

## Career Guide:

# SPECIAL EDUCATION

Special education teachers shape the future by providing K-12 students who have a broad range of special needs with an educational foundation for life. And they do so with a great level of autonomy in their classrooms, applying trusted, proven strategies for engaging students while coming up with creative solutions to meet new educational challenges.

### INDUSTRY GROWTH IS TIED TO:

- Increasing enrollment in a number of states.
- Better identification of various disabilities in children.
- Teacher turnover resulting from job stress.



**6%**

**JOB GROWTH  
THROUGH 2024**



**2016 MEDIAN SALARY: \$57,910**



### JOB GROWTH HIGHEST FOR:

- Early childhood intervention
- Autism spectrum disorders
- Learning disabilities
- Speech and language impairments

### REWARDS OF TEACHING SPECIAL EDUCATION

- Seeing results in action as students progress
- Personal relationships with students and parents
- Long vacations
- Respect and admiration
- Dynamic work environment
- Lifelong impact on students
- New learning opportunities
- Autonomy
- Job stability

### JOB TASKS AND DUTIES

- Work with students with a wide range of abilities.
- Adapt general education lessons for students.
- Motivate and encourage students with special needs.
- Create IEPs (individual education programs) for students.
- Make recommendations to promote learning at home.
- Evaluate students to monitor progress.

### CHARACTERISTICS OF GREAT TEACHERS

- Good organization and communication skills
- Creativity
- Patience
- Stamina
- Resourceful
- Passionate
- Flexible
- Fun-loving and a sense of humor



## WHAT TO EXPECT IN A SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

Students pursuing a degree in special education are prepared to teach children from K-12 with varying special needs or disabilities. They take classes in teaching methods, educational theories and child psychology, and develop a strong understanding of instructional, assessment and management strategies that are most effective with students a broad range of needs.

### SPECIAL EDUCATION MAY BE A GOOD FIT IF YOU...

- Have a love for learning new things.
- Enjoy working with children with a variety of special needs.
- Receive great satisfaction from helping others learn.
- Have excellent oral and written communication skills.
- Know how to work collaboratively for the good of all children.
- Enjoy the challenges of a dynamic workplace.
- Want to shape future generations.
- Can be an innovative and creative problem solver.
- Want to advocate for people with disabilities.

### CLASSES MAY INCLUDE:

- Speech and language development
- Educational psychology
- Culture of special education
- Individual education programs
- Assessment in special education
- Teaching methods
- Behavior of special education students
- American Sign Language
- Student teaching
- Technology in education
- Human growth and development

### LOOK FOR A PROGRAM THAT OFFERS:

- Supportive faculty who are experienced professionals and share your passion for educating children.
- Connections with a number of school districts for job shadowing, student teaching, and mentoring.
- Cutting-edge research and innovation for special education.
- Graduates successfully passing state certification exams on their first try.

To learn about the Special Education program at the University of Northern Colorado, visit us at [UNCO.EDU/PROGRAMS/SPECIAL-EDUCATION/SPECIAL-EDUCATION-GENERALIST-BA](http://UNCO.EDU/PROGRAMS/SPECIAL-EDUCATION/SPECIAL-EDUCATION-GENERALIST-BA)

### Before you declare your major in Special Education:

- Volunteer at a local school or children's hospital or start babysitting to gain experience working with children.
- Tutor students struggling with schoolwork.
- Shadow and talk with a special education teacher to see what a typical day is like.

*"If a child can't learn the way we teach, maybe we should teach the way they learn."*

*—Ignacio 'Nacho' Estrada, educational consultant and motivator*



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**NORTHERN**  
**COLORADO**