

# How Can I Become a Special Education Teacher in Michigan?

We are excited you are interested in becoming a special education teacher in Michigan! In Michigan, teacher preparation is guided by state law, state Administrative Rules which hold the weight of law, and teacher preparation program standards.

- [Michigan Administrative Rules Governing Educator Certification](#)
- [Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education](#)

## Michigan Program Completion Requirements

Michigan law and rules require all individuals complete an approved preparation program in order to become a teacher in Michigan. Michigan approved programs for Special Education must also have a general education elementary or secondary content program (e.g., Elementary Education, English, Social Studies).

In addition to completion of an approved teacher preparation program, Michigan law requires teachers:

- Complete [required reading courses](#) (6 semester credit hours for elementary teachers and 3 semester credit hours for secondary teachers);
- Complete a course in [first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation](#) which leads to a valid certification from the American Red Cross, American Heart Association or a comparable organization/institution approved by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE);
- Pass the appropriate [Michigan Test for Teacher Certification \(MTTC\)](#). Passage of examinations is required before recommendation for the Standard Teaching Certificate.

Michigan Educator Preparation Providers (EPPs) guide prospective educators through these requirements and each EPP takes their own unique approach to meeting the requirements of law, rule, and standards.

## Preparation Program Pathways

Certified Michigan teachers can add special education endorsements to their certificates while employed as full-time teachers in special education positions by

enrolling in an approved preparation program and working under a valid [Special Education Teacher Approval](#). This approval process is considered an alternative route as defined in the Federal Regulation 34 C.F.R. §300.156 (c)(2). Individuals must make progress towards program completion in order to renew the approval.

Additionally, there are two types of special education teacher preparation program pathways or *initial* teacher certification in Michigan:

1. **Traditional:** This pathway is offered at either an undergraduate or post-baccalaureate level through an [approved Michigan EPP](#). Potential candidates must meet the minimum requirements of the institution to be admitted into the teacher preparation program. Passage of MTTC examinations is required before recommendation for certification.
2. **Expedited:** This pathway is designed for individuals who have completed a bachelor's degree. It leverages demonstrated skills to complete the program in an expedited manner. Expedited programs are offered through several Michigan colleges and universities. Many expedited programs are residencies, designed for individuals who are interested in being employed as full-time teachers while concurrently working toward certification. The required reading coursework is typically embedded throughout the program. Passage of MTTC content examinations is required before recommendation for certification.

While Michigan Compiled Law (MCL) 380.1531i does not allow the development of alternative route preparation programs for special education, the United States Department of Education does recognize the Special Education Approval process as an alternative pathway, as indicated above. As a result of the restriction in MCL 380.1531i, educators cannot obtain the Interim Teaching Certificate (ITC) with special education endorsements or work under an ITC in conjunction with a Special Education Approval.

An individual enrolled in a [Michigan approved alternative route](#) may, however, be employed under a [Full-year Basic Permit](#) for special education in conjunction with an ITC while simultaneously being enrolled in a separate special education preparation program (EPP). Specific and detailed coordination with the alternate route provider, the special education EPP and the employing school is vital.

### **Considerations in Selecting a Program Out-of-State**

Educators who complete preparation programs at institutions or universities [outside the state of Michigan](#), regardless of whether it is online or face-to-face, must meet the certification requirements of that state. The MDE does not have the authority to approve out-of-state educator preparation programs prior to completion. Under the [National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification](#) reciprocal agreement held between states, educators may apply for a Michigan

certificate based on completion of an out-of-state approved preparation program for special education.

Unlike most states, Michigan is categorical for special education (e.g. Learning Disabilities, Emotional Impairment). A list of all of Michigan's special education categorical endorsements can be found on page two of the [Active Teachers Endorsements document](#). In addition to meeting certification requirements in the state where the program was completed, out-of-state cross-categorical program completers, and/or alternative route applicants must meet [Michigan's preparation standards](#) for the special education categorical endorsement(s) applied for.

The MDE uses a competency-based review process for evaluating applications for special education endorsement(s) for candidates who completed their programs through out-of-state traditional or alternative routes. Alternative route completers must obtain a standard, out-of-state certificate (issued after program completion) before applying for certification in Michigan. The MDE uses a competency-based review process for evaluating applications for special education endorsement(s) for candidates who completed their programs through out-of-state traditional or alternative routes. Alternative route completers must obtain a standard, out-of-state certificate (issued after program completion) before applying for certification in Michigan.

## **Application**

Application for initial certification based on an in-state or out-of-state preparation program must be submitted using the [Michigan Online Educator Certification System \(MOECS\)](#). Like in-state program completers, out-of-state applicants must complete a course in [first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation](#) from an approved provider and pass the appropriate MTTCs in order to receive a Standard Teaching Certificate. The MDE cannot advise applicants on testing requirements prior to application submission through MOECS.

## **School and District Employment Options**

A school or district unable to find a properly certified and endorsed special education teacher can utilize the [Special Education Teacher Approval](#) option to place individuals in special education settings. The approval can be granted to a district for a teacher who possesses a valid Michigan teaching certificate and is enrolled in a [Michigan special education endorsement program](#). Continuing annual approvals (renewals) require the completion of six semester credits since the issuance of the previous approval.

Michigan also allows the use of a Full-year Basic Permit to staff a special education vacancy. Information about permits can be found on the Department's [Permits and Placement](#) page under the "Permits" heading. This permit is particularly useful when

the candidate is not enrolled in a Michigan preparation program or does not hold valid Michigan certification. Permits are applied for and issued to the employing school district, not to an educator.

Questions regarding placement, assignment, role and services allowed for individuals working under either of these options should be directed to the Office of Special Education at [MDE-OSE@Michigan.gov](mailto:MDE-OSE@Michigan.gov).

## **Contact**

For more information contact the MDE Office of Special Education:

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