

What is an intern program?

Intern programs are designed for persons who have already demonstrated subject-matter competency and need to complete a teacher preparation program but who must work while taking classes. Interns teach during the day and take classes in the late afternoon, in the evening, or on weekends.

I have heard there are two levels of credentials. What are they?

- a. The first stage is the Preliminary Education Specialist Instruction Credential. To receive this, you must have:
 - 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 teacher preparation program
- b. The second stage is the Clear Education Specialist Instruction Credential. To obtain this, you must have completed an induction plan.

I have an associate degree. What is available to financially help me get my special education credential?

The new California Classified School Employee Teacher Credentialing Program is designed to support your completion both of an undergraduate degree and a Commission-approved teacher preparation program of your choice. Completion will qualify you to provide instructional service as credentialed teachers in the public schools. The Commission on Teacher Credentialing lists the names of the programs at <http://www.ctc.ca.gov/briefing-room/pdf/PR-2016-12-07.pdf>.

Save time and money by exploring the Integrated Teacher Preparation Programs that allow undergraduates to complete their credentialing requirements during a four-year undergraduate course of study.

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An Associate's Teacher in California

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This brochure and other free teacher recruitment materials may be downloaded or ordered online. Log on to <http://www.teachcalifornia.org>, select **Learn More**, then **Recruitment Materials**. Online orders will be shipped within two weeks.

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Become a Special Educator

A guide for current
Paraeducators
in California



Paraeducators: Ideal Candidates to Become Special Education Teachers

As thousands of teachers enter retirement age, California faces the challenge of replacing more than 30 percent of its teachers during the next decade. School districts statewide are scrambling to fill the void, but they face a daunting task when it comes to special education. There is a critical shortage of special education teachers, and enrollment in teacher preparation programs is steadily dropping. In addition, nearly half of first-year special education teachers do not hold full credentials.

Paraeducators and other classified employees are ideal candidates to become special education teachers. With practical experience in today's schools and a passion for working with children, classified employees should consider becoming fully credentialed teachers.

There are many different pathways to becoming a credentialed special education teacher. The factors that most affect which path is best for you include the amount of education you possess; your financial situation (can you go to school full time or part time?); where you live (how close is the college you wish to attend?); interest in online courses; and life situations that affect your time (do you have family responsibilities?). Here are some steps that will put you on the right path:

Get info about careers in special education.

Obtaining a credential in special education can open many doors for you. There are many different settings in which you can work. Collaborating with general education teachers, working in resource/learning centers and teaching in home/hospital settings are some examples of the variety of venues in which you can work.

In addition, you must choose an area of specialization when you are completing your teacher preparation program. There are seven specialty areas: mild/moderate, moderate/severe, deaf and hard of hearing, visual impairments, physical and health impairments, early childhood special education, and Language and Academic Development. Each specialty area focuses on different disabilities



(learning disabilities, cognitive disabilities, hearing and visual impairments are a few examples).

To find out more about special education careers:

- Attend special education credential information seminars.
- Join a Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) state chapter (<http://www.cec.sped.org>).
- Volunteer in a special education classroom.
- Go to <http://www.personnelcenter.org> for information about special education career options and resources.

Take the right undergraduate courses.

One of the requirements for a credential is that you have an undergraduate degree. If you do not have one, you may want to start your college career at a community college, where the tuition is less than at a four-year college or university. Before you enroll in classes, make sure you are taking courses that fulfill the requirements for your major and for graduation. Unnecessary classes can waste time and money. Talk with the teacher preparation adviser at the four-year college from which you wish to obtain your credential so that you understand those requirements. Each college is different!

If you already have an undergraduate degree, you may still need to take courses. Check with the teacher preparation adviser at your college or university.

Verify basic skills proficiency.

Verifying basic skills is required of all credential candidates. The California Basic Educational Skills Test (CBEST) is used to assess and verify proficiency in mathematics, reading, and writing skills. Passing scores are required in each section, but once you pass the test, your scores are good for the rest of your life. Passing the CBEST is just one way to satisfy the basic skills requirement. Other options are explained in the Commission on Teacher Credentialing's leaflet on the basic skills requirements at <http://www.ctc.ca.gov/credentials/leaflets/cl667.pdf>. Remember to review good test taking strategies, use the CBEST practice test option from the publisher, and start early.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is subject-matter competency?

Subject-matter competency is knowledge of the subject you wish to teach. Providing proof of this knowledge can be done by passing the appropriate, approved California Subject Examinations for Teachers (CSET) or an approved subject-matter program at a California college or university with an accredited program.

What kinds of courses are required in a teacher preparation program?

Teacher preparation programs focus on teaching you how to teach (pedagogy). Required courses may include child development, teaching reading, and how to teach your specific subject area.

What kind of financial programs are available?

The federal Office of Special Education Programs sponsors programs that often provide financial support. School districts and unions, including the California School Employees Association, work together at the local level to create career ladder programs for paraeducators. Community and professional organizations provide scholarships (but be wary of agencies that charge fees to find scholarships). For more information on financial programs, visit the TEACH California Web site.

Track your progress by registering in the **Career Plan** section of the TEACH California Web site.