

# LSU Special Education Programs' Dual Certification Program Narrative

## 2020-2021 Academic Year

[LSU's dual certification program](#) is an instructional preparation sequence that readies candidates to teach students with and without verified disabilities. Program completion results in the candidate graduating eligible for two teaching certifications, grades 1-5 elementary education and grades 1-5 mild-moderate disabilities. The program prepares candidates to be effective general education or special education teachers. At present, it is a 129-credit, 4-year, 8-semester program that begins with the candidate completing LSU general education requirements and culminates with a two-semester residency/student teaching experience in a public school setting.

While the base program targets the elementary grades 1-5, candidates who are interested in the PK-3 or secondary school programs can also complete a process leading to certifications to teach both general education and special education populations. In most cases, that goal is accomplished through candidates completing the five-course minor in special education in addition to their respective program coursework.

### Program Emphases

The dual certification degree program – known as DUALC in the LSU system – focuses on developing candidates who are child centered, data driven, outcome oriented, and solution seeking. Being child centered means that Special Education Programs faculty and candidates (a) recognizes each public school student as an individual; and (b) value and teach each student within the contexts of his/her class, school, family, home, and community. Being data driven means that Special Education Programs faculty and candidates (a) strive to develop candidate knowledge and skill mastery of assessment and instructional procedures that are research- or evidence-based; and (b) incorporate objective and valid measurement in instructional planning, teaching, and evaluation processes. Being outcome oriented means that Special Education Programs faculty and candidates (a) foster actions that emphasize development and monitoring of meaningful and appropriate public school student outcomes; and (b) cultivate a culture of effective collaboration with school professionals and family members in developing and monitoring meaningful and appropriate public school student outcomes. Being solution seeking means that Special Education Programs faculty and candidates (a) emphasize communication and action that promote problem solving; and (b) collaborate for the purpose of performing meaningful teaching and learning.

The child centered, data driven, outcome oriented, and solution seeking emphases are the Special Education Programs' operationalization of the School of Education's conceptual framework of inquiring pedagogy, effective professionalism, and reflective practice. LSU Special Education Programs professors work closely with effective public school mentor teacher teams and school and parish administrators to emphasize teacher education candidate actions that provide effective instructional practice to all students and specially designed instruction to students with disabilities.

### Program Structure

If the [recommended path](#) is followed, then the candidate completes the program in 4 academic years or 8 fall-spring semesters. In the first 4 semesters the university's general education requirements and some School of Education prerequisites are met. One of the School of Education's prerequisites is an orientation to special education, EDCI 2700: Introduction to Exceptionalities, that is generally taught by Special Education Programs' faculty.

In the final 4 semesters, candidates take a series of special education assessment, instruction, and classroom management courses in the fifth semester, a collection of science and math methods courses in the sixth semester, and a group of reading/language arts courses in the seventh semester prior to full-time placement in a public school setting in the eighth semester. The candidates' seventh and eighth semesters constitute a residency/student teaching experience. Throughout the final 4 semesters, candidates are presented content in LSU classrooms and then practice implementation in public school classroom placements. During this time there is an emphasis on mastering effective instructional practice, including what the larger field of education has termed "high-leverage practices," or teaching procedures that are used across contexts, can be directly taught, and have been shown to contribute to student achievement gains (McLeskey et al., 2017). In special education, 22 procedures, including collecting individualized data, using explicit instruction, intensifying instruction as needed, teaching social skills, and collaborating with professionals, are categorized into four broad areas of development: collaboration, assessment, instruction, and social/emotional/behavioral development.

Each candidate is assigned a mentor teacher team which includes a general education teacher and a special education teacher. Placements are organized by Special Education Programs' faculty members and provide the candidate with the opportunity to receive an in-depth exposure to classroom teaching practice and school/classroom climate. Placements also enable candidates to develop ongoing relationships with practicing teachers, public school students, and specific grade-level contexts. In the best of cases, candidates who want to remain in the area end up being offered teaching positions in our partner schools because they have demonstrated their capacity to be effective teachers.

## Program Entrance and Completion Requirements

You must gain admission into the College of Human Sciences & Education in order to pursue the dual certification degree major. Prospective candidates need a 2.5 LSU and cumulative grade point average (GPA) and to have completed 24 hours of college credit. That does not mean, however, that interested candidates steer clear of education courses of interest to them. Freshmen might consider mixing in the previously mentioned EDCI 2700: Introduction to Exceptionalities course with the university's General Education requirements if the course is not full of already registered candidates. In order to take 3000-level courses within the School of Education, candidates need a 2.5 LSU and cumulative GPA and either passing scores on the PRAXIS I core academic skills for educators assessments in reading (Test 5712, Score  $\geq 156$ ), writing (Test 5722, Score  $\geq 162$ ), and math (Test 5732, Score  $\geq 150$ ) or ACT/SAT/RSAT composite scores that meet or exceed 22/1030/1100, respectively.

In order to graduate and be eligible for Louisiana certification, candidates need to complete the course requirements of the program as well as meet criteria on a series of PRAXIS II program-related assessments. It is recommended that these assessments be completed in the fifth and sixth semesters of a candidate's eight-semester program. There [are three assessments that need to be taken](#). It is recommended that Test 5543: Special Education: Core Knowledge and Mild to Moderate Applications (Score  $\geq 153$ ) and Test 5001: Elementary Education: Multiple Subjects (Reading and Language Arts Subtest Score  $\geq 157$ ; Math Score  $\geq 157$ ; Social Studies Score  $\geq 155$ ; and Science Score  $\geq 159$ ) be taken in the fifth semester. It is recommended that Test 5622: Principles of Learning and Teaching: Grades K-6 (Score  $\geq 160$ ) be taken in the sixth semester.

## The Ideal Program Candidate

Special Education Programs' faculty members believe that the ideal dual certification candidate has two attributes. These two critical attributes are also what the school principals that the program works closely with

– and who hire program graduates – have emphasized repeatedly over the years. First, the ideal candidate wants to be the best teacher he or she can be. There is a ‘want to,’ a willingness, to which program faculty and partner school principals can add the ‘how to’ through course content and field-based practical experience. Second, the ideal candidate is willing to work with *all* students, what some teaching researchers have described as the HALO – high achievers, average achievers, low achievers, and others, including students with disabilities. We want it known that dual certification graduates can be general education classroom teachers or special education teachers, whatever they want to be, upon graduation and certification. School principals tell us that their ideal general education teacher is dually certified.

## Program Possibilities

At present, LSU’s Special Education Programs has working relationships with school districts in West Baton Rouge and Ascension Parishes. That means that our dual certification candidates complete their field experience and residency experiences in classrooms in those districts. However, we are presently working to expand the opportunities that candidates have to work with different student populations and school and classroom contexts. For example, it is possible for grades 1-5 candidates to complete additional field experience activities in Baton Rouge at the Emerge School for Autism, the Louisiana School for the Visually Impaired, or the Louisiana School for the Deaf. It is also possible for PK-3 candidates to complete additional field experience activities at Iberville (Parish) Elementary Montessori School. It is the goal of Special Education Programs’ faculty to consider to improve and expand the opportunities for dual certification candidates to positively impact the academic and social-emotional-behavioral lives of students with and without disabilities, students’ caregivers and families, and their teachers and accompanying educational professionals.

## Program Contacts

For more information on the dual certification degree program or to enroll in dual certification coursework, please contact representatives in the [LSU College of Human Sciences & Education’s Office of Student Services](#)

## Reference

McLeskey, J., Barringer, M. D., Billingsley, B., Brownell, M., Jackson, D. Ziegler, D. (2017). *High-leverage practices in special education*. Arlington, VA: Council for Exceptional Children & CEEDAR Center.

## **Appendix A: Semester Sequence**

### **Semester 5: Fall of Junior Year**

Major Emphasis: Special Education Assessment and Instruction; Classroom Management

Courses: EDCI 3701, 3702, 3704, 4703

Field Experience Placement Preference: Special Education Resource or Self-Contained Classroom

Field Experience Weekly Hour Requirements: 12 over 2-3 days

Major Content Areas: Assessment, Instruction, Classroom Management, Language

Major Assignments:

Curriculum-Based Measurement Administration and Interpretation Project (3701)

IEP Introduction Project (3701)

Lesson Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation Project – Academics (3702)

Lesson Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation Project – Social Emotional Learning (4703)

Student Language Project (3704)