



## **Early Childhood Careers** **Special Education Teaching (Preschool Age Students)**

### **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

#### **What are the certification requirements to be a special education teacher with preschool age children?**

An early childhood special education teacher in NYS is certified as a Teacher of Students with Disabilities (Birth – Grade 2). Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) degree programs prepare teachers to work with students with a range of disabilities across a variety of settings and programs. Additionally, you may elect to complete a dual certification program, completing both early childhood education and early childhood special education degree requirements.

#### **Requirements for Classroom Teacher, Initial Certificate Students with Disabilities (Birth-Grade 2)**

1. Bachelor's degree or Master's degree in Early Childhood Special Education  
AND
2. NYS Initial Teaching Certification - Students with Disabilities

#### **Requirements for Classroom Teacher, Professional Certificate Special Education**

1. Master's degree in Early Childhood Special Education  
AND
2. Initial Teaching Certificate (any subject)  
AND
3. Paid, full-time classroom teaching experience (3 years)

*Teachers certified after February 1, 2004, are required to obtain 175 hours of professional development every 5 years, if they work in a public school. If teachers are employed by a private institution, the 175 hour obligation is reduced by 10%.*

#### **What are the special education teaching positions for preschool age children?**

If you are interested in teaching children between the ages of three and five, commonly referred to as preschool age students, there are two main teaching positions. The two teaching positions are special education itinerant teacher (SEIT) and classroom teacher, (often identified as lead or head teacher of a special class). Additionally, there are opportunities to co-teach with an Early Childhood Educator in schools and programs that offer collaborative team teacher (CTT) classrooms. These various teaching positions are created to support the inclusion of students with disabilities in the least restrictive educational environment. For preschool age children with disabilities, a special class placement of only students with disabilities in a separate classroom or center-based program is a more restrictive educational environment, whereas SEIT and CTT placements offer a greater level of inclusion within the general education setting.

#### **What is a SEIT? (Special Education Itinerant Teacher)**

A SEIT is a special education model of full inclusion in which children with disabilities fully participate in the general education setting. A SEIT travels to where the student is (at home, at a caretaker's home, or a child care setting including community centers such as preschool, daycare, or Head Start programs) to provide special education instruction and support. A SEIT 'pushes in' to the student's classroom and provides one-to-one instruction specific to the student's IEP (individual education plan) goals, as well as to facilitate and support the student's complete participation in the educational setting.



### **What does a SEIT do?**

- ✓ Provides guidance and support to the child's family
- ✓ Offers indirect/consultation services to the students general education professionals in order to support progress towards IEP goals by showing, demonstrating, and practicing specific techniques
- ✓ Engages collaboratively with related service providers working with the same student to support the students learning across settings
- ✓ Encourages the development of the student's self-regulation skills as well as social and emotional skills that support the students successful interactions with peers and adults
- ✓ Completes progress reports, annual reports, and contributes to the development of the IEP

### **More about lead teacher and co-teacher positions**

Collaborative Team Teaching (CTT) is a model of inclusion in which an early childhood teacher and an early childhood special education teacher co-teach in the same classroom. Both teachers share in the responsibilities for the overall planning and management of the classroom. The special education teacher facilitates the participation of students with disabilities in the general education environment by providing individual and direct support. This includes coordinating the implementation of each student's IEP throughout the school day, ensuring students receive mandated related services and that instruction is aligned with specific IEP goals by modifications and adaptations to the general curricula. Children with an IEP may be placed in an integrated classroom setting when individual learning, health, and behavioral needs can be supported within the general education classroom or program.

A center-based program is a special education model to support students with disabilities, often offering only special classes and/or integrated classes. A special class is a class grouping of only students with disabilities. Students with disabilities are grouped together by similar individual needs that are best met from highly structured educational programming and with the support of a smaller ratio of students per teacher. Special class groupings can range from 15 to 6 students, staffed by one teacher and as many as four paraprofessionals. Specific ratios differ by program and specific student needs. Center-based programs are collaborative multidisciplinary settings where related service providers work directly with students and teachers throughout the school day. It will be recommended for a student to attend a special class when the necessary supports for full education participation are not accessible or best delivered in other educational settings. Examples of such accommodations and supports include specialized instruction and/or modified curriculum, intensive supervision and/or behavioral techniques, alternative methods for communication, special health care needs, or adaptive equipment.

### **For more information:**

- To learn more about teacher certification in New York State, visit the NYS Education Department Office of Teaching Initiatives website at <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/>
- Visit NY Department of Health at: [http://www.health.ny.gov/community/infants\\_children/early\\_intervention/index.htm](http://www.health.ny.gov/community/infants_children/early_intervention/index.htm) and read about the transition of children at age 3 from the Early Intervention Program
- Visit the NYC Department of Education website at: <http://schools.nyc.gov/> and explore the special education section located under the academic tab or read "A Parent's Guide to Special Education" which can be download from the website.
- Visit these websites for information about the field, become a member, or participate in trainings: Council for Exceptional Children, [www.cec.sped.org](http://www.cec.sped.org); Division for Early Childhood, [www.dec-sped.org](http://www.dec-sped.org); National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) [www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org)
- Read - DEC/NAEYC. (2009). Early childhood inclusion: A joint position statement of the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, FPG Child Development Institute. [http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/DEC\\_NAEYC\\_EC\\_updatedKS.pdf](http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/DEC_NAEYC_EC_updatedKS.pdf)
- For more information about education laws, disabilities, research visit the National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY) website at <http://nichcy.org/>