

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO
School of Special Education

Post-Master's Licensure Program
Special Education Administration

Externship Handbook

**SPECIAL EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION
POST-MASTER'S LICENSURE PROGRAM
Externship Handbook**

The Special Education Administration endorsement program is designed to prepare experienced education professionals to become special education administrators. The endorsement is a post-Master's administrator license, and all individuals must have completed a master's degree at an accredited institution of higher education prior to acceptance into the 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 Special Education Administration endorsement 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 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.

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 730: Externship in Special Education Administration

The capstone experience for all post-Master's licensure students in the Special Education: Administration program is an individually designed externship in special education. The EDSE 730 class is completed through the supervision of the university supervisor and a collaborating professional in the public schools who is a fully qualified 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 administrator candidate. Each semester credit of externship requires forty-five contact hours of supervised experiences through the supervision and support of a qualified Special Education Director. An outline of the general expectations of the externship is found in the course syllabus for EDSE 730 in appendix A.

Externship Requirements

The philosophy of professional development that guides the design and delivery of the post-Master's 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. The intended outcome of the externship experiences is to connect personal development to organizational development. The following assumptions guide the planning, implementation, supervision, and evaluation of the externship (EDSE 730) experiences:

- (1) Ongoing professional development is required if it is to result in significant change.
- (2) School change is the result of both individual and organizational development.
- (3) The goal of professional development is to support the inquiry into and study of teaching and learning.
- (4) School leaders learn as a result of training, practice, and feedback, as well as individual reflection and group inquiry into their practice.
- (5) Professional development is essential to school development.
- (6) Professional development should be primarily school focused and embedded in the job.

To accomplish these guiding principles, a shared responsibility for the externship is promoted among the extern (learner), cooperating professional administrator, and university supervisor. The general roles and responsibilities of each of these three positions is described as follows:

Extern (Learner):

1. Develops the initial proposal for the externship.
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.
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.

Cooperating Professional:

1. Reviews proposal for externship and provides feedback and recommended modifications.

2. Provides orientation to the school district, its policies, and the culture of the organization.
3. Develops opportunities for externs to participate in all aspects of leading and managing the organization.
4. Demonstrates 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. Assists the extern in self-assessment and planning for personal growth and development.

University Supervisor:

1. Provides guidance and overall direction on the final plan for externship.
2. Makes arrangements for externship placements.
3. Serves as a resource as requested for the extern and cooperating professional.
4. Visits the externship site to observe the extern and consult with both the extern and the cooperating professional.
5. Obtains information from the cooperating professional on the level of application of program knowledge and skills.
6. Prepares final evaluation of the externship experience.

Director of Special Education Program Competencies

The program competencies that are expected of each student completing the externship include the following:

1. Identify the differences between strategic thinking and traditional thinking in relation to the roles and responsibilities of special education leaders.
2. Develop a keen awareness of the students with disabilities who are educated under the provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
3. Describe the financing of public education, with an emphasis on the basic types and patterns of special education reimbursement of local education agencies.
4. Identify federal legislation that defines special education and related services.
5. Relate past and present litigation developments that continue to shape special education today.
6. List the duties, responsibilities, and typical problems in special education administration.
7. Identify effective practices and issues involved in special education personnel recruitment and retention.

8. Categorize and describe various auxiliary services and related services that assure a free appropriate education to students with disabilities.
9. Identify pertinent variables associated with early intervention and transition programs and services.
10. Consider various aspects of administrative decision-making.
11. Describe the components of inter-agency agreements and professional development partnerships.
12. Discuss the similarities and differences between building principal and special education director roles.
13. Describe the proactive role of the special education administrator in the identification, prevention, and intervention of child abuse and neglect situations.
14. Identify the role of the special education administrator in working with the mental health and juvenile justice systems.
15. Discuss the role of the special education administrator in working with parent and advocacy groups.
16. Identify current issues and trends in the fields of special education and educational leadership.
17. Review the professional standards for special education administrators adopted by the Council for Exceptional Children.
18. Identify the duties, responsibilities, and problems in program evaluation.
19. Describe effective practices and potential problems associated with personnel selection, development, reassignment, and termination.
20. Categorize and determine the effectiveness of various auxiliary services and related services which ensure a free appropriate public education to students with disabilities.
21. Pinpoint considerations involved in administrative decision making including: formal and informal community structures, position power and authority, perception and motivation, etc.
22. Conceptualize effective team building approaches and strategies that result in effective organizations.

23. Describe how to evaluate inter-agency agreements developed on behalf of students with disabilities.
24. Delineate effective considerations for professional development of special educators and related service providers.
25. Apply systems thinking to the role and function of special education.
26. Demonstrate a broad general knowledge base regarding program evaluation systems.
27. Explain the various approaches to compliance monitoring required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.
28. Develop program evaluation strategies for instructional improvement.
29. Apply statistical analysis of data for purposes of program review and potential modification.
30. Construct logic models and quality performance measures that document student and program efficacy.
31. Apply strategic planning as a tool for school and system improvement.

Externship Proposal and Planning Forms:

Each individual completing EDSE 730, Externship in Special Education Administration, completes an individual proposal for the externship to be submitted to the Cooperating Professional and University Coordinator of the endorsement program. The proposal should be developed to address the expectations or knowledge and skills to be gained and/or demonstrated, the proposed learning activities, frequency and form of faculty/student contact, and evaluation of competency/knowledge demonstrations (i.e., any “products” resulting from the experiences).

The university supervisor submits the University of Northern Colorado Directed Study/Non-Scheduled Course Registration form to complete the registration process.

Supervision and Evaluation of Externship:

An initial placement conference among the extern, cooperating professional administrator, and university supervisor will establish the goals, objectives, activities, and intended outcomes/products to be developed through the externship. A schedule of visitation from the university supervisor to the externship site will be identified through the initial meeting. At the close of the experience, the cooperating professional administrator will provide a letter to the university supervisor with an assessment of the graduate student’s performance in the assigned areas of responsibility. The extern will provide a self-assessment of accomplishments, log of activities completed, artifacts

collected in the course of experience along with reflections on the value of each for ongoing professional development as a special education leader, and a copy of any products developed in the course of the externship. The university supervisor will compile all information and submit a final grade for the externship experience.

**APPENDIX A
COURSE SYLLABUS
EDSE 730
EXTERNSHIP IN SPECIAL EDUCATION
ADMINISTRATION**

A. Course Description

The externship is a supervised program of orientation, observation, and participation in an assigned placement, which provides an opportunity to expand experience and learning beyond the University of Northern Colorado. Particular emphasis is placed on increasing students' understanding and experiences with economically, socially, and ethnically diverse populations. Externships include study of inter-agency relationships, and the development of cooperative programs and may focus on inquiry, administration, or university teaching. Activities in the externship are cooperatively designed by the student, the UNC advisor, and the on-site supervisor.

B. Prerequisites:

This course is available to graduate students at the post-Masters program level.

C. Relationship of this Course to the Program Knowledge Base:

The program that prepares Directors of Special Education was developed using the knowledge and skills statements of the Council for Exceptional Children's Knowledge and Skills for Beginning Special Education Administrators, although these standards are not required for accreditation purposes. The program knowledge base is addressed in the externship through integration and application of the five guiding themes of: strategic thinking, leadership, organizational change, collaborative partnerships, and systems of accountability.

D. Professional Standards Met:

All students pursuing the post-Masters program in Special Education Administration are required to meet the requirements for Special Education: Moderate Needs Teacher licensure or the equivalent. This background addresses the Colorado Department of Education's performance-based standards for Colorado teachers.

E. Goals of the Course

1. Complete 45 contact hours of supervised professional experiences in an agency setting for each semester hour completed.
2. Demonstrate program knowledge and performances in an applied agency setting.

F. Course Objectives:

1. Demonstrate progressively more sophisticated knowledge and skill in the area of special education administration.
2. Develop knowledge and skill related to the overall operation of an assigned organization and an individually approved project.
3. Develop knowledge and skill related to working with economically, socially, and ethnically diverse populations in the context of an assigned organization or project.
4. Develop ability to deal effectively with the power structure and inter-individual relationships; in the assigned organization and/or project.
5. Develop knowledge and skill regarding problem solving and decision-making by immersion in the processes of the assigned organization and/or project.
6. Apply knowledge and skill regarding specific theories, concepts, and practices in special education in relation to the functioning of the assigned organization and/or project.
7. Additional objectives should be individually tailored to the needs of the student and rationale for the particular externship.

G. Content of the Course:

1. Demonstration of program knowledge and skills in an applied setting.
2. Development and implementation of an individually designed externship plan that includes: goals/objectives, activities/strategies, setting(s) and supervisor(s), and outcomes/products from the externship.
3. Completion of 45 contact hours of supervised experiences for each semester credit.

H. Course Requirements:

1. Complete all assigned activities detailed in the individually designed externship plan.
2. Receive satisfactory recommendation from externship supervisor(s).
3. Provide a summary log of all externship activities.

I. Grading Criteria:

A letter grade is assigned by the university supervisor of the externship experience, based on evaluation of externship products and recommendations from the on-site supervisor(s). Within two weeks of the conclusion of the externship, the on-site supervisor(s) should submit a letter evaluating the student's competency during the externship, including specific documentation of leadership abilities and professionalism.

J. Required Readings:

Students are required to read the Special Education Administration Program Handbook.

K. Suggested Readings:

N/A

L. Accommodations Statement:

Students with disabilities who believe they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact the Disability Access Center (970-351-2289) as soon as possible to better ensure such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.