Special Education (MA)

This program is offered by the School of Education. It is available online and at the St. Louis home campus.

Program Description
The master of arts (MA) in special education provides practicing educators, related professionals and other qualified individuals opportunities to study and research special education practices and services. Current issues and emerging trends are explored on a global level, with a strong focus on social justice and ethical themes at the local, national and/or international level. The program emphasizes developmentally oriented theory and research in the areas of cognitive and socio-emotional development, and students are expected to use this knowledge to design and promote evidence-based interventions and instructional practices to enhance pupil learning. Candidates explore opportunities for collaboration and advocacy within their educational settings that are designed to improve the quality of life of individuals with disabilities in general. The program of study recognizes the rapidly changing dimensions of special education and promotes the philosophy of integrated and inclusive learning experiences for all children and youth.

The program offers students opportunities to individualize professional development by specializing in unique areas of study. The emphasis areas are designed to provide flexibility within a structured sequence of coursework. Students may choose to specialize in applied behavior analysis, dyslexia, mild/moderate disabilities, positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS), severe developmental disabilities and autism, or trauma-informed education and intervention.

The master of arts in special education program does not lead to initial teacher certification in special education. For more information about initial teacher certification in special education (mild/moderate disabilities), please refer to the Teacher Certification section under the MAT with an emphasis in special education section of this catalog.

Learning Outcomes
Graduates of this program are able to:

• Use valid and reliable assessment practices to minimize bias.
• Use their knowledge of general and specialized curricula to improve programs, supports and services at classroom, school, community and system levels.
• Facilitate the continuous improvement of general and special education programs, supports and services at the classroom, school and system levels for individuals with exceptionalities.
• Conduct, evaluate and use inquiry to guide professional practice.
• Provide leadership to formulate goals, set and meet high professional expectations, advocate for effective policies and evidence-based practices, and create positive and productive work environments.
• Use foundational knowledge of the field and professional ethical principles and practice standards to inform special education practice, engage in lifelong learning, advance the profession, and perform leadership responsibilities to promote the success of professional colleagues and individuals with exceptionalities.
• Collaborate with stakeholders to improve programs, services and outcomes for individuals with exceptionalities and their families.

Program Curriculum
The MA special education majors are required to complete a minimum of 33 credit hours, 24 of which must be in special education. Students considering graduate study at the doctoral level are encouraged to complete six (6) credits of field research and complete a thesis for a program total of 36 credit hours.

Required Coursework:
The following courses are required, with a minimum grade of B- in each course, for all special education majors:

Global Citizenship, Teacher Leadership, and Policy
• SPED 5318 Global Issues in Special Education (3 hours)

Learner Development, Curriculum and Program Outcomes
• SPED 5500 Socio-emotional Development: Children with Special Needs (3 hours)
or SPED 5660 Cognitive Development: Children with Special Needs (3 hours)
• Emphasis area (5000-level) coursework (9 hours)

Assessment
One course from the following list based on emphasis area:
• SPED 5040 Assessment of Reading Disabilities, including Dyslexia (3 hours)
• SPED 5240 Psychoeducational Assessment (3 hours)
• SPED 5311 Assessment of Functional Skills for Students with Severe Developmental Disabilities and Autism (3 hours)
• SPED 5413 Assessment of Learning and Learning Problems (3 hours)
• SPED 5315 Identification and Assessment of Children with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (3 hours)
• SPED 5703 Functional Behavior Assessment and Intervention (3 hours)

Professional and Ethical Practice
One course from the following list:
• SPED 5270 Advocating for Persons with Disabilities (3 hours)
• SPED 5275 Reflective Teaching and Mentoring (3 hours)
• SPED 5319 Disability and Ethics (3 hours)
• SPED 5330 Legal Issues in Special Education (3 hours)
• SPED 5903 Ethics and Professional Issues in Applied Behavior Analysis (3 hours)

Collaboration
One course from the following list:
• EDUC 5080 Planning for the Inclusive Classroom (3 hours)
• SPED 5290 Co-Teaching and Collaborative Practices for the 21st Century Classroom (3 hours)
• SPED 5704 PBIS/Systems Leadership: Staff Development & Coaching (3 hours)
• SPED 5880 Integrating Resources: Community, School and Family (3 hours)

Research and Inquiry
• SPED 5800 Applied Research Methods (3 hours)
or SPED 5850 Single-Subject Research Design (3 hours)
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**General Information**

**Areas of Emphasis**

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- **SPED 6000 Applied Field Research (3 hours)**  
  or **SPED 6250 Thesis (for graduate students interested in doctoral studies) (6 hours)**

**Elective**

- 3 hours in consultation with advisor

**Total: 33 credit hours**

**Emphasis in Applied Behavior Analysis**

This emphasis is only available online.

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is a type of intervention that focuses on improving specific behaviors, such as academics and adaptive behavior. The emphasis in applied behavior analysis prepares candidates with the knowledge and concepts needed to engage in applied behavior analysis in schools, community agencies, residential centers and family settings to enhance the skills and abilities of persons with Autism Spectrum Disorder, significant disabilities and other developmental disabilities.

The emphasis is designed to prepare candidates with the coursework-based content knowledge and skills required to apply to sit for the Board Certified Behavior Analyst® Examination offered through the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB). Successful completion of the Webster University master of arts in special education with an emphasis in applied behavior analysis does not guarantee that the candidate will be approved to sit for the Board Certified Behavior Analyst® Examination. Candidates who plan to apply for BCBA certification should carefully review the requirements, published by the BACB (www.bacb.com).

Students pursuing the ABA emphasis are expected to have an association, professional or voluntary, with community service providers, agencies or educational organizations which provide services to individuals with developmental disabilities and/or behavioral challenges, in order to fully benefit from the coursework.

The following coursework is required for an emphasis in applied behavior analysis:

- **SPED 5703 Functional Behavioral Assessment and Interventions** (3 hours)
- **SPED 5850 Single-Subject Research Design** (3 hours)
- **SPED 5890 Introduction to Applied Behavior Analysis** (3 hours)
- **SPED 5900 Concepts and Principles of Behavior Analysis** (3 hours)
- **SPED 5901 Behavior Change Procedures** (3 hours)
- **SPED 5902 Supervision and Staff Performance** (3 hours)
- **SPED 5903 Ethics and Professional Issues in Applied Behavior Analysis** (3 hours)

*Core course requirement

**Optional course in applied behavior analysis:**

- **SPED 5090 Special Education Practicum: ABA** (1-3)  
  *(may be repeated for credit if content differs)*

**This practicum is an optional course to meet the field experience requirement for the BCBA certification.**

**Emphasis in Dyslexia**

The emphasis in dyslexia is intended for certified educators who are interested in acquiring the foundational knowledge necessary for understanding what dyslexia is, how to recognize this problem early in a child’s academic career, and how to provide appropriate, intensive instruction to help students with reading disabilities to achieve academic success. Each of the six courses required for this emphasis are aligned with the International Dyslexia Association’s (IDA) Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading.

The following courses are required for an emphasis in dyslexia:

- **READ 5190 Advanced Studies in Language Development and Acquisition** (3 hours)
- **SPED 5040 Assessment of Reading Disabilities, including Dyslexia** (3 hours)
- **SPED 5235 Understanding Diverse Reading Profiles, including Dyslexia** (3 hours)
- **SPED 5412 Instructional Methods for Diverse Reading Profiles, including Dyslexia** (3 hours)
- **SPED 5270 Advocating for Persons with Disabilities** (3 hours)
- **SPED 5090 Special Education Practicum: Dyslexia** (3 hours)

*Core course requirement

**Emphasis in Mild/Moderate Disabilities**

The emphasis in mild/moderate disabilities is intended for certified educators who are interested in developing expertise in teaching students with mild/moderate (cross-categorical) disabilities. While the emphasis does not lead to an initial teacher certificate in mild/moderate disabilities, the program of study offers currently certified teachers an opportunity to acquire the foundational knowledge in preparation for an endorsement in mild/moderate disabilities: cross-categorical.

The following coursework is required for an emphasis in mild/moderate disabilities:

- **SPED 5030 Students with Mild/Moderate Disabilities** (3 hours)
- **SPED 5240 Psychoeducational Assessment** (3 hours)
- **SPED 5380 Methods for Students with Mild/Moderate Disabilities I** (3 hours)

*Core course requirement or substitute

**Two courses (6 credits) from the following:**

- **SPED 5010 Differentiated Mathematics Instruction** (3 hours)
- **SPED 5020 Assistive Technology for Students with Special Needs** (2-3 hours)
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- SPED 5040 Assessment of Reading Disabilities, including Dyslexia (3 hours)
- SPED 5050 Language Development (3 hours)
- SPED 5090 Special Education Practicum (3 hours)
- SPED 5245 Counseling for Life’s Transitions (3 hours)
- SPED 5250 Behavior Management for Children with Special Needs (3 hours)
- SPED 5320 Self-Regulated Learning for Students with Exceptionalities (3 hours)
- SPED 5381 Methods for Students with Mild/Moderate Disabilities II (3 hours)

**Emphasis in Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)**

This emphasis is only available online.

The emphasis in positive behavioral interventions and supports prepares educators and other qualified professionals who are interested in developing and participating in school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS). The emphasis in PBIS is designed to provide educators with the knowledge and expertise to design, implement and evaluate individual, small group and systemic strategies that improve social behavior and learning outcomes for K-12 students. The conceptual framework for PBIS is based in a tiered systems approach to improving academic and social outcomes for all students. This program is targeted to educators who are interested in pursuing careers as behavior specialists and/or school-wide PBIS team members or consultants. Successful completion of this emphasis may add three hours to the master of arts degree.

Students pursuing the PBIS emphasis are expected to have a professional affiliation with a private or public educational organization in order to fully benefit from the coursework.

**The following coursework is required for an emphasis in PBIS:**

- SPED 5700 School-Based Prevention/Intervention: RTI and PBIS (3 hours)
- SPED 5701 Universal School-Wide PBIS* (3 hours)
- SPED 5702 Secondary Prevention: Targeted Group Interventions (3 hours)
- SPED 5703 Functional Behavior Assessment and Intervention (3 hours)

*Core course requirement or substitute

**Emphasis/Certification Endorsement in Severe Developmental Disabilities and Autism**

The emphasis in severe developmental disabilities and autism offers a concentrated program of study in the assessment and instruction of children and youth with severe developmental disabilities and autism. The program builds on the knowledge base of special educators who are qualified to teach students with mild and moderate disabilities, and extends the capabilities of special educators to provide individualized and appropriate educational opportunities to all children.

In order to apply for the advanced certification endorsement program in severe developmental disabilities and autism, the applicant must hold a valid Missouri teacher’s certificate in mild/moderate disabilities: learning disabilities, mental retardation, behavior disorders, physical and other health impairments, or cross-categorical disabilities.

The following coursework is required for an emphasis in severe developmental disabilities and autism:

- SPED 5311 Assessment of Functional Skills for Students with Severe Developmental Disabilities and Autism* (3 hours)
- SPED 5312 Curriculum and Methods of Teaching Students with Severe Developmental Disabilities and Autism (3 hours)
- SPED 5313 Augmentative and Alternative Communication for Students with SDD and Autism (3 hours)
- SPED 5090 Special Education Practicum: Severe Developmental Disabilities (3 hours)

* Core course requirement or substitute

**Emphasis in Trauma-Informed Education and Intervention**

The emphasis in trauma-informed education and intervention is designed for practicing teachers, school-based mental health specialists, counselors and other related services professionals who are interested in expanding their expertise in advocating and working with children who require specialized, targeted or one-to-one services. This offers an advanced program of study in the identification, assessment and evaluation, psychoeducational intervention and instruction of children and youth who have experienced trauma as well as severe emotional and behavioral disorders.

The following coursework is required for an emphasis in trauma-informed education and intervention:

- SPED 5500 Socio-emotional Development: Children with Special Needs* (3 hours)
- SPED 5315 Identification and Assessment of Children with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders* (3 hours)
- SPED 5285 Understanding and Responding to Trauma in Schools (3 hours)
- SPED 5317 Psychoeducational Interventions, Curriculum, and Strategies for Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (3 hours)

*Core course requirement

**Two courses (6 credits) from the following:**

- SPED 5220 Topics in Education (topic appropriate to emphasis) (1-3 hours)
- SPED 5250 Behavior Management for Children with Special Needs (3 hours)
- SPED 5314 Children and Youth with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (3 hours)
- SPED 5350 Enhancing Social Competency in Children with Special Needs (3 hours)
- SPED 5331 Working with Difficult Students (3 hours)
- COUN 5160 Issues in Counseling: Psychodrama Therapy (1-3 hours)
- EDIN 5620 Mindfulness (3 hours)
- EDIN 5622 Restorative Justice: Learning Communities (3 hours)
- EPSY 5150 Resilience and Self-Concept Development (3 hours)
- EPSY 5890 Psychology of Stress (3 hours)
- EPSY 5952 Children, Culture and Violence (3 hours)

**Admission**

Students who are interested in applying to this degree program should also see the Admission section of this catalog for general requirements.
Special Education (MA)

Admission Requirements

Prior to admission to the program, candidates are expected to have successfully completed, with a grade of B or better, a three-credit course in the Psychology of the Exceptional Students, or its equivalent. Those applicants who have not completed this requirement, prior to admission, will be required to successfully complete the course, or a similar overview course, in order to complete the graduation requirements for the MA in special education.

Additional requirements:

• Receipt of official transcripts from the baccalaureate-granting institution
• A minimum cumulative undergraduate GPA of 2.75 on a 4.0 scale

Send all admissions materials to:

Webster University
Office of Admission
470 East Lockwood Ave.
St. Louis, MO 63119

Advancement to Candidacy

Upon successful completion of 12 credit hours of 3.0 GPA graduate level SPED courses, students are automatically advanced to candidacy.