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) program with a major 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 area 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, inclusive education, mild/moderate disabilities, severe developmental disabilities, emotional & behavioral disorders, or Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS). These emphases are designed to:

- Promote efforts to advocate for inclusive education for persons with disabilities.
- Provide certain special educators who are currently teaching academic subjects increased expertise in teaching core academic subjects.
- Offer practicing educators the learning opportunities that support teaching students with mild/moderate or severe developmental disabilities.
- Lead to increased understanding of specific educational disabilities in relation to the identification, assessment and evidence-based interventions.

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

Learning Outcomes

Graduates of this program are able to:

- Analyze current issues and trends in special education on a global level.
- Promote legal and ethical policy and practice that supports high quality education in inclusive settings (as is appropriate to the individual student’s needs) and improves outcomes for individuals with disabilities, at a local, national and international level.
- Actively design and improve effective, evidence-based instructional, curricular and classroom management programs on an individual, school-wide and systems level, based on a thorough understanding of up-to-date research in cognitive, social and emotional development of students with disabilities.

- Use scientifically-based methodology to research, evaluate and improve curriculum, instruction and interventions for students with disabilities.
- Use valid tools to evaluate progress of pupils in the general education curriculum and towards IEP goals.
- Advocate for and safeguard the human and civil rights of individuals with disabilities and their families, engage in professional and ethical practices and behavior, reflect on individual strengths and weaknesses as professionals, and pursue continuing professional development to refine skills and expertise in teaching and learning.
- Collaborate with families, colleagues and the community to improve programs and services.

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)

Program Development and Organization

- **SPED 5500 Socio-emotional Development: Children with Special Needs** (3 hours)
- **SPED 5660 Cognitive Development: Children with Special Needs** (3 hours)
- Graduate level (5000) coursework (12 hours)

* Required coursework from Webster University only

Assessment and Evaluation

One course from the following list:

- **SPED 5413 Assessment of Learning and Learning Problems** (3 hours)
- **SPED 5830 Evaluation** (3 hours)
- **SPED 5703 Functional Behavior Assessment and Intervention**

Other emphasis courses in assessment may substitute for this requirement.

Professional and Ethical Practice

One course from the following list:

- **SPED 5270 Advocating for Persons with Disabilities** (3 hours)
- **SPED 5330 Legal Issues in Special Education** (3 hours)
- **SPED 5319 Disability and Ethics** (3 hours)

Collaborative Practice

One course from the following list:

- **SPED 5880 Integrating Resources: Community, School, and Family** (3 hours)
- **SPED 5290 Collaborative Practices for the 21st Century Classroom** (3 hours)
- **EDUC 5080 Planning for the Inclusive Classroom** (3 hours)
  (may not be used for the emphasis in inclusive education)
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- SPED 5704 PBIS/Systems Leadership: Staff Development & Coaching (3 hours)

Research and Inquiry

- SPED 5800 Applied Research Methods (3 hours)
- SPED 6000 Applied Field Research (3 hours)
  or SPED 6250 Thesis (for graduate students interested in doctoral studies) (6 hours)

Total: 33 hours

Emphasis in Applied Behavior Analysis

This emphasis is only available online.

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 conditions.

The emphasis is designed to prepare candidates with 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 and 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 5900 Concepts and Principles of Behavior Analysis (3 hours)
- SPED 5703 Functional Behavioral Assessment and Interventions (3 hours)
- SPED 5901 Applied Behavior Analysis I (3 hours)
- SPED 5902 Applied Behavior Analysis II (3 hours)
- SPED 5319 Disability and Ethics (3 hours)

*Core course requirement

Emphasis in Emotional and Behavioral Disorders

The emphasis area in emotional and behavioral disorders, in partnership with a local children’s residential treatment center, is designed for school-based mental health specialists, practicing teachers, counselors and other related services professionals, and advocates who are interested in expanding their expertise in working with children who require specialized, targeted, or one-to-one services. It offers an advanced program of study in the identification, assessment and evaluation, psycho-educational intervention and instruction of children and youth with severe emotional and behavioral disorders (both internalizing and externalizing).

The following coursework is required for an emphasis in emotional and behavioral disorders:

- SPED 5315 Assessment, Evaluation, and Diagnosis of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (3 hours)
  or SPED 5703 Functional Behavior Assessment and Intervention (3 hours)

Three of the following:

- SPED 5314 Children and Youth with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (3 hours)
- SPED 5316 Instructional Methods for Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (3 hours)
- SPED 5250 Behavior Management for Children with Special Needs (3 hours)
- SPED 5317 Therapeutic Interventions for Disturbed Students (3 hours)
- SPED 5350 Enhancing Social Competency in Children with Special Needs (3 hours)
- SPED 5331 Working with Difficult Students (3 hours)
- SPED 5220 Topics in Special Education (topic appropriate to emphasis) (3 hours)
- SPED 5702 Secondary Prevention: Targeted Group Interventions (3 hours)
- SPED 5315 Assessment, Evaluation, and Diagnosis of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (may not be duplicated) (3 hours)
- SPED 5413 Assessment of Learning and Learning Problems (3 hours)

*Core course requirement

Emphasis in Inclusive Education

The emphasis in inclusive education is designed to provide inclusion facilitators, regular and special educators at the preschool, elementary and secondary levels, and other qualified individuals with the knowledge base, practical applications and strategies necessary for implementing a successful inclusive education program appropriate to the diverse needs of students in today’s regular classroom. This emphasis enables practicing teachers to investigate issues and examine strategies that relate to the education of all students, regardless of ability, in their local school.

The following courses are required for the area of emphasis in inclusive education:

- EDUC 5080 Planning for the Inclusive Classroom (3 hours)
- EDUC 5090 Curricular and Instructional Adaptations (3 hours)
- One SPED 5000 course (3 hours)

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
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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) *(may substitute for SPED 5413)*
- SPED 5380 Methods for Students with Mild/Moderate Disabilities I (3 hours)

One course from:

- SPED 5250 Behavior Management for Children with Special Needs (3 hours)
- SPED 5010 Methods of Teaching Mathematics for Disabled Learners (3 hours)
- SPED 5040 Analysis and Correction of Reading Disabilities (3 hours)
- SPED 5260 Career Preparation for Students with Special Needs (3 hours)
- SPED 5300 Communicating with Families and Disabled Persons (3 hours)
- SPED 5050 Language Development for Exceptional Students (3 hours)
- SPED 5020 Assistive Technology for Students with Special Needs (2-3 hours)
- SPED 5381 Methods for Students with Mild/Moderate Disabilities II (3 hours)
- EDUC 5090 Curricular and Instructional Adaptations (3 hours)
- SPED 5320 Learning Strategies: A Cognitive Approach to Exceptional Learners (3 hours)

**Core course requirement or substitute

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 "Tiered Systems" approaches 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) *(may substitute for SPED 5413)*
- SPED 5702 Secondary Prevention: Targeted Group Interventions (3 hours)

**Core course requirement or substitute

Emphasis/Certification Endorsement in Severe Developmental Disabilities

The emphasis in severe developmental disabilities offers a concentrated program of study in the assessment and instruction of children and youth with severe developmental disabilities. 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 for all children.

In order to apply for the advanced certification endorsement program in severe developmental disabilities, 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 courses are required for an emphasis in severe developmental disabilities:

- SPED 5311 Assessment of Functional Skills for Students with Severe Developmental Disabilities and Autism** (3 hours) *(may substitute for SPED 5413)*
- 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

Admission

Students who are interested in applying to this degree program should also see the Admission Section of this catalog for general requirements.

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 2.5 on a 4.0 scale

Send all admissions materials to:

Webster University
Office of Admission
470 East Lockwood Ave.
St. Louis, MO 63119
General Information Areas of Emphasis

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Transfer of Credit

Students may transfer no more than six (6) hours of Webster University 4000-level coursework towards the MA in special education, if the coursework did not apply towards the requirements for another degree. Students may transfer no more than six (6) credits of graduate coursework from another accredited institution of higher learning. Students may apply no more than six (6) credits of SPED 5210/SPED 5410 to satisfy the requirements of the MA degree. Requests to transfer credit must be approved by the special education program coordinator.

The course(s) being transferred must meet the following criteria:

- The course is required to achieve the program goals and is relevant to the student’s major.
- The course carries graduate credit toward an accredited master’s degree program at the sponsoring institution.
- The course was not used to fulfill requirements for another degree.
- The course must carry a grade of A, B, or Credit.
- The course must have been completed within five years before admission into the program.
- Courses taken at other colleges or universities after admission to the program and MA in-service courses ordinarily may not be transferred for credit. Waivers would require the following:
  - Prior approval by an advisor and relevant area coordinator must be granted on “prior permission form” before the course is taken.
  - The course does not duplicate one offered at Webster University. (Note: This does not refer only to courses offered in the current semester, but to any similar course Webster University offers.)
  - The student fills out a Request for Transfer of Credit form (available in the School of Education Office) and submits it, along with an official transcript of the course(s) being requested, to the School of Education Office. When the transfer hours have been approved and processed, the student will be notified.

Students may request approval of the transfer courses at any time after admission to the program. Approved transfer hours are not used in evaluating advancement to candidacy or probation and dismissal actions.

Advancement to Candidacy

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