both typical and crisis situations
Communications	Understand language development, identify strategies to support students language and communication needs, determine appropriate assistive technology to support students communicative needs, and model effective language for all students including those whose primary language is not English
Ethical Practice	Practice as a lifelong learner within legal and ethical guidelines, with sensitivity to diverse learners

Collaboration	Effectively collaborate with families, educators, related service providers, and agency personnel in a culturally responsive manner in the education of children with exceptionalities
Social and Global Competence	Live and work effectively in a diverse and global society and articulate the value of a diverse and global perspective
Critical Thinking	Apply critical thinking skills to solve problems in the field of education

Professional Expectations of Special Educators

As professionals in training, you are expected to model professional behavior at all times including in class, in the community, and in your field-based experiences. As instructors, we are asked about your professionalism by faculty, community members, and future employers. We judge professionalism from your behaviors in our classrooms. The following is a list of expectations that will help you present yourself in the most positive and professional manner.

- 1. Attendance, punctuality, and participation:** Come to class on time and be prepared for class (e.g., assignments, readings completed ahead of time). You are also expected to notify professors in case of absence. The notification can be done through email, telephone or text message as previously arranged by you and your instructor. Bring doctor notes and university absence forms to class when you return.
- 2. Work habits:** Complete assignments on time (e.g., adhere to due dates outlined in course syllabi). Carefully read and follow instructions regarding assignments so they are complete and professionally presented.
- 3. Quality of work:** You are expected to submit work that reflects thoughtful consideration and your best effort. This includes proofreading and correcting errors before submitting. If you wait until the last minute to do your assignments, it will be reflected in your work.
- 4. Respect:** Exhibit professional behaviors in and out of class, including oral and written communication (e.g., emails). With regard to emails, include appropriate greetings (e.g., Dear Dr. Smith) and sign your first and last name at the end of the message. Identify the name of the course in your correspondence. Your demeanor should also communicate respect in your interactions with faculty members, school personnel, students, peers, and parents.
- 5. Technology:** Turn off cell phones or other communication media during class and field placements, as sending or receiving text messages, twitter, or communication unacceptable. You may use iPads and laptop computers for the purpose of taking

notes in class, following along with Power Points and lessons, or completing tasks assigned in class that require the use of electronic devices. If you use these devices to access your email, games, or the Internet, consequences will be applied. Be responsible and respectful in your postings on social media outlets.

- 6. Interactions with professors, field placement personnel, and students:** Conduct yourself in a professional manner in working with faculty, collaborating with mentor teachers and other school personnel, and when interacting with students as well as in the community. This includes, but is not limited to, using positive language, having discussions at appropriate times and in appropriate places.
- 7. Attitude:** Demonstrate a positive attitude toward the profession, faculty, students, school personnel, your peers, and parents.
- 8. Commitment to excellence in teaching:** Display an interest in and commitment to teaching, be willing to improve your skills and to apply feedback from supervisors in a timely manner. Plan to engage in lifelong learning.
- 9. Confidentiality:** Maintain confidentiality of student records, correspondence, and conversations both in your University courses and in school and community settings. This means using pseudonyms in written materials, and being sure not to mention real names in your professional conversations. As trainers, your faculty can know information about the students you are teaching, but keeping specific identifying information private is essential.

Developing the Special Educator

The special education teacher preparation program at Texas A&M University is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). The program is based on essential knowledge and skills developed by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). Because certification in special education in Texas is non-categorical, special educators will be trained to work with students who have all types of disabilities in all grades and at all types of levels, from mild to severe. The CEC Common Core of Knowledge for Special Educators, along with skills and knowledge required for teachers of students in individualized general curriculums (mild-moderate) and for teachers of students in individualized independence curriculums (moderate-severe), are available at <https://www.cec.sped.org/>.

The decision to become a special education teacher is a very important one. The early part of the program is designed to build background knowledge about the profession of teaching, issues in education, and the nature of students in a classroom environment. This early awareness should help the student evaluate the decision and test the commitment to a very demanding, but rewarding profession. Later components of the

program will build knowledge and skills necessary for successful classroom and behavior management, instructional planning for diverse groups of students, large and small group instruction, and evaluation of learning.

Currently, the special education training program is for all-level special education. Those on the all-level special education track obtain a baccalaureate degree in Interdisciplinary Studies and are certified to teach Special Education, Early Childhood through 12 (EC-12) within the constraints based on Texas certifications and No Child Left Behind mandates. Degree and certification plans are available at <http://epsy.tamu.edu/student-services/undergraduate-advising>.

Addition Training as required by the Texas Education Agency (TEA)

In addition to the program requirements, there are additional requirements that the TEA mandates of all teacher education programs. Currently, there are two modules that must be completed on ethics and mental health awareness.

All students in the degree plans leading to teacher certification must complete the on-line Ethics module prior to participating in field-based experiences. This is required as a part of acceptance into any undergraduate teaching program and is completed in SPED 302. In addition to the Aggie Honor Code, it is the expectation that all students working on degree plans leading to teacher certification through the CEHD will abide by the Code of Ethics and Standard Practices for Texas Educators as put forth by the Texas Administrative Code

http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=2147501244&menu_id=771&menu_id2=794

You will receive specific information about how this will be completed at the beginning of the SPED 302 course, along with specific dates for completion. Any violation of these Codes may result in dismissal from the CEHD.

In addition, students will also participate in Mental Health Awareness training as mandated based on Senate Bill 460 (www.SB460.org). The specific details will be communicated as training specifics are determined by TEA, the College of Education and Human Development, and the Special Education Program.

MEETING PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Guidelines for Admission and Retention in the Special Education Program

In an effort to provide students with the best possible educational experiences that meet their career goals, it is necessary to evaluate students in terms of the appropriateness of the special education program meeting their goals. In order to make the selection process as equitable as possible, and maintain high standards of excellence, a number of minimal criteria for admission to and continuation in the special education program beyond the introductory level have been established. All decisions regarding admission and continuation are made by the special education faculty.

Application to the Special Education Program

No student will be allowed to take special education courses other than INST 210, EPFB 210, or SPED 302 until he or she has been admitted to the Special Education Program. Admission to the Special Education Program is a competitive process based on student qualifications and availability of preparation slots. **Meeting criterion for admission is not a guarantee of admission to the program.** Admission occurs twice yearly, with materials submission deadlines of October 1 for the following spring semester, and March 1 for the following fall semester.

Application considerations include the following:

1. The state requires a minimum GPR of 2.75 in 60 hours of approved college coursework for admission to upper-level education programs and for teacher certification.
2. Have earned at least a B in INST 310 and SPED 302
3. Satisfaction of English proficiency requirement evidenced by earning:
 - a. a grade of B or higher in ENGL 104 (or receiving credit by exam for the course); or
 - b. a grade of B or higher in ENGL 210, 241, or 301; and
 - c. no grade below C in any course taken in (a) or (b) above.
4. Satisfactory completion of math and science core curriculum requirements.
5. Pass the THEA, ACCUPLACER, ASSET or COMPASS test or show proof of exemption from the test with appropriate TAKS/STAAR, SAT, or ACT scores

Additionally, the following must be submitted by the October 1 or March 1 deadline prior to the semester for which they plan to take upper-level special education classes:

1. A completed program application which can be accessed at:

http://epsy.tamu.edu/articles/application_to_special_education_certification_program

2. Current transcript from all universities attended (may be unofficial)
3. Written and typed response to the prompt posed in the application. This written statement will be reviewed not only for content, but also for clarity of thought, expression, organization, and writing style. Through this statement applicants should present an idea of their commitment to special education and students with exceptionalities.
4. A resume containing information regarding schools attended (secondary and post-secondary), work experience, extracurricular activities, honors, and related professional activities.
5. Three letters of recommendation: one from a College of Education and Human Development or other TAMU faculty member or from any other college/university attended; one from a teacher, counselor, or administrator in a school; and one from a community member who knows you well. These recommendations should address your ability to complete the academic requirements as well as your potential as a special educator in the classroom setting. Recommendations can also include your ability to work with children and/or adolescents in general, with children and/or adolescents who have diverse needs, families, and other professionals. In addition, you may include a recommendation form from professional organizations to which you belong. Special Education Program Faculty cannot provide these recommendations, as they are already part of the review process.
6. Evidence of passing the ethics exam. All students in degree plans leading to teacher certification must complete the on-line ethics module prior to participating in field experiences. In Special Education, passing the module is required as part of the application process.
7. In addition to the Aggie Code of Honor, it is the expectation that all students will abide by the Code of Ethics and Standard Practices for Texas Educators as put forth by the Texas Administrative Code. Any violation of these Codes may result in dismissal from the College of Education and Human Development.

(All materials must be received by the undergraduate special education advisor by the October 1 or March 1 deadlines.)

Acceptance into the Special Education Program

All students who are accepted MUST let the program know of their acceptance by the date indicated on their acceptance letter and attend an orientation meeting. Students who were not admitted into upper-level Special Education Program may elect to reapply during the next cohort selection. Students who are admitted must begin Block I the semester following admission. Deferral requests for extraordinary reasons will reviewed by the Undergraduate Committee. It is at the discretion of this committee whether or not the deferral is granted.

Students admitted to the Special Education Program must adhere to all regulations attached to the program. In addition to academic evaluation, students will also be evaluated on professional practices each semester. Students must be successful and make satisfactory progress in all aspects of the Special Education Program in order to remain in the program. Following admission, a student should anticipate four additional semesters and one summer semester to complete the program.

Retention in the Special Education Program

Each semester applicants are admitted to the program. Retention in the program is not automatic. Some students may not be allowed to continue in the program even though they may have completed the initial coursework successfully. Continuation in the special education program depends upon three critical factors: grades, progression in teaching skills, and professional demeanor in all settings.

Grades: Students must exhibit successful performance as evidenced by maintaining an overall GPR of 3.00 in all 300 and 400 level courses that are a part of the program. Students must at all times maintain a GPR of 3.00 in courses identified as part of the special education program and an overall GPR as indicated in their admission catalog. Students who fall below these minimum requirements will meet with the Undergraduate Program Coordinator and a probationary plan for academics will be developed. Probationary status for grades means that students will have one semester to bring their GPR back up to the minimum requirements.

Any student receiving a “D” or lower in any special education course will be required to repeat that course and will be placed on program probation. A probationary plan will be developed to assist the student in making progress toward GPR requirements. Failure to show progress and proficiency will result in the student not being allowed entry into more advanced level courses and/or in dismissal from the program.

Completion of core classes: Students in Special Education may only take the courses designated in each Block. Core or other classes, if lacking, may only be taken during Maymester or summer terms. While core math and science classes must be completed prior to beginning Block I, **all** core classes must be completed with a “C” or better prior to

the beginning of the Block II sequence. Courses on the degree plan must be passed with a grade of “C” or better.

Prerequisite teaching skills: Students must be proficient in prerequisite teaching skills by the time they are registering for student teaching. While students may start the program at various levels of ability, it is expected that by the completion of senior block, students will be proficient in teaching criteria as evaluated by school-based mentor teachers and by university evaluators. If students do not meet criteria and are judged to need additional support and practice in teaching, they may be required to do additional field experiences in the schools before being recommended for student teaching. If additional support and practice does not result in improvement, the student will be dismissed from the program.

Professional conduct: Students must exhibit professional conduct at all times. These behaviors are expected in all settings including, but not limited to, the field based classroom placement setting; the university classroom placement setting; interactions with field based personnel, students, and parents; interactions with university faculty; interactions with peers; and ability to fulfill professional requirements such as turning in paperwork in a timely manner. Students with areas of need will be advised, and if required, a support plan will be developed. Support plans identify cause/reason for the sanction, corrective actions to be completed by the student to have the sanction removed, and the timeline by which the corrective actions must be completed. If a student’s professional conduct is judged by faculty to be inappropriate despite advising and a support plan, the student will be dismissed from the program. In exceptional cases of gross lack of appropriate behavior such as, but not limited to, assault or battery, sexual misconduct, and/or substance abuse, students will be excluded from field experiences immediately and will be dismissed from the program.

Advising: Students in the Special Education Program must also complete program requirements that will ensure their ability to progress through the program. Each student must visit with the advisor every semester to discuss progress in the program and to ensure that all degree plan and certification requirements are met. This will occur each semester prior to registration.

W Courses: Texas A&M University requires students to take two courses in their major that carry a W designation. This designation means that the class is writing intensive. SEFB 420 (Education and Employment Issues in Secondary Special Education) and EPSY 428 (Collaboration in School Settings) carry this designation. If competencies are not met, the student will be placed on a plan to remediate writing skills, which may include any of the following: required reviews before submission, attending extra support workshops from the UWC, taking an extra course on technical writing, and/or completion a personalized plan.

Field-based experiences: Block I, Block II, Block III, and Block IV have associated paperwork and applications. All forms for field experiences and for student teaching must be filed within appropriate deadlines designated by the Field Placement Coordinator. Notification will be sent to students' university e-mail accounts. Additionally, **all** coursework must be completed prior to taking Block IV classes. There are no exceptions for this requirement.

Field-based competencies: Students in Block I and Block II field-based placements must meet minimum expectations on targeted teaching competencies. These competencies are designed to prepare students for a successful student teaching experience. These competencies include the ability to:

- work collaboratively with school personnel
- display professional behavior at all times
- take initiative in classroom activities
- implement classroom behavior management strategies appropriately
- establish a climate of courtesy and rapport
- prepare for the start of classes with necessary materials and equipment
- secure the student learners' attention while teaching and set behavioral expectations
- introduce lesson to include purpose and objective
- relate lesson to prior knowledge and learning
- present lesson in a clear and sequential manner
- provide and model activities to support student learning
- use questioning strategies for higher order thinking
- relate practice to learning
- redirect off task/inappropriate behavior (verbal/nonverbal)
- positively and specifically reinforce students' efforts and desired behaviors both individually and collectively
- relate lesson to prior knowledge
- introduce the lesson to include stating the purpose and objective
- present lesson information in clear and sequential way

- relate the content to the students' interests/experiences
- incorporate modifications appropriately
- use questioning strategies for higher level thinking
- provide and model activities to support the lesson objective
- relate practice activities to learning
- monitor and assess student understanding, participation, and progress
- adjust teaching based on student understanding, participation, and progress
- implement classroom behavior management strategies appropriately
- positively and specifically reinforce student effort and desired behavior
- effectively re-state lesson objective and purpose to provide lesson closure
- engage students in participation in lesson closure
- follow rules established for school personnel in field settings

Review Process

Students who are admitted to the program will be subject to a review process. There are two types of review. The first type is a planned review of progress in the program. This review generally occurs at midterm or as needed during the semester. The second type is a called review occurs when there are concerns about professional behaviors, performance in the field settings, and/or academic performance. A called review is typically initiated by a faculty member or members with the student. In either type of review, planned or called, a support plan can be developed at the time of the review.

A support plan is developed to assist the student in making appropriate progress. The support plan is developed with the student, and a follow-up review is scheduled. The support plan can be one of two types, a growth plan or a probation contract.

A growth plan is individually developed to assist the student in developing and/or refining professional skills and/or professional practices. A review date is included in the plan. If the student makes expected progress, the plan should be considered complete. If the student is not making expected progress, the growth plan may continue or may become a probation contract.

A probation contract is individually developed to assist the student in consistently producing professional skills and/or demonstrating professional practices, and will also place the student on probation status with the program. A student may be placed on a probation contract immediately without a growth plan if concerns about compromised

professional behaviors and/or if performance in the field settings, and/or academic performance are significant enough to adversely impact the student, peers, faculty, or those in the field settings.

While on the probation contract, the student is expected to fulfill the terms of the contract. Review of progress will be at the time as indicated in the contract. If the expected progress is completed, the plan would typically be considered complete. On some occasions, the probation plan may revert to a growth plan if continued support is needed in specific areas. If the expected progress is not completed, then two actions will be considered. One action is extending the probation. The student will continue to be on probation status. The other action is that the student will be terminated from the program. Either action can occur depending on how well progress has or has not be made by the student.

Students with probation status are blocked from scheduling additional courses. A probation status block means the student must fulfill obligations or conditions in the probation contract. If the obligations or conditions are not fulfilled, then the student will be dismissed from the program.

The termination from the program includes a dismissal letter written to the student with cause or reason of this sanction, the corrective actions attempted, and the timeline of the corrective actions. Copies are sent to the program advisor, program coordinator, program director, and the student file regarding dismissal from the program. Students may appeal the dismissal using established university procedures.

Any student placed under any of the above sanctions may access the University's Student Grievance Process to contest the sanction. Information relating to this process can be found at: <http://student-rules.tamu.edu/studentgrievanceprocedures>

Dismissal Process

Termination from the program may be voluntary or involuntary.

Voluntary: Voluntary termination is for students who choose to voluntarily leave the special education program. Students should write a letter to the academic advisor stating

their intention to terminate, rationale for termination (e.g., pursuing a different major), and semester of termination. No appeal is available.

Involuntary: Involuntary termination (dismissal) will occur where remediation efforts have been unsuccessful, professional conduct has been compromised, and/or the student has violated Texas A & M University student rules. Students have a right to appeal the dismissal using the established university appeals process. See <http://student-rules.tamu.edu/studentgrievanceprocedures> for university rules and appeal process.

Information on additional procedures is available from the Undergraduate Program Coordinator.

Timelines for Planned Review

Several planned reviews occur in the professional sequence. Students are reviewed at least once during field placement blocks usually at mid-term, and during student teaching as scheduled by the university supervisor.

Block I: Mid-semester, the student will be reviewed by university faculty regarding grades, professional demeanor and practices, and teaching progress. As needed, a second review will be scheduled.

Block II: Mid-semester, the student will be reviewed by university faculty regarding grades, professional demeanor and practices, and teaching progress. As needed, a second review will be scheduled.

Block III: Reviews will be scheduled as needed.

Block IV: Mid-semester and end of semester reviews are conducted regarding professional demeanor and practices, as well as teaching progress. As needed, additional reviews can be scheduled.

SPECIAL EDUCATION UNDERGRADUATE COURSES AND PREREQUISITES

The following courses are open to all students enrolled at TAMU who have completed INST 210 (Understanding Special Populations) as a prerequisite:

- SPED 302 Instructional Design for Students with Disabilities
- EPFB 210 Family Involvement and Empowerment (may be co-enrolled with INST 210)

The Special Education Undergraduate Program is arranged in a four block sequence. The following courses may only be taken by students who have been accepted into the Special Education program and who have degree plans or certification plans on file. ***Please check with your academic advisor as slight variations to Block III may required.***

Block I: Full school day experiences on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Courses are on Mondays and Wednesdays, with associated seminar on Wednesdays.

- SPED 310 Instructional Strategies for Students with Disabilities
- SPED 312 Reading for Students with Disabilities
- SPED 471 Classroom and Behavior Management
- EPSY 428 Collaboration in School Settings (Writing Intensive)
- EPFB 301 Field Teaching Skills I.

Block II: Full school day experiences are on Mondays and Wednesdays. Courses are on Tuesdays and Thursdays, with associated seminar held on Tuesdays.

- SPED 311 Assessment for Students with Disabilities
- SPED 314 Problem Solving in Math
- SPED 414 Methods & Issues in Low-incidence Disabilities
- SPED 442 Teaching Students with Emotional Disturbances and Behavior Disorders
- EPFB 401 Field Teaching Skills II.

Block III: There are field experience hours associated with SEFB 420

- SEFB 420* Education and Employment Issues in Secondary Special Education
- EDTC 311 Adapted/Assistive Technology
- RDNG 372 Reading and Writing across the Middle Grades
- INST 463 Second Language Methodology: ESL/Bilingual
- INST 301 Educational Psychology

**Indicates a writing-intensive course (W course)*

Block IV

Important Note: Changes may be made to the above depending upon which catalog the student is admitted. Check with the Special Education Advisor for the specific courses needed in order to complete the program in a timely manner.

FIELD EXPERIENCES IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

Philosophy

It is the view of the Special Education Program faculty that the preservice teaching experience should be designed to provide concrete experiences in school settings that facilitate the development of acceptable and realistic perceptions of roles, responsibilities, and relationships.

Goals of the Special Education Field Experience

Our primary goal is to develop confident professional teachers who will offer strength and leadership to the teaching profession. In meeting this goal, the following objectives are established to provide students with a continuing sequence of opportunities to accomplish the following:

- Observe in public school classrooms with a variety of exceptional students
- Relate observational experience to theory and coursework
- Apply theory and coursework to preservice experiences in the classroom

Transportation

It is the student's responsibility to arrange for transportation to and from his or her field placement sites. There are other university required procedures that will be explained before field experience placement in Block I.

Field Experiences by Block

Block I

This block of courses is taken after students have been admitted to the Special Education Program. This field based experience is done in diverse settings. Practicum activities include application of methods to teach reading, development and delivery of instruction plans and modified materials, and development of behavior management plans.

Block II

This semester consists of advanced methods in special education. During this semester, students will spend time in a variety of special education settings. Field based activities include individual and small group teaching, applying methods to teach academic skills, development and delivery of instruction plans and modified materials, development and delivery of curriculum based measures, and development of behavior management plans.

Block III

Block III includes education issues particular to adolescents, multicultural education, and students with limited English proficiency. SEFB 320 requires 36 clock hours of field based experience working in a secondary classroom or related setting and focuses on transition from school to work. Other courses in this block may have associated labs that require additional practicum hours.

Block IV

The final semester consists of student teaching, which provides field experience in a special education setting. It is designed to provide applied experiences in school settings that facilitate the development of acceptable and realistic perceptions of roles, responsibilities, and relationships. The cooperating teacher becomes the vital force in articulating what is expected of a professional teacher and in interpreting the culture of the school and its attitudes, values, and behaviors. During the application process and prior to making student placements, the students are asked about their grade level and setting preferences. Students are placed in classroom settings appropriate to their training program, with certified teachers who have a minimum of three years of experience in that setting. Taken concurrently with student teaching is SEFB 426, which consists of planned seminars to be conducted by the supervisor.

Student teaching is the capstone experience for all teacher preparation degree plans. As such, all courses on the students' degree plan have to be successfully completed prior to student teaching. In addition, students must meet all College of Education and Human Development requirements before entering student teaching. **Students are not allowed to take additional courses to complete program or university requirements**

during the student teaching semester or after completing student teaching. There are no exceptions to this rule.

Because of the strong evaluation component, there are several limitations to the kind and place of the student teaching experience. Personnel in the Texas A&M Special Education Program and cooperating school districts make student teaching arrangements. Distance placement options are at the discretion of the Field Placement Coordinator and the Special Education Undergraduate Program. There are many factors to consider when offering distance options including, but not limited to, having an established relationship with the district, having a qualified university supervisor in the immediate area, and the number of student teachers requesting a certain area.

Students are not to contact schools or school personnel regarding student teaching placement or attempt to make any arrangements for student teaching. Generally, you will not be placed in a high school you attended, nor will you be placed with teachers you know or teachers whom your relatives or friends know. Typically, you are not placed in a school where your family, your friends, or friends of your relatives work or attend school. For the good of candidates, the Texas A & M Special Education Program makes every effort to avoid even the appearance of favoritism. Your degrees and licenses are based on successful completion of a teacher education program. Graduates of the Special Education Program should not be put in jeopardy by having the validity of their degrees and/or credentials questioned because their field experiences involved or were supervised by individuals whose relationships might be construed as partisan.

STEPS IN PROGRAM COMPLETION

Degree Planning

Freshmen, sophomores, and transfer students may designate their intention to major in Special Education. Once a student has designated their intent to major in Special Education, he or she should make an appointment with the Special Education Advisor to develop a degree plan. An example is included in Appendix B. The Special Education Advisor will assist students with degree/certification planning and scheduling of courses.

A completed degree plan/certification plan is an agreement between the student and Texas A&M University. When the listed courses and all other requirements and approvals

on the degree plan/certification plan have been completed, the student will qualify for the degree and to be recommended for certification to the State of Texas.

Admission to Upper Level Coursework

Admission to the Special Education Program is the first step in the teacher certification process. Accreditation agencies require that criteria be established by the department and met by enrolled students before they continue in the program of studies leading to a teaching certificate. Admission to Teacher Education is a precondition to registering in advanced courses. A complete list of Teacher Education admission requirements will be provided by the advisor when the degree plan is completed. Additionally, the requirements and process is explained earlier in this handbook under Guidelines for Admission To and Retention in the Special Education Program. It is the responsibility of each student to obtain a complete list of these requirements and to meet them before he or she will qualify for formal admission into teacher education.

Admission to Student Teaching

Student teaching is an important component of the Special Education teacher preparation program and occurs during the final semester for students in the Special Education Program. It is required of all students who plan to be certified as teachers in Texas. Student teaching is a full-time one-semester program.

Student teaching will not occur until all courses on the students' degree plan have been successfully completed. In addition, students must meet all College of Education requirements before entering student teaching. **Students are not allowed to take additional courses to complete program or university requirements during the student teaching semester.** There are no exceptions to this rule. Additional requirements are available in the student teaching handbook and can be accessed at [http://epsy.tamu.edu/articles/Student Teaching](http://epsy.tamu.edu/articles/Student_Teaching)

Qualifying for Teaching Certification

In Texas, all teachers must have valid teaching certificates. Texas A&M University does not award the certificate, but recommends the student to the State Board for Educator

Certification. Therefore, the student must apply for certification during student teaching. **When criteria are met for certification, the State of Texas will award the certificate(s).**

In 1981, the Texas Legislature enacted legislation requiring that all individuals who apply for state certification pass proficiency tests in their teaching fields or areas of specialization. Specific details of certification tests, study guides, and applications are available through the CEHD Certification Officer. Students apply to take the initial certification tests during BK III with the final one required during student teaching during their student teaching semester. During student teaching, students must file for certification and pay the certification fee to the State Board for Educator Certification to receive certification. Information about certification and applications will be distributed to students during the student teaching semester.

The Teacher Education faculty and the Council for Teacher Education will judge the student's aptitude and attitude and recommend for or against certification. An appeals procedure is available for students denied a favorable recommendation. The Dean's Office will provide information on the procedure for appealing the decision. Upon successful completion of all student teaching, degree, and certification requirements the student is recommended by the department to the Texas Education Agency through the University Council on Teacher Education.

Completion of Requirements for Graduation

Satisfactory completion of all course work on the degree plan will meet basic graduation requirements for the bachelor's degree. Graduation is not automatic; therefore, the student must submit an application for graduation to the Office of the Registrar. The guidelines state that such an application occur at least 90 days prior to the end of the semester in which the student will complete all requirements. A diploma fee must also be paid. Clearance for graduation is the responsibility of individual students.

Certification Statement

Course content, state requirements and teaching certification areas are constantly under revision. It is the expectation that students with certification granting degree plans out of the CEHD will take the certification exams at the appropriate time during their

coursework. Upon graduation, they should complete the certification process. To provide quality teachers to the students in the State of Texas, the College of Education and Human Development at Texas A&M have instituted the following:

Option #1: Certification: This is the primary avenue for Special Education major students. Exams and issuance of the teaching certificate through TEA will need to be completed within twelve months post-graduation.

Option #2: Accelerated On-Line Post Graduate Certification: To be considered for this option, Texas A&M graduates must have initially taken and passed the certification exams. Those who meet these criteria and are requesting certification and are twelve months up to two years post-graduation will be referred to Accelerate On-line for Professional Development. Returning graduates are responsible for all expenses associated with the Professional Development program.

Option #3: Alternate certification: Graduates who request certification after two years post-graduation will be referred to an alternative certification program. Returning graduates are responsible for all expenses associated with the alternative certification program.

Special Education Program Sequence of Activities

The following is the typical sequence for students in the TAMU special education program:

- _____ Complete INST 210 with a grade of B or better
- _____ Complete EPFB/EPsy 210 with a grade of B or better
- _____ Encouraged to join Student Council for Exceptional Children
- _____ Apply for admission to Special Education Program (spring of sophomore year)
- _____ Complete SPED 302 with a grade of B or better
- _____ Complete the Ethics course as required by TEA
- _____ Admission to Special Education Program
- _____ Participate in Orientation to the Special Education Program
- _____ Complete all core and additional required courses with a grade of C or better
- _____ Complete Block I with 3.0 or better GPA
- _____ Complete Block II with 3.0 or better GPA
- _____ Complete Block III with 3.0 or better GPA
- _____ Apply for student teaching during Block III
- _____ Take certification examinations
- _____ Apply for Certification
- _____ Complete Block IV (SEFB 425)
- _____ Present electronic portfolio to program faculty
- _____ Ensure all blocks/holds are reconciled on your TAMU record
- _____ Receive B.S. degree in Interdisciplinary Studies (all-level)
- _____ Receive teaching certificate through the State (3-4 weeks after graduation)

Student Resources

Links to resources of materials and information that are useful to the student in the Special Education Program:

Degree and Certification Requirements: <http://epsy.tamu.edu/degrees-and-programs/undergraduate-degree-programs/special-education>

Certification Exams for Teachers: <http://epsy.tamu.edu/degrees-and-programs/teacher-certification>

STUDENT COUNCIL FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) is widely respected as the most active organization in the world serving all exceptional children who have disabilities and those who are gifted. It is a network of 53,000 professional members from every state and province who are involved in all aspects of special education. Texas A&M University sponsors a student chapter of the Council for Exceptional Children. Our chapter number is 784. All students in the Special Education program are strongly encouraged to join this professional organization.

Benefits of membership in CEC are listed below, and may change as dictated by CEC.

- * **Three publications:** *TEACHING Exceptional Children*, quarterly; *Exceptional Children*, bimonthly; and *CEC Today*, monthly.
- * **Automatic Membership** in local, state/provincial and international CEC.
- * **Seventeen CEC Divisions** centered on various interests or exceptionalities.
- * **Professional Development Activities** including the annual CEC Convention, academies, conferences, and workshops. Early notice and special rates for members.
- * **Effective Representation** at all levels of government.
- * **Information Services** through the ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education.
- * **Discount of 30%** on over 100 CEC professional products and services--books, periodicals, multimedia kits and more.
- * **Access** to latest research, practice, and products linking technology and special education.
- * **Savings** on professional liability, major medical, and term life insurance through group plans.
- * **Opportunity** to receive a major credit card with no annual fee for the first year.
- * **Investment Opportunities** also available--CDs and money market accounts.