



Special Education

The mission of the Department of Special Education is to enhance the quality of life for individuals with disabilities and their families in advocating for inclusive practices. This is achieved by preparing competent educators to engage collaboratively with education professionals, service providers, and families in developing individualized, culturally responsive instructional planning and application. The Department of Special Education is committed to equipping candidates to select and implement evidence-based practices through consistent applied experiences.

THE PROGRAM

As a top 15% program in the United States, the Special Education Department is committed to educating students to become leaders that serve the common good. The Department of Special Education chooses to approach this commitment one individual at a time, understanding that getting to know someone helps faculty understand an individual's worth and to address their needs as a whole person. Through getting to know students and creating individual plans for success, faculty and staff model the expectations in genuine ways while encouraging students to do the same.

Many courses in the program offer community-engaged service-learning activities to provide students opportunities to experience servant leadership. As a community of reflective learners, Gonzaga's faculty, staff, and students form supportive relationships that encourage service for others and responsibility to each other.

The Special Education major is a great gateway to prepare for becoming a teacher, Board-Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst (BCaBA), speech and language therapist, occupational therapist, school psychologist, social worker, or school counselor. Since these fields frequently serve individuals with differing abilities, understanding and gaining experience with individuals having a variety of disabilities provides insights into the needs of the individual, style of learning, ability to build trust, development of relationships, and engagement of challenges to attain success.

Strong partnerships with local schools and agencies provide opportunities for applying knowledge and skills gained in the classroom to real-life experiences through field experiences. Students complete a minimum of 60 hours of field experience prior to their senior practicum or student teaching. Qualified University supervisors, agency mentors, and/or cooperating teachers provide mentoring support at all field practicum levels.

DEGREE PROGRAMS

The Department of Special Education offers a flexible and marketable academic program that prepares students to work with individuals with mild to severe disabilities, such as learning, physical, communication, behavior, and autism spectrum disorders. Students can complete a major (B.Ed.) or minor in Special Education. The minor in Special Education is designed to increase personal understanding and abilities when interacting with those who may need additional guidance to participate in society fully and is an opportunity for undergraduate students to pursue a BCaBA certificate in coordination with the degree. Please note the BCaBA option has specific course requirements. Please contact the department directly for more information.



OUTCOMES

Gonzaga University prides itself on outcomes of its students. The **Department of Special Education was ranked 21st out of 185 Special Education Programs by College Factual, placing in the top 15% of Special Education programs in the United States.** Over the past five years, Gonzaga graduates in their first year after graduation tend to follow in one of five major paths:

The largest group of graduates obtain work in the teaching profession (approximately 70%); enter graduate school (approximately 20%); join volunteer service agency like the Jesuit Volunteer Corps or Mercy Corps (approximately 5%); gain employment working directly with individuals with disabilities and/or employment that provides opportunities to advocate for rights of individuals (approximately 4%); and our fifth and newest group work toward becoming BCaBAs (approximately 1%). This last group is expected to grow in numbers over the next few years, as the demand in this employment area continues to grow. Additionally, many of our graduates have received state awards, scholarships, started their own businesses, etc. Graduates from Gonzaga's Special Education program are trained to become highly qualified professionals and, as a result, experience excellent career outcomes upon graduation.

The Department of Special Education also offers a Master's degree (M.Ed.) in Special Education. Students may choose to complete the General M.Ed. which provides flexibility in course content allowing students to choose areas of focus. Some choose to focus on adding a Special Education endorsement (if they already have a teaching certification) while others may specialize in Early Childhood Special Education. Other areas of focus include working toward obtaining a Board-Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) certification or Special Education teacher certification.

CERTIFICATION & RECIPROCITY

Many students in the program combine an academic degree with initial teacher certification. Special Education majors seeking certification in Special Education obtain an endorsement to teach preschool through grade 12. These students must add at least one additional endorsement area. **Students seeking elementary education certification receive an elementary endorsement and can teach grades K-8 in general education classrooms in addition to their special education endorsement. Other endorsement areas include but are not limited to Reading, English Language Learners (ELL), English, Mathematics, Spanish, Music, Theatre Arts, Biology, and History.**

The teacher preparation programs have affiliation agreements with over 30 public and private school districts in the state of Washington. This allows our students to experience a wide variety of school settings, cultures, and programming during their teacher preparation program.

All teacher preparation programs are approved by the Washington Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB). Completing a teacher preparation program at Gonzaga University, therefore, qualifies a candidate as an out of state program completer when applying for licensure in other states. For more information, visit gonzaga.edu/licensuredisclosure.



ENDORSEMENTS

Many of our students add **teacher certification in Special Education.** Some add another endorsement area to increase marketability in the teaching profession. Some of our majors go on to obtain advanced degrees in a variety of helping professions other than teaching. Endorsements offered at Gonzaga include:

- Biology, 5-12
- Chemistry, 5-12
- Early Childhood Special Education, Pre-K-3
- Elementary Education, K-8
- English Language Arts, 5-12
- English Language Learners, K-12
- Health and Fitness, K-12
- History/Social Studies, 5-12
- Mathematics, 5-12
- Music, K-12
- Physics, 5-12
- Reading, K-12
- Special Education, Pre-K-12
- Theatre Arts, K-12
- World Languages-French, Spanish, K-12



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