How Can I Become a Special Education Teacher in Michigan?

Michigan Department of Education Office of Special Education
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We are excited you are interested in becoming a special education teacher in Michigan! In Michigan, teacher preparation is guided by state law, state Administrative Rules that hold the weight of law, and teacher preparation program standards.

- Michigan Administrative Rules for Governing Educator Certification
- Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education

Michigan Special Education Endorsements

Special education teachers in Michigan earn specific categorical special education endorsements for their Michigan teaching certificate. These endorsements serve students in K-12 classrooms and include:

- Students with autism spectrum disorder
- Students requiring adapted physical education
- Students in early childhood general and special education classrooms
- Students with cognitive impairment
- Students who are deaf and hard of hearing
- Students with emotional impairment
- Students with learning disabilities
- Students with physical impairment and other health impairment
- Students with speech and language impairment
- Students with visual impairment

Michigan Program Completion Requirements

To earn Michigan certification, individuals must complete an approved preparation program, including required clinical experiences, and pass the appropriate Michigan Test for Teacher Certification. Michigan-approved preparation programs for special

education may be paired with general education endorsement preparation programs (e.g., Lower/Upper Elementary Education, English Language Arts, Social Studies).

In addition to holding a bachelor's degree and completion of an approved teacher preparation program, Michigan law requires teachers to complete additional requirements:

- Complete required reading courses (6 semester credit hours for elementary teachers and 3 semester credit hours for secondary teachers).
- Complete clinical experiences, including student teaching.
- Pass the appropriate Michigan Test for Teacher Certification (MTTC) content examinations. Passage of content examinations is required before recommendation for certification. In alternative route programs, testing is required prior to entrance into the program.

Additional information can be found on How can I become a teacher in Michigan?

Preparation Program Pathways

Individuals seeking initial teacher certification must hold or obtain at least a bachelor's degree and complete a Michigan-approved preparation program for the desired special education endorsement.

Traditional preparation programs include the completion of a general education endorsement preparation program as well as the special education preparation program. Individuals emerge from these programs with both general education and special education endorsements on a Michigan teaching certificate.

Expedited preparation programs include the completion of a special education preparation program and a professional preparation sequence. Individuals emerge from these programs with a special education endorsement on a Michigan teaching certificate. An individual who completes an expedited preparation program is only eligible to teach in a special education program that matches their endorsement. An individual who wishes to teach general education in the future will need to complete additional classes to obtain a general education endorsement.

Alternative route preparation programs are open to individuals who hold a bachelor's degree in any area and include the completion of a 32-credit special education preparation program and a 12-credit professional preparation program. Individuals emerge with a special education endorsement and a general education endorsement on a Michigan Interim Teaching Certificate. Individuals must come with prior general education content knowledge or a prior general education endorsement on a Michigan teaching certificate.

Certified Michigan teachers can add special education endorsements by completing any of the above preparation program options, including clinical experiences, and passing the appropriate Michigan Test for Teacher Certification.

Placement in a Special Education Assignment

A certified Michigan teacher can add a special education endorsement to their certificates while employed as a full-time teacher in a special education position by enrolling in an approved preparation program and working under a valid Special Education Teacher Approval. This approval is applied for by the employing district or ISD. Continuing annual approvals (renewals) require the completion of six semester credits since the issuance of the previous approval.

An individual who has a bachelor's degree but does not yet have a teaching certificate and is participating in a traditional, expedited, or alternative route to certification may be employed under a Full-year Basic Permit (FYB) for special education. The FYB permit is applied for by the employing district or ISD. Specific and detailed coordination with the special education preparation provider and the employing school is vital for the special education placement.

Out-of-State Applicants

MDE does not have the authority to approve out-of-state educator preparation programs. Out-of-state educator preparation programs must lead to certification in the state where the program resides. To determine certification eligibility, an application must be submitted using the Michigan Online Educator Certification System (MOECS). Additional information can be found on Out-of-State Applicants.

Michigan has signed an Interstate Compact Agreement (ICA) with every state agreeing to accept out-of-state approved teacher preparation programs and standard teaching certificates on a reciprocal basis for initial certification. Out-of-state certification programs and credentials may differ from Michigan programs and credentials; however, under the ICA, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) attempts to match out-of-state certificates, grade levels, and content endorsements as closely as possible. Even with reciprocity, Michigan certification is not guaranteed as ancillary state requirements exist in Michigan law (e.g., testing).

Application

Application for initial certification based on an in-state or out-of-state preparation program must be submitted using the Michigan Online Educator Certification System (MOECS). MDE cannot advise applicants on testing requirements prior to application submission through MOECS.

Educator Placement and Flexibilities

Questions and answers regarding placement, assignment, role, and services allowed for individuals working under permits and approvals can be found on the Educator Placement and Flexibilities page or the Special Education Assignments document.

Contact

Questions regarding special education assignments and placement can be directed to MDE Office of Special Education at 1-888-320-8384 or MDE-OSE@michigan.gov .

Questions regarding endorsements and certification should be directed to the Office of Educator Excellence at 517-241-5000 or MDE-EducatorHelp@michigan.gov.