

Are you interested in earning a bachelor's degree and becoming a special education teacher?



Steps to Obtaining a Pennsylvania Special Education Teaching Certificate

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO TEACH?

1

Consider which certificate best meets your interest.

Pennsylvania has four instructional certificates specific to special education:

- Hearing Impaired PK-12
- Speech & Language Impaired PK-12 (*requires a Master's Degree*)
- Special Education PK-12
- Visually Impaired PK-12

WHERE CAN YOU ACCOMPLISH THIS?

There are over 100 programs in Pennsylvania approved by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) for special education certifications.

Refer to [this list](#) of approved programs on the PDE website when considering which program(s) to apply to.



2

ENROLL IN A BACHELOR'S DEGREE PROGRAM

3

All teacher certification programs require a minimum of a bachelor's degree.

Not ready for a bachelor's degree program? Colleges and universities have partnerships with community colleges so you can earn credits toward a bachelor's degree and teacher certification.

TAKE THE BASIC SKILLS ASSESSMENTS

Currently, the requirement to take the basic skills assessments in math, reading, and writing prior to formal admission into a program is waived. Consult with the college/university for details.



4

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) accepts a variety of tests for this requirement, such as the ACTs, SATs, PAPA with Pearson, or CORE with Praxis. For more information on certification testing and scoring requirements, refer to the [Pathways to Demonstrate Basic Skills for Teacher Certification webpage](#) on the PDE website.

APPLY TO THE EDUCATION PROGRAM

5

Once you are enrolled in a bachelor's degree program, there is a formal admittance process into the education program.*

Formal entry into a teacher preparation program can take place anywhere between 48-60 credits. Candidates can be admitted any time during their freshman and sophomore years if they have accumulated the credits.

**Admission into a program is based on multiple sources of data including an assessment of academic preparation, academic performance, faculty recommendations, and a minimum grade point average.*

FULFILL THE STUDENT-TEACHING REQUIREMENT

There is a twelve-week minimum for student teaching. Colleges and universities have a variety of approaches for candidates to have in-school field experiences prior to student teaching.



6

Refer to pages 7-9 of the [PA Field Experience and Student Teaching Competencies](#) document for more information on the required competencies for student teaching.

GRADUATE FROM THE PROGRAM

7

Consult with the college/university for details.



All special education teaching candidates must take and pass a general knowledge test and content area tests, often referred to as the PRAXIS Tests, as part of the certification process.

Special education candidates take a minimum of two tests:

1. Fundamental Subjects: Content Knowledge (5511). The passing score is 150.
2. A content area test based on the special education certification you are seeking. Refer to [Certification Test and Score Requirements](#) for the passing scores needed for the Special Education Content Area Tests.



Special Education Content Area Tests:

- ✓ Hearing Impaired PK-12: Education of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students (5272) Passing Score: 160
- ✓ Speech & Language Impaired PK-12: Speech Language Pathology (5331) Passing Score: 162
- ✓ Special Education PK-12: Foundational Knowledge (5355) Passing Score: 145
- ✓ Visually Impaired PK-12: Teaching Students With Visual Impairments (5282) Passing Score: 163

Some helpful tips and information on content area testing:

- ✓ Consider taking and passing the content area tests **before** student teaching. [Practice Tests](#) are available on the PRAXIS website to target preparation for the tests.
- ✓ Locate the passing scores for the tests so you know what is needed to pass (refer to [Certification Test and Score Requirements](#)). Your grade point average (GPA) may affect the passing score needed. Maintaining a GPA of 3.0 or higher may have a positive impact on the passing score needed.
- ✓ Testing requirements can change which can impact the tests you have to take and/or the passing scores. Refer to the [Certification Testing Requirements](#) webpage on the PDE website for the most current information on tests and passing scores.



Note: There is a cost for each test you take. To learn more, visit [Certification Testing Requirements](#).

APPLY FOR THE CERTIFICATE

Apply for your certificate through the Teacher Information Management System (TIMS), Pennsylvania's online certification system.

The application can be started on the first day of the month of graduation. Once the degree is conferred, the application can be processed and confirmed by the college/university. To view the application and User Guides, visit the [TIMS webpage](#) on the PDE website.

Note: There is a cost to apply for your certificate. The processing time to receive your Instructional I certificate can vary. Processing takes approximately one week. For more information about the processing time, visit the [Certification page](#) on the PDE website.



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Josh Shapiro, Governor

