What financial assistance is available?

Individuals seeking careers in special education are eligible for the financial assistance available to all students. In addition, the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), funds programs that support students becoming special educators. A list of these programs can be found on the TEACH California website.

What is the job market like?

Districts needed roughly twice as many special education teachers in 2014-15 than were produced from California universities. The teacher shortage is most acute in the area of special education.

How do I know if this career is for me?

There are three things that can help you decide whether becoming a special educator is a good career option for you:

- Volunteer in a special education classroom. You will gain experience with many students and discover the skills needed to teach children with special needs.
- Complete a service-learning experience by being involved in a special education-related activity as a youth.
- Talk with special educators. Find out why they chose this profession and what they find challenging and rewarding about their work.

I want to become a special educator. What should I do now?

TEACH California explains the credentialing process, provides financial aid information, and identifies the next steps you need to take to become a credentialed special education teacher in California. For more information, log onto **www.teachcalifornia.org**

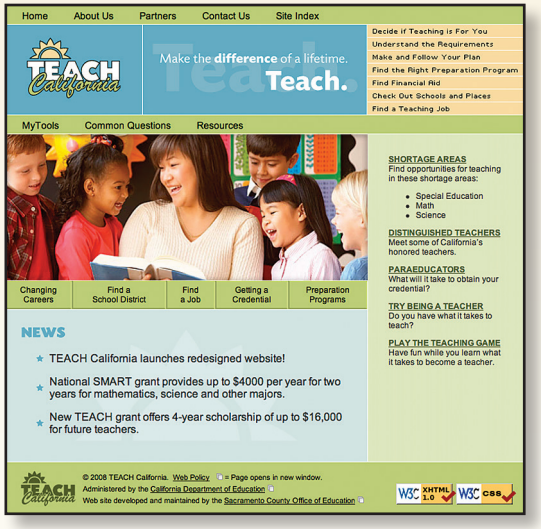
*Track your progress by registering in the **My Career Plan** section of the TEACH California website.*

Make the **difference** of a lifetime.

Teach.

TEACH California

www.teachcalifornia.org



This brochure and other free teacher recruitment materials may be downloaded or ordered online. Log on to **www.teachcalifornia.org**, click on "Resources," then "Outreach Materials." Online orders will be shipped within two weeks.

Funds for this project come from a federal grant to California allowed in Part D of Public Law 108-447, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), as amended in 2004.

TEACH Special Ed

A guide to becoming a special education teacher in California

TEACH California

California Department of Education, 2016

What do special educators do?

Special educators provide specially designed instruction to individuals with disabilities and support to their families. Special educators assess learning abilities, adapt materials, modify curriculum, and consult with other teachers.

Who are special education students?

These are students who require specially designed instruction because of:

- Cognitive impairments, such as mental retardation
- Learning disabilities that require specific teaching strategies
- Physical disabilities that limit mobility
- Sensory loss, such as hearing loss and vision impairments
- Emotional disorders
- Traumatic brain injury
- Autism
- Speech or language impairments
- Chronic health problems

Where do special educators work?

One of the benefits of being a special educator is the variety of settings in which one can work, including:

- **General education**. Special educators consult, collaborate and co-teach with general education teachers and other service providers.
- **Resource or Learning Centers**. In this setting, specialized instruction is provided for part of the day, individually or in groups.
- **Self-contained classrooms**. This is a classroom specifically for children with disabilities.
- **Itinerant (traveling) teaching**.
- **Home/hospital settings**.
- **Youth authority facilities**.

What are the credentialing requirements?

a. Special educators are highly trained individuals who must complete the following requirements in order to receive the Preliminary Education Specialist Instruction Credential:

   i. Earned an undergraduate degree *

   ii. Satisfied the basic skills requirement *

   iii. Demonstrated subject-matter competency *

   iv. Passed the Reading Instruction Competence Assessment (RICA) test

   v. Completed a course or passed an examination in the U.S. Constitution *

   vi. Completed a teacher preparation program *

b. The second stage is the Clear Education Specialist Instruction Credential. To obtain this, you must have completed a clear credential program through a Commission-approved Induction Program specifically for special education.

c. Additionally, there are a number of authorizations for special education teaching one can add to an existing California teaching credential designed to broaden the teaching pool.

d. Additionally, alternative routes are available to earn a teaching credential. University and District Intern Programs are available for those having met, at a minimum, the asterisked items above and wish to be employed prior to the completion of all their teacher preparation program.

What are the "areas of specialization"?

There are six areas of specialization, depending on the students' disabilities, in which persons become authorized to teach:

- **Mild/Moderate**. Includes specific learning disabilities, mild/moderate mental retardation, other health impairments, serious emotional disturbance, and autism spectrum disorders
- **Moderate/Severe**. Includes autism; deaf-blindness; moderate to severe mental retardation; multiple disabilities; serious emotional disturbance
- **Deaf and Hard of Hearing**. Includes deafness, hearing impairment, and deaf-blindness
- **Visual Impairments**. Includes blindness, visual impairment, and deaf-blindness
- **Physical and Health Impairments**. Includes orthopedic impairment; other health impairment; multiple disabilities; traumatic brain injury
- **Early Childhood Special Education**. Includes mild/moderate and moderate/severe disabilities listed above and traumatic brain injury, and authorizes service to children ages birth to pre-kindergarten only

How long will it take me to become fully credentialed?

The length of time depends on your current educational level and the type of teacher credential program you enter. The Preliminary Education Specialist Instruction Credential can be completed within one to two years if you already have your undergraduate degree and can demonstrate subject matter competency. The Clear Education Specialist Instruction Credential requirements must be completed within five years of obtaining the Preliminary Credential.