

Special Education Teacher

You teach students with disabilities and you write the legal plan that says what their school has to provide.

TYPICAL PAY

\$64,910

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$48k to \$103k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

4 to 6 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Public elementary and high schools, resource rooms, separat...

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma** Grade 12
 Nothing specific required. Volunteering with children, especially disabled children, is the thing that will actually tell you whether you want this.
- 2 Bachelor's degree with a teacher preparation program** 4 years
 Either a special education major, or a subject major plus an approved preparation program. It must be an approved program in the state where you want the license.
- 3 Student teaching** One semester
 A full semester in a real classroom under a mentor teacher, unpaid, and effectively a long job interview.
- 4 Pass your state exams** Final year
 Most states use the Praxis series, including Special Education: Foundational Knowledge, plus a basic skills test and sometimes a subject test.
- 5 Apply for your state license** Weeks to months
 Background check, fingerprints, transcripts and exam scores. Then you can be hired into a public school classroom.

Pros and cons

- + You can see the progress you made in an individual child
- + A pension, health cover and summers off
- + Loan forgiveness programs apply directly to this job
- Paperwork and legal deadlines take enormous time
- Meetings with families can be tense, and some become legal disputes
- Behavioral incidents can be physical, and you are in the room

Good to know

You write a document that is legally binding

Every student in special education has an IEP (Individualized Education Program), a written plan setting out goals, services and accommodations the school must deliver. It is not advice. If a school...

One federal law shapes the whole job

IDEA (the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) requires public schools to give every eligible child a free appropriate public education, in the least restrictive setting that works for them. Millions...

Optional boosts

Autism. Visual impairment, or deaf and hard of hearing. Early childhood special education. Reading specialist.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Special Education Teachers, Elementary School (25-2056.00)
 Council for Exceptional Children
 Praxis tests from Educational Testing Service
 University of Texas at Austin College of Education

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in United States dollars, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data and published pay scales. They vary by state, employer and experience. Tuition is for in-state students at public schools unless the card says otherwise. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/us/careers/special-education-teacher>



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