

# SPECIAL EDUCATION, BSE

## WISCONSIN EXPERIENCE

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UW–Madison’s vision for the total student experience, the Wisconsin Experience (<https://wisconsinexperience.wisc.edu/about/>), combines learning in and out of the classroom. Tied to the Wisconsin Idea (<https://www.wisc.edu/wisconsin-idea/>) and steeped in long-standing institutional values – the commitment to the truth, shared participation in decision-making, and service to local and global communities – the Wisconsin Experience describes how students develop and integrate these core values across their educational experience.

UW–Madison encourages students to mindfully engage in four core concepts throughout their time on campus: Empathy & Humility, Relentless Curiosity, Intellectual Confidence, and Purposeful Action (<https://wisconsinexperience.wisc.edu/intellectual-confidence/>).

Since its inception, the School of Education has embraced the concepts of the Wisconsin Experience, providing opportunities for students to learn in venues beyond the traditional classroom. Our students also independently seek out related activities and experiences, thus creating their own unique Wisconsin Experience.

### SPECIAL EDUCATION AND THE WISCONSIN EXPERIENCE

#### Community-Based Learning

RP SE 300 Individuals with Disabilities offers a field-based experience where students work directly or indirectly with individuals with disabilities. Each year, hundreds of students are placed in various community settings across Madison. This experience provides students with valuable, first-hand knowledge of the services and contributions made to support individuals with disabilities, encouraging learning beyond the traditional classroom. These real-world experiences allow students to better understand the community and its needs, extending their education beyond textbooks and lectures.

#### Learning from Current Practitioners

Teacher candidates gain extensive field experience in schools, culminating in a full-time student teaching assignment alongside a cooperating teacher. The strong partnership between the teacher candidate, their field supervisor, and the cooperating teacher in Madison-area schools ensures robust support from day one. Many graduates are offered teaching positions by the schools where they completed their fieldwork.

#### Guest Speakers

The Special Education major emphasizes bringing guest speakers into the classroom. These experts offer diverse perspectives on the daily experiences of individuals with disabilities. Students also hear directly from community organizations that advocate for and support people with disabilities.

Additionally, a wide range of guest speakers participate in Special Education practicum and student teaching seminars. These guests may

include school district personnel, parents and family members, teachers, and individuals with disabilities.

#### Field Experiences

Students in our teacher education programs participate in multiple field experiences, including practicum and student teaching, throughout their professional sequence. These hands-on experiences provide students with numerous opportunities to apply what they are learning in the classroom to real-world teaching in schools and communities.

#### Clubs and Organizations

Special Education students have many opportunities to participate in clubs and organizations. Popular options include Special Olympics, Aspiring Educators, and Camp Kesem.

#### Additional Majors and Certificates

Many students choose to pair their Special Education program with another major or certificate. Popular second majors include Educational Policy Studies, Spanish, and Psychology, but students can select from a variety of majors and certificates that align with their academic and professional goals.

#### Community Employment

The Department of Rehabilitation Psychology and Special Education has strong connections with the community. Students in the department often find both paid and volunteer opportunities in school and community organizations that serve children with disabilities and their families. Examples include the Schools of Hope Tutoring Program, Madison School and Community Recreation, and Gio’s Garden.

#### Study Abroad

Special Education students are encouraged to explore study abroad opportunities, including popular faculty-led short-term programs hosted by the School of Education. The Department of Rehabilitation Psychology and Special Education offers a popular Disability Rights & Access in Australia (<https://studyabroad.wisc.edu/program/?programId=330353>) course which provides hands-on learning experiences in a global context. Students are encouraged to explore all available options (<https://global.education.wisc.edu/study-abroad/>) through the School of Education to enrich their academic journey and gain valuable international perspectives.