
Teacher Preparation: Special Education Requirements for General Education Teachers

More than 6 million students with disabilities are served under the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) of 2004. Two-thirds of these students are in at least one course taught by general education teachers. Due to the increased inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms, it is essential for general education teachers to have the knowledge and skills needed to teach students with disabilities. This project will produce a report of the current certification requirements for general education teachers to teach students with disabilities in the Northeast and Islands Region.

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LEARNING INNOVATIONS AT WESTED, PROJECT TEAM

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- Document the existing certification requirements in special education coursework and/or fieldwork for general education teachers in the nine jurisdictions of the Northeast and Islands Region.
- Analyze and describe the commonalities and differences in the certification requirements across jurisdictions in the region.

AUDIENCE & APPLICATION

- State education agency (SEA) staff responsible for reviewing and potentially updating their states' certification requirements general education teachers.
- Higher education institutions that prepare teachers in the region.

METHODOLOGY

- Collect and analyze data from publicly available documents and a web-based database related to special education requirements for general education teachers.
- Conduct face-to-face interviews with primary credentialing officials in the nine SEAs in the region.

FINAL PRODUCTS

- Issues & Answers Report to be published by the Institute of Education Sciences.

What Are Fast-Response Projects?

Fast-Response Projects are short-term projects that respond to regional and national needs and priorities and provide research-based knowledge to inform policy and practice. They use methods such as research syntheses, mining of existing data sets, and descriptive studies.



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Coursework and Fieldwork Requirements in the Northeast and Islands Region

Researchers found that eight of the nine jurisdictions in the region require some coursework in teaching students with disabilities for initial licensure for general education teachers. Only New Hampshire does not currently mandate coursework or fieldwork in this area and its Department of Education is revising its regulations.

Researchers also found commonalities and differences in how the jurisdictions require general education teacher candidates to develop special education knowledge and in the specific knowledge and skills within special education that they require candidates to know. For example:

- Four jurisdictions require teacher candidates to take a prescribed number of credit hours focused on special education or teaching exceptional students
- Four others require teacher candidates to demonstrate knowledge and skills in teaching students with disabilities but do not specify how teacher preparation programs meet this requirement
- Two jurisdictions require general education teacher candidates to spend part of their student teaching experience working in classrooms with students with disabilities

Knowledge, Skills, and Practices Required

Researchers identified eight special education content areas that teachers are required to learn by at least one jurisdiction in the region:

1. Growth and development of exceptional children;
2. Instructional design;
3. Adapt, differentiate, accommodate, or modify instruction;
4. Field experiences with students with disabilities;
5. Prepare, implement, or evaluate Individualized Education Programs (IEPs);
6. Seek support or collaboration to assist students with disabilities;
7. Understand the legal and historical foundation of special education; and
8. Identify student learning differences.

Contact Information

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