The Special Education program is the academic home to many students who enjoy working with children and youth, especially children and youth with disabilities. Special Education graduates enter a high-demand field with an almost 100% job placement rate, with graduates finding employment in Wisconsin and across the country.

The program prepares educators to serve as resources and advocates for persons with disabilities and their families. This includes being a leader, collaborating with others, and working creatively within and outside schools to create inclusive educational experiences to improve the quality of life for individuals with disabilities and their families.

Graduates are prepared to work effectively across disability categories, including intellectual and developmental disabilities, learning disabilities, and emotional/behavioral disorders. The program emphasizes coursework and experiences in elementary, middle, and high schools with students who have a wide range of abilities, including students with severe disabilities.

The Special Education program emphasizes coursework in areas including:

- Assessing learning needs in all core academic areas
- Creating individualized education programs
- Implementing instructional strategies for helping students with a variety of abilities succeed
- Using assistive technology
- Understanding behavior and intervention strategies for social and academic success
- Diversity issues in special education
- Working collaboratively with teachers and other school professionals to create successful inclusive learning environments

Students learn about these topics through a four-semester sequence of coursework, practicum experiences, and student teaching experiences in elementary, middle, and high schools.

**NEW CERTIFICATION OPTIONS!**

The department is thrilled to provide two new certification programs beginning with fall 2022 program admission. The first is a certification program in Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE). Graduates will be certified in ECSE, ages birth-grade 3. This program prepares early intervention and early childhood special education professionals to serve young children ages birth through eight years who have, or are at-risk for, developmental delays and disabilities, and also the families of these children. Graduates may work in a variety of settings including, but not limited to, the birth-grade 3 program. These might include Early Head Start, Head Start, licensed child care centers, 4K programs, and grades kindergarten-grade 3.

The second new program option will prepare educators to support the needs of students with disabilities ages birth through Grade 12. This program provides a path for students to become certified in both ECSE and Special Education Cross-Categorical K-12. Both new program options require four semesters of professional coursework and include multiple field experiences in local educational settings and schools.

Effective with fall 2022 program admission, new teacher certification licensing options are being implemented at UW-Madison in response to changes in Wisconsin teacher licensing requirements. Pending final approval from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, students admitted to Special Education can pursue one of four certification paths:


Students intending to teach in Wisconsin may be eligible for the Teacher Pledge ([https://tec.education.wisc.edu/teacher-pledge/](https://tec.education.wisc.edu/teacher-pledge/)), an opt-in loan forgiveness program for teacher education students.

Madison College students should also investigate the new transfer agreement ([https://tec.education.wisc.edu/become-a-teacher/uw-madison-school-of-education-transfer-agreement/](https://tec.education.wisc.edu/become-a-teacher/uw-madison-school-of-education-transfer-agreement/)) between Madison College and UW-Madison. Students meeting the requirements of the agreement are guaranteed admission to UW-Madison’s School of Education and to Special Education.

**ELEMENTARY EDUCATION AND SPECIAL EDUCATION DUAL MAJOR CERTIFICATION PROGRAM**

Students interested in Special Education may want to consider another program option that certifies students in both Elementary Education and Special Education. The job placement rate for students graduating from this program is almost 100%. Employment opportunities are available across the country.

The Elementary-Special Education teacher certification program prepares educators who foster high academic achievement in all children—particularly students of color, students from minoritized racial, cultural, linguistic and socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as students with disabilities. The program helps students become leaders who collaborate and work creatively within and outside schools to foster inclusive educational experiences for all pupils, including those with disabilities. Program graduates understand the important role that families play in supporting students’ development and achievement.

This program emphasizes collaboration, with training in both Elementary and Special Education program areas. It focuses on inclusion and gaining a strong background in working with students across disability
categories, including learning disabilities, emotional/behavioral disorders, and other high incidence disabilities.

Graduates receive a bachelor of science degree in Education. Effective with fall 2022 program admission, students will be eligible to receive an Elementary Education license in grades K-9 and a Special Education license in grades K-12.

The Elementary Education-Special Education program emphasizes coursework in areas including:

- Recognizing how our backgrounds and experiences shape thinking and actions; reflecting and adapting to best serve students
- Assessing learning needs in all core academic areas
- Creating individualized education programs
- Understanding behavior and intervention strategies for social and academic success
- Diversity and social justice in education
- Working collaboratively with teachers and other school professionals to create successful inclusive learning environments

Students learn about these topics through a four-semester sequence of coursework, practicum experiences, and student-teaching experiences in elementary and middle schools. The sequence begins in the fall after program admission.

Information about requirements and application procedures for the Elementary-Special Education dual teacher certification program is available in the Elementary Education (http://guide.wisc.edu/undergraduate/education/curriculum-instruction/elementary-education-bse/) section of the Guide.