

Special Education Professional Development Credential

The Special Education Graduate Program offers teachers a **professional development credential** in five critical skill areas:

- Creativity and Differentiation
- Response to Intervention for Social and Emotional Behavior
- Collaboration with Families and Professionals.
- Autism
- Technology

This **online opportunity** is highly interactive and will help address real issues you face in today's classrooms.

BENEFITS OF EARNING A PDC

- Advance and refine specific critical skills. For each area, you take two specially designed courses (3 credit hours, each) that focus on developing advanced competency skills and earn a Professional Development Credential (PDC) for that area.
- Become prepared to share your skills with other teachers and become a leader in that area for your school or county.
- Make progress toward your Master's degree: If you choose to continue graduate work, the six credit hours required for your PDC may be applied WCU's M.A.Ed. in special education for either (1) Mild-to-Moderate Disabilities, (2) Severe/Profound Disabilities, or (3) Gifted, Creative, & Innovative Education.

CRITICAL SKILLS FOCUS AREAS

- ***Creativity and Differentiation***: This pair of courses will help teachers meet the 21st century needs of students with high potential through creativity and differentiation. SPED 500 will focus on fostering creativity in students by using problem-based and product-based learning in a collaborative learning environment. This course will have a one-week field experience on-campus, typically the last week in June. SPED 577 will include ways to adapt content, process, product, and the learning environment, to provide appropriate learning experiences for all students, with a focus on gifted students.
 - **Required courses** (6 credit hours):
 - **SPED 500**: Creative Thinking and Problem-Solving
 - **SPED 577**: Curriculum Differentiation for Gifted and Creative Learners
- ***Response to Intervention for Social and Emotional Behavior***: This set of courses will help participants develop Response to Intervention (RTI) procedures and strategies for developing positive school and classroom climate; preventing behavioral problems; motivating and engaging students; and developing

strategies for groups or individual students with social, emotional, and behavioral difficulties. Topics will include: school-wide positive behavioral intervention and support; culturally responsive classroom management; motivation and engagement; screening and assessments of behavioral and emotional disorders; appropriate tier 2 and tier 3 interventions; data based decision-making; and bullying prevention and intervention.

- **Required courses** (6 credit hours):
 - **SPED 555:** Culturally Responsive Classroom Management for Exceptional Learners
 - **SPED 684:** Social and Emotional Issues of Exceptional Learners
- **Collaboration with Families and Professionals:** This set of courses will enable participants to acquire skills for collaborating with families who have children with moderate, severe, or profound disabilities. Specifically, participants will develop (a) an understanding of what families experience raising a child with disabilities; (b) effective communication skills to enhance collaboration and reduce conflicts; (c) creating teams to produce effective IEPs, behavior plans, inclusion plans, etc.; and (d) skills to interview and conduct informal assessments with families regarding functional skills. In addition, participants will gain information on working collaboratively with paraprofessionals and related support personnel. Participants will learn skills such as preparing paraprofessionals to implement behavior plans, collect data, implement systematic instruction, etc. Other skills will include resolving conflict, collaborative problem-solving, assertiveness, and responsive listening.
 - **Required courses** (6 credit hours):
 - **SPED 530:** Assessment and Functional Skill Instruction in the Adapted Curriculum
 - **SPED 633:** Collaboration with Families and Professionals
- **Autism:** This set of courses will enable participants to acquire skills for understanding and teaching students with autism. Specifically, participants will develop an understanding of the characteristics students with autism spectrum disorders experience and how students are diagnosed. Information on the most current and evidence-based instructional strategies will be provided to teach students with autism spectrum disorders both academic and functional skills. Information on how to assess the progress of students will also be included.
 - **Required courses** (6 credit hours):
 - **SPED 635:** Introduction to Autism Spectrum Disorders
 - **SPED 636:** Evidence-Based Methods for Teaching Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders
- **Technology:** This credential includes one graduate-level course and one conference/workshop designed to assist participants in using instructional technology to personalize learning, differentiate, and promote 21st century skills: collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, and communication.
 - **Required courses** (3 credit hours + conference):
 - **EDCI 646:** Technology and Personalized Learning Environments
 - Attend one **Professional Development Conference on Technology** hosted by WCU

ADMISSION AND ENROLLMENT

1. Email Bridget Lopez at blopez@wcu.edu or call her at 828.227.2000 to indicate which PDC you wish to pursue. She will also be happy to help you with the admissions process.
2. Apply to WCU as a Non-Degree graduate student. Visit gradapply.wcu.edu to apply. You will need official transcripts and a \$65 application fee.
3. Graduate Distance Education fees apply for tuition purposes.
4. Enroll in the appropriate courses.

For additional information, please contact Lisa Bloom at bloom@wcu.edu or Bridget Lopez at blopez@wcu.edu.