

APR Guide to Obtaining a Special Education Teaching Certificate Pennsylvania’s Traditional Route to Certification



I am interested in becoming a special education teacher. I want to earn a bachelor’s degree and obtain teacher certification.

Steps to Obtaining a PA Teaching Certificate	Details Specific to Special Education Certifications
<p style="text-align: center;">Step One What do I want to teach?</p>	<p>PA has four instructional certificates specific to Special Education. Consider which certificate best meets your interest.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hearing Impaired PK-12 • Special Education PK-12 • Speech Language Impaired PK-12 note: this instructional certification requires a master’s degree • Visually Impaired PK-12
<p style="text-align: center;">Step Two Where do I accomplish this?</p>	<p>There are over 100 Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) - approved programs in Pennsylvania for special education certifications.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hearing Impaired (4 programs) • PK-12 Special Education (78 programs) • Speech Language Impaired (20 programs) • Visually Impaired (4 programs) <p>Approved Special Education Teacher Certification Programs: Refer to this list of programs when considering which program(s) to apply to.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Step Three Enroll in a bachelor's degree program</p>	<p>All teacher certification programs require a minimum of a bachelor’s degree.</p> <p>Not ready for a bachelor’s degree program? Colleges and universities have partnerships with community colleges so you can earn credits towards a bachelor’s degree and teacher certification.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Step Four</p> <p>Basic Skills Assessments: we currently accept a variety of tests for this requirement, such as the ACTs, SATs, PAPA with Pearson, or CORE with Praxis.</p> <p>Find the score requirements for each option under the Certifications Test Requirements tab on our website. (Excel)</p>	<p>Consult with the college/university for details.</p> <p>Currently, the requirement to take the basic skills assessments in math, reading, and writing prior to formal admission into a program is waived. For more information, refer to Pathways to Demonstrate Basic Skills for Teacher Certification.</p>

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<p style="text-align: center;">Step Five Complete college program</p>	<p>Once you are enrolled in a bachelor's degree program, there is a formal admittance process into the education program.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Step Six Student Teaching</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>PA Field Experience and Student Teaching Competencies: See pages 7-9 for more information on the required competencies for student teaching.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Step Seven Graduate</p>	<p>Consult with the college/university for details.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Step Eight</p> <p>Pass Content Area Testing: This will be the testing associated with the subject area you completed. As an example, if you completed a Mathematics program, you will need to take the Mathematics testing.</p> <p>Find the test(s) and scores required under the Certification Test Requirements tab on our website. (Excel)</p>	<p>All special education teaching candidates must take and pass content area tests (often referred to as the PRAXIS Tests) as part of the certification process. This includes the general content knowledge test and a special education content area test.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Consider taking and passing the content area tests before student teaching. ✓ Practice tests are available to target preparation for the tests. ✓ Locate the passing scores for the tests so you know what is needed to pass. 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. PDE's certification testing requirements webpage has the most current information on tests and passing scores. <p>Special education candidates take a minimum of two tests.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fundamental Subjects: General Content Knowledge (5511). The passing score is 150. 2. A content area test based on the special education certification you are seeking (see list below).

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	<p><u>Special Education Content Area Tests:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 <p>Note: There is a cost for each test you take. For more information on testing, visit Special Education Testing Requirements</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Step Nine</p> <p>Apply for your certificate through the Teacher Information Management System (TIMS). View the application and User Guides.</p>	<p>The application is started by the teacher candidate and confirmed by the college/university.</p> <p>The application can be started on the first day of the month of graduation. Once the degree is conferred, the application can be processed.</p> <p>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. More information about the processing time can be found on the Certification page of PDE’s website.</p>