



UNIVERSITY OF  
**NORTHERN**  
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**UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO**  
**School of Special Education**

**Special Education Director Program**

**Externship Handbook**

**January 2022**

## **SPECIAL EDUCATION DIRECTOR PROGRAM Externship Handbook**

The Special Education Director endorsement/license program is designed to prepare experienced education professionals to become special education directors. The endorsement/license is a non-degree post-Master's administrator endorsement/license, and all individuals must have completed a master's degree at an accredited institution of higher education prior to acceptance into the program (**exceptions are persons enrolled in the Educational Leadership and Policy and Special Education Administration MA/Ed.S. Interdisciplinary Program**). The program is based on pre-requisite knowledge concerning the field of special education equivalent to the current knowledge and skills expected of Colorado Special Education Generalist teachers. The course of study is a highly individualized program based on learner's prior experiential and educational background, and provides a broad knowledge base for all areas of special education. The intended outcome of the program is to produce instructional leaders and effective managers of special education programs and services within a variety of organizational and cultural contexts.

Participants in the program complete pre-requisite courses in the special education core course requirements that focus on foundations of special education, characteristics of learners, assessment practices, instructional interventions, managing student behavior, communication/collaboration/consultation effectiveness, and professional ethics. The advanced requirements in the program address the following: legal, fiscal, and policy foundations; leadership and management effectiveness; strategic thinking and planning; cultivation of collaborative partnerships and inter-agency agreements; accountability approaches at the individual student, school, and system levels of impact; and professional development approaches that focus on identifying, preparing, and supporting personnel in a comprehensive manner. The specific skills that support these requirements include: decision making, technological competence, accessing resources and human services, staff selection, budgeting and reimbursement applications, legal interpretations that comply with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004) and state special education regulations, effective communication with diverse audiences, and the articulation of compelling vision that provides the basis for continuous assessment and ongoing improvement of special education programs and services. Coursework in the program is aligned with the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) Special Education Director Standards and Performance Indicators (6.13, 1-8) and selected Principal Quality Standards (from 6, 6.01, 6.02, 6.03, 6.04, 6.05, 6.06, 6.07, 6.08)

Graduate students who complete the endorsement program are qualified to assume positions as local school district Directors of Special Education in Colorado and across the United States. To support the big picture framework of the program, a collection of five themes provides the conceptual underpinnings of the awareness, knowledge, skills, and mastery levels that are identified through performance-based assessment measures for all students. The five guiding themes include the following:

Effective Leadership/Management – cultivating the necessary balance of vision and mission that promotes personal mastery, articulation of mental models, team learning, and system thinking.

Strategic Thinking and Intervention – considering the range of possible courses of action, including both traditional and strategic approaches, and making intentional decisions to influence continuous improvement of special education programs and services.

Collaborative Partnerships – identifying effective means for diverse stakeholders to work together in ways that divide labor, promote democratic and continuous decision-making, and allow for shared

responsibility in achieving common goals.

Organizational Change – initiating, understanding, and supporting the process of change at the individual, team, school, and system level of impact to facilitate ongoing improvement in programs and services for all learners, including those with special needs.

Systems of Accountability – identifying and applying principles of inclusive accountability that address input/process, individual student learning, and system result measures of success. Emphasis on shared responsibility among general and special educators focuses on the identification of quality performance measures for personnel and learners with specific attention to both learning and results.

Beginning special education administrators are prepared for change agent roles within the larger educational and societal context. Program graduates are expected to operate with a high degree of integrity in initiating and sustaining appropriate educational opportunities for all learners, including those with disabilities.

### EDSE 697: Externship in Special Education Administration

The capstone experience for all students in the program is an individually designed externship in special education. The EDSE 697 course is completed through the supervision of a university supervisor and a collaborating professional in the public schools who is a fully endorsed Director of Special Education. The number of contact hours in this variable credit experience is determined based on the previous background and experience of the student/candidate (**i.e., 1-12 credits – see program plan of study**). Each **semester credit of externship requires forty-five contact hours of supervised experiences** through the supervision and support of a qualified Special Education Director.

Students complete the externship simultaneously with EDSE and ELPS coursework in their program (i.e., EDSE 680, EDSE 681, EDSE 718, ELPS 650, ELPS 654, ELPS 660).

An outline of the general expectations of the externship is found in the course syllabus for EDSE 697 Externship: Special Education Administration. The activities aligned with the externship goals are to be completed during the semester(s) in which the student is registered for EDSE 697. Given the School of Special Education policy, students may not receive credit for activities and hours completed for the activities in semesters before they are registered for EDSE 697.

### Roles and Responsibilities of Externship Personnel

The intended outcome of the externship experiences is to connect personal development to organizational development. To accomplish these outcomes, a shared responsibility for the externship is promoted among the student/candidate, cooperating professional administrator, and university supervisor. The general roles and responsibilities of each of these three positions is described as follows:

Student/Candidate shall:

1. Develop the initial proposal for the externship (see the Externship plan in Appendix A).
2. Apply program knowledge and skills through increasing levels of responsibility.
3. Understand the theoretical and philosophical bases for the management and leadership practices of the cooperating professional and university supervisor.
4. Integrate knowledge of special education administration practices into a

- comprehensive personal approach.
5. Evaluate personal purposes, values, knowledge, and skills; and devise plans for personal growth and change.
  6. Prepare for implementing personal growth plans into future administrative position responsibilities.
  7. Complete the externship requirements as described in the Externship Requirements section of this handbook.

Cooperating Professional shall:

1. Review the proposal for externship and provides feedback and recommended modifications.
2. Provide orientation to the school district, its policies, and the culture of the organization.
3. Develop opportunities for candidate to participate in all aspects of leading and managing the organization.
4. Demonstrate current practices in system change, accountability, collaborative partnerships, and administration.
5. Discuss the philosophical and theoretical bases of the school district's programs and services.
6. Assist the candidate with self-assessment and planning for personal growth and development.

University Supervisor and/or Program Coordinator shall:

1. Provide guidance and overall direction for the externship proposal.
2. Approve the externship proposal.
3. Serve as a resource as requested for the extern and cooperating professional.
4. Visit the externship site to observe the student and consult with both the extern and the cooperating professional (virtual or face to face visit).
5. Obtain information from the cooperating professional on the level of application of program knowledge and skills.
6. Complete the final evaluation of the externship experience.
7. Submit a final grade for *EDSE 697: Externship in Special Education Administration* once all credits for the externship and evaluation is completed.
8. Verify for the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences (CEBS) that the student/candidate has completed the requirements for the Special Education Director Program upon request from the CEBS license officer once the student has requested such verification.

### Externship Requirements

The philosophy of professional development that guides the design and delivery of the endorsement/licensure program in special education administration is based on Bellanca's (1994) definition that views field experiences and externships as part of a larger system. Professional development is a planned, comprehensive, and systematic program designed by the system to improve all school personnel's ability to design, implement, and assess productive change in each individual and the school organization. With this in mind, the EDSE 697 externship requirements were designed.

1. Externship Proposal:

- a. Submit an externship activities plan to the university supervisor for approval during the first week of the externship. The template for the externship activities plan is available in Appendix A.
- b. Once the externship activities plan is approved, begin to track hours.

## 2. Externship Goals and Activities:

- a. Complete all assigned activities detailed in the individually designed externship activities plan within the semester(s) that you are registered for EDSE 697.
- b. Provide a summary log of all externship activities. Figure 1 provides a visual for the externship log template that will be used to track hours (submitted in Canvas during the externship semester(s)).
- c. Develop an externship ePortfolio that includes artifacts that are developed or collected in the course of the externship that demonstrate completion of the activities aligned with each of the eight CDE standards for Special Education Directors found here: [http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/speddirectors\\_handbook2018](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/speddirectors_handbook2018) . **Include artifacts for each of the eight externship standards with a brief explanation for each of the artifacts. Include a one page reflection for each standard, the activities you completed for the standard and the artifacts you included in your ePortfolio.** The reflective statements should be about the value of each of the standards added to your developing leadership and management capabilities, and how the nature of the externship contributed to your ongoing professional development.
- d. Provide a zip file copy of your private ePortfolio for your cooperating professional. Submit a **link** to the completed ePortfolio by the due date listed in Canvas.

## 3. Assessment and Evaluation

- a. Complete a self-assessment rating of the *CDE Director of Special Education Standards and Performance Indicators* assessments regarding your demonstration of current level of performance. Provide your cooperating professional with a copy of the assessment form and ask them to complete a rating of your current level of performance. Complete the ratings by the due date specified in the course syllabus and submit copies of the completed assessments through the Canvas site by the due date and time.
- b. Cooperating professional submits a letter of completion to the you by the due date. Submit the letter in Canvas by the due date.
- c. The letter needs to be:
  - addressed to the university supervisor/coordinator of the Special Education Director Program;
  - written on school/district letterhead
  - inclusive of content about the candidate's completion of the externship and whether or not they demonstrated at least an overall emerging to proficient level of performance for the eight CDE Standards for the Special Education Director License by the end of their externship

- d. signed by the cooperating professional. Once the ePortfolio, ratings by the candidate and cooperating professional of the standards, and the letter from the cooperating professional are all submitted, the university supervisor will complete a final review of the student’s work. Based on that review, a letter grade will be determined and submitted for EDSE 697.

**Figure 1.. Externship Log Sample (partial)**

SPECIAL EDUCATION DIRECTOR EXTERNSHIP LOG - SPRING 2022

<p><b>Standard I: The Special Education Director will have a solid foundation for leadership by: (a) demonstrating a comprehensive knowledge of special education organization, programs, laws and best practices; and (b) setting high standards and a positive direction for special education consistent with the values, mission and vision of the state and administrative unit. The performance indicators for this standard include the following:</b></p>	Activity	Date	# of Hours	Location	Notes (Optional--This space is for you to note specific learning you experienced, challenges, and high points that you want to include in your final standard reflection as well as what artifact(s) you will use to demonstrate this standard/element.)
<p>Element 1.1: Promote and reinforce the belief that a free and appropriate education is the fundamental right of all students.</p>			0		
<p><i>add rows to enter more activities</i></p>			0		
<p>ELEMENT 1.2: Recognize and accept personal and professional accountability to direct, monitor and continually work to improve the educational processes and practices for which he/she is responsible.</p>			0		
<p><i>add rows to enter more activities</i></p>			0		
<p>Element 1.3: Articulate and model a clear set of core professional values.</p>			0		
<p><i>add rows to enter more activities</i></p>			0		
<p>Element 1.4: Demonstrate ethical behavior by acting with integrity of word and action.</p>			0		
			0		

**Figure 2. Format for ePortfolio**

Page 1	Externship Activities Plan
Page 2	<p>CDE Standard #1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2-3 artifacts that demonstrate completed activities with brief explanations</li> <li>• 1 page (or less) reflection for standard #1 and associated activities</li> </ul>
Page 3	<p>CDE Standard #2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2-3 artifacts that demonstrate completed activities with brief explanations</li> <li>• 1 page (or less) reflection for standard #2 and associated activities</li> </ul>
Page 4	<p>CDE Standard #3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2-3 artifacts that demonstrate completed activities with brief explanations</li> <li>• 1 page (or less) reflection for standard #3 and associated activities</li> </ul>
Page 5	<p>CDE Standard #4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2-3 artifacts that demonstrate completed activities with brief explanations</li> <li>• 1 page (or less) reflection for standard #4 and associated activities</li> </ul>
Page 6	<p>CDE Standard #5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2-3 artifacts that demonstrate completed activities with brief explanations</li> <li>• 1 page (or less) reflection for standard #5 and associated activities</li> </ul>
Page 7	<p>CDE Standard #6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2-3 artifacts that demonstrate completed activities with brief explanations</li> <li>• 1 page (or less) reflection for standard #6 and associated activities</li> </ul>
Page 8	<p>CDE Standard #7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2-3 artifacts that demonstrate completed activities with brief explanations</li> <li>• 1 page (or less) reflection for standard #7 and associated activities</li> </ul>
Page 9	<p>CDE Standard #8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2-3 artifacts that demonstrate completed activities with brief explanations</li> <li>• 1 page (or less) reflection for standard #8 and associated activities</li> </ul>

## **Appendix A**

### **Externship Activities Plan Template**



# EDSE 697 Special Education Director Externship Activities Plan

Meet with your cooperating professional early in the first semester of your externship to plan activities that will help you gain experience in the competency areas of the eight Colorado Special Education Director Quality Standards and Performance Indicators. Activities may range from one-time leadership experiences to long-term projects in which the extern assumes a leadership role. In the spaces below, list one or more activities that you and your cooperating professional have identified for **at least three elements of each standard**. Keep in mind that this activities plan is only an *initial* plan; you and your cooperating professional are invited to modify/add activities as appropriate over the course of your externship.

## **Standard I Foundations of Leadership**

**The Special Education Director will have a solid foundation for leadership by: (a) demonstrating a comprehensive knowledge of special education organization, programs, laws and best practices; and (b) setting high standards and a positive direction for special education consistent with the values, mission and vision of the state and administrative unit. The performance indicators for this standard include the following:**

ELEMENT 1.1 Promote and reinforce the belief that a free and appropriate education is the fundamental right of all students.

ELEMENT 1.2 Recognize and accept personal and professional accountability to direct, monitor and continually work to improve the educational processes and practices for which he/she is responsible.

ELEMENT 1.3 Articulate and model a clear set of core professional values.

ELEMENT 1.4 Demonstrate ethical behavior by acting with integrity of word and action.

ELEMENT 1.5 Articulate comprehensive knowledge of the significant elements of special education; its history, organization, programs, laws and best practices.

ELEMENT 1.6 Build mutually respectful relationships through effective listening and empathetic responses.

ELEMENT 1.7 Participate in ongoing quality professional development.

ELEMENT 1.8 Collaborate with others to ensure there is continued awareness of the latest research regarding special education, learning theory and best instructional practices.

## **Standard II Special Education and School Systems**

**The Special Education Director shall: (a) demonstrate knowledge of organizational culture; (b) apply a systems approach to the development of special education programs and processes; and (c) facilitate effective systems change. The performance indicators for this standard include the following:**

ELEMENT 2.1 Develop organizational relationships between and among:

- federal, state, intermediate and local educational agencies;
- district and building levels and the various schools and schooling levels;
- special and general education;
- the greater community, including but not limited to families, advocates and agencies, and potential employers.

ELEMENT 2.2 Demonstrate an understanding of leadership roles, hierarchies, authority and chain-of-command relationships.

ELEMENT 2.3 Promote positive culture within special education and in the greater organization, in alignment with district vision, mission and values.

ELEMENT 2.4 Support systems thinking at all levels of the organization.

ELEMENT 2.5 Lead change processes consistent with proven change theories at all levels of the organization, inclusive of all stakeholder groups.

### **Standard III Law and Policy**

**The Special Education Director shall be knowledgeable about and able to apply relevant federal and state statutes, regulations, case law and policies that impact all children, including those with disabilities. The performance indicators for this standard include the following:**

ELEMENT 3.1 Implement requirements of federal, state and case law in public education, with an emphasis on special education.

ELEMENT 3.2 Demonstrate knowledge of policies and procedures required to implement legal requirements.

ELEMENT 3.3 Describe legislative processes at local, state and national levels.

ELEMENT 3.4 Demonstrate skills in networking and advocating on behalf of students with disabilities in order to develop, influence and impact laws and policies.

ELEMENT 3.5 Facilitate the development of student-centered Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) to include procedures, processes and legal requirements.

ELEMENT 3.6 Identify resources of national organizations in the field of special education.

ELEMENT 3.7 Execute federal, state and local data collection, analysis and reporting requirements.

ELEMENT 3.8 Provide for an educational environment that is safe, secure, healthy and accessible.

ELEMENT 3.9 Implement principles of universal design to assure equal access to students across all educational settings that include specialized transportation, health needs, safety procedures and proactive approaches for students with disabilities in emergency situations.

### **Standard IV Instructional Leadership**

**The Special Education Director shall be able to integrate general education and special education, including curriculum, instructional strategies, and individualized instruction in support of all children, including those with disabilities. The performance indicators for this standard include the following:**

ELEMENT 4.1 Facilitate the attainment of state standards, expanded benchmarks and access skills.

ELEMENT 4.2 Promote high standards for the instruction of all students, including students with disabilities, and for continuously improving their academic achievement.

ELEMENT 4.3 Implement assessment systems for identification and programming.

ELEMENT 4.4 Develop data driven, evidence-based instructional practices, including behavioral support systems.

ELEMENT 4.5 Develop comprehensive approaches to educational planning, including student involvement and self-determination.

ELEMENT 4.6 Implement transition plans for individuals with disabilities across the educational continuum and other programs from birth through adulthood.

ELEMENT 4.7 Provide leadership to guide appropriate instructional decision-making, focusing on individualization for students with disabilities.

ELEMENT 4.8 Facilitate staff development related to evidence-based practices, rigorous content and effective outcomes for all learners, including those with disabilities.

### **Standard V Program Planning and Organization**

**The Special Education Director shall be able to evaluate the efficacy and efficiency of special education programs, facilities, services and monitoring systems and to use the evaluation data to improve the programs and services for all children, including those with disabilities. The performance indicators for this standard include the following:**

ELEMENT 5.1 Apply program evaluation strategies for determining efficacy and efficiency.

ELEMENT 5.2 Implement continuous improvement monitoring processes.

ELEMENT 5.3 Develop special education programs, facilities, services, and monitoring systems that are complementary to and mutually supportive of one another and of general education.

ELEMENT 5.4 Facilitate strategic planning for program development and implementation to encompass all stakeholders.

ELEMENT 5.5 Demonstrate and extend collaborative consultation principles with all stakeholders.

ELEMENT 5.6 Facilitate professional development to implement, improve and expand programs.

### **Standard VI Human Resource Functions**

**The Special Education Director shall have the knowledge and ability to recruit, retain and evaluate qualified personnel in order to effectively implement programs and services for all children, including those with disabilities. The performance indicators for this standard include the following:**

ELEMENT 6.1 Recruit and retain qualified personnel.

ELEMENT 6.2 Screen, interview and select qualified staff.

ELEMENT 6.3 Facilitate professional development of staff members.

ELEMENT 6.4 Implement alternative procedures to ensure appropriate personnel when fully qualified individuals are not available.

ELEMENT 6.5 Delineate roles and responsibilities of all special education instructional and related services personnel.

ELEMENT 6.6 Adhere to established ethical and legal considerations of human resource management.

ELEMENT 6.7 Provide supervision and evaluation of personnel serving students with disabilities.

## **Standard VII Parent, Family, and Community Engagement**

**The Special Education Director shall be able to integrate general education and special education, including curriculum, instructional strategies, and individualized instruction in support of all children, including those with disabilities.**

ELEMENT 7.1 Implement a comprehensive communication infrastructure to organize and distribute the flow of information coming from and to the district.

ELEMENT 7.2 Facilitate collaborative relationships with all stakeholders.

ELEMENT 7.3 Promote parent training and support services to support parents in understanding rights, responsibilities, processes and decision-making within special education.

ELEMENT 7.4 Develop interactive opportunities with the local and/or state Special Education Advisory Council, parent advocacy groups, the Parent Training and Information Centers, and the Protection and Advocacy Agency.

ELEMENT 7.5 Disseminate current research and best practices to improve student achievement.

ELEMENT 7.6 Demonstrate conflict resolution in a variety of contexts.

ELEMENT 7.7 Develop and implement intra-agency and inter-agency agreements.

## **Standard VI Budget and Resources**

**The Special Education Director shall be knowledgeable and able to demonstrate school district budgeting and resource allocation, including those related to special education. The performance indicators for this standard include the following:**

ELEMENT 8.1 Identify fiscal issues relevant to the provision of services to learners with disabilities.

ELEMENT 8.2 Manage human resources to align appropriate expertise with the individualized needs of learners with disabilities.

ELEMENT 8.3 Apply knowledge of local, state and federal reporting requirements to promote responsible fiscal management.

ELEMENT 8.4 Develop proposals to external agencies to secure supplemental resources to enhance the services available to students with special needs.

ELEMENT 8.5 Implement agreements for contractual services from outside agencies to benefit students with disabilities.

ELEMENT 8.6 Establish linkages between preschool, school age and post-secondary programs and services.

ELEMENT 8.7 Develop program budgets that allocate adequate resources to school sites and programs, and demonstrate sound fiscal management and planning.

ELEMENT 8.8 Allocate available Full Time Equivalency (FTE) positions to special education programs and services to

ensure a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) to students identified with disabilities.

ELEMENT 8.9 Identify current needs and resources for assistive technology to meet the needs of students with disabilities.