Master of Arts in Teaching - Special Education
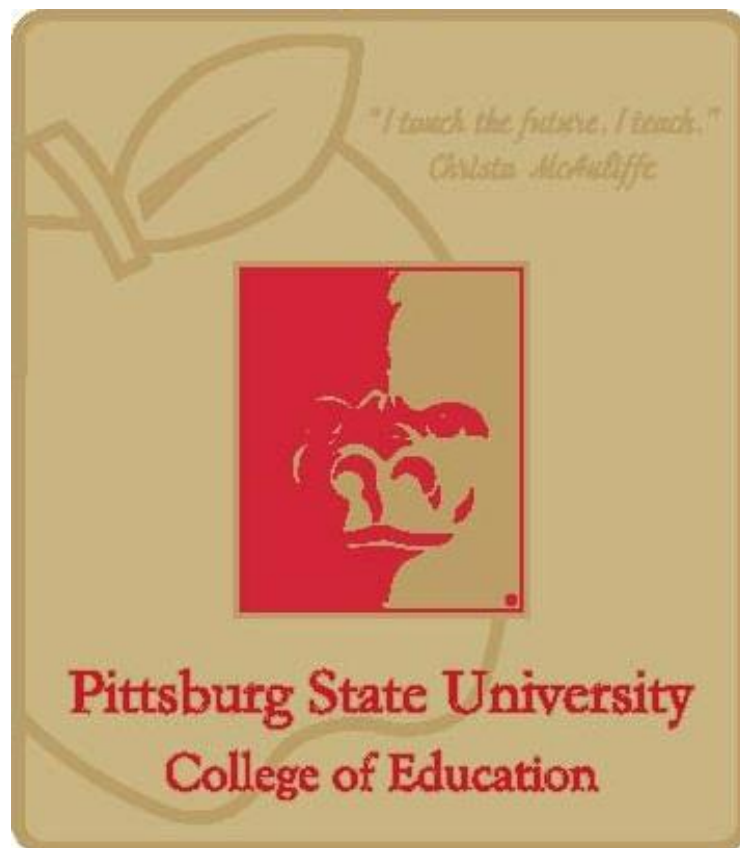# (High-Incidence Grades K-6 _or_ 6-12)

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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Master of Arts in Teaching Special Education (MAT-SPED) is a licensure program designed for paraeducators. It is a two-year, 36 credit hour, online program with new cohorts beginning each summer. Candidates must have a baccalaureate degree in a non-teaching area and at least one-year prior experience working as a special education paraeducator. The program allows teacher candidates to earn a Kansas teaching license in high-incidence special education, grades K-6 *or* 6-12. The application deadline is March 1st.

The program has two paths for completion. Both paths require employment in a high-incidence special education setting for the duration of the program and the grade level must align with the program grade level selected. Candidates may change paths prior to the second year of enrollment.

Path 1 – Paraeducator
Candidates may be employed as full time paraeducators in an accredited Kansas school, working with students who have high-incidence learning needs.

Path 2 - Teacher of Record
The paraeducator is hired by the school district to be the teacher of record in a high-incidence special education setting. Candidates on this path are able to serve as the teacher of record through the limited apprentice license.

For additional information contact:

Admission Questions:
Office of Teacher Education
620-235-6153; teachered@pittstate.edu

Academic or Program Questions:
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The College of Education reserves the right to amend any policies, rules or regulations as needed to best serve its constituents.

Notice of Nondiscrimination

Pittsburg State University prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, age, marital status, ancestry, genetic information, or disabilities. The following person has been designated to address inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policies: Director of Institutional Equity/Title IX Coordinator, 218 Russ Hall, 1701 S. Broadway, Pittsburg, KS 66762-7528, telephone (620) 235-4189, equity@pittstate.edu.
Website: https://office.pittstate.edu/institutional-equity/

Revised: 08/07/2024

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Prospective candidates should apply for admission to Graduate School by completing the application online at https://go.pittstate.edu/apps.intro.v2. Official transcripts for all completed coursework must be sent to PSU Graduate School (mail: 1701 S. Broadway, Pittsburg, KS 66762 or electronically: jsmiller@pittstate.edu). A direct transcript should be submitted from each institution where college credit was earned.

Upon receipt of all transcripts, the Educational Licensing Officer will analyze the transcript(s) for academic eligibility. To be academically eligible for the MAT – Special Education program, one must hold a baccalaureate degree without an education emphasis with a minimum cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 3.00 and have at least one year of experience as a special education paraeducator. Note – candidates seeking the limited apprentice license must also hold a GPA of 2.50 in their last 60 hours of college credit.

Professional Disposition Assessment
Applicants who meet the academic requirements are invited to participate in a professional disposition assessment. The assessment is comprised of multiple components. During the session, the applicant will present a lesson, participate in a group discussion, complete a personal interview, and compose a writing sample based on a case study.

1. **Lesson Presentation**
   Each applicant will conduct a five-minute lesson presentation. This will **NOT** be the delivery of a traditional lesson. There may be questions from audience members. Applicants are welcome to bring any visual aids they feel will help the audience remain engaged and understand the presentation. For virtual sessions, screen sharing will be an option.

   The presentation should contain the following components:
   a) A 1-2 minute description of a traditional lesson that has been observed or found from another source. Lesson plans are available in many places including online (i.e., creativecommons.org). The following points need to be included in the description:
      i. Lesson objective: What do students need to be able to know/understand/do as a result of the lesson?
      ii. How lesson is delivered (i.e., lecture, technology, student participation, etc.)?
      iii. How are students to be assessed in this lesson?

   b) The remainder of the presentation should include:
      i. Explanation of any barriers or challenges that may be faced by students with high-incidence disabilities
      ii. Explanation of how one could remove these barriers using the principles of universal design for learning. These principles are delineated in many places; here is one example:

Remember these key points for an effective presentation:
- There is a five-minute time limit.
- Lessons should have a clear beginning, middle, and end.
- Specific objectives should be communicated to the audience.
- Lessons should be interactive and age-appropriate.

2. **Discussion Group**
   During the discussion period, applicants will discuss one or more professional articles referenced in the interview packet. Applicants should access the article(s) and be prepared to participate in a professional conversation.

4. **Writing Sample**
   Each participant will be presented with a teaching scenario and will create a writing sample based on the situation.

5. **Open Q & A Session**
   This session will follow an overview of the MAT program. Applicants will be able to openly ask questions about the program.

6. **Personal Interviews**
   Applicants will have a personal interview with a faculty member. The goal of the interview is to explore the applicant's background, qualifications and commitment to expanding educational opportunities for children. The applicant will also have an opportunity to ask questions.

Sample Agenda
Introductions
Sample Teaching Session
Break
Discussion Group
Overview of MAT program
Open Q & A Session
Personal Interviews/Writing Samples

Applicants will be notified by e-mail of their acceptance status within two weeks of the assessment session. This communication will also provide information regarding the remaining admission requirements.

Verification of Paraeducator Experience
A letter from the district or cooperative must be submitted verifying at least one year of experience working as a special education paraeducator.

Two Recommendation Forms
Candidates must have two positive recommendation forms submitted to the Office of Teacher Education, Pittsburg State University, 1701 S. Broadway, Pittsburg, Kansas, 66762. These recommendations should be completed by a university professor, direct supervisor, or someone who is knowledgeable of the candidate's work with young people. The Office of Teacher Education will provide specific recommendation forms to be used for this requirement.

Background Check
As a requirement for admission to graduate programs in the department of Teaching and Leadership, candidates are required to complete a background check. The background check is required for admission and will not take the place of the required background check for licensure. Once candidates have completed the program and are ready to apply for the initial teaching license, an additional background check will be required by KSDE.

The background check for program admission is complete through Validity Screening Solutions. The Office of Teacher Education will provide specific instructions for the completion of this requirement.

All admission requirements listed above must be completed for candidates to be fully admitted to the MAT – Special Education program. Candidates must be fully admitted to the program by the time they have completed 12 credit hours in the program. If one is not fully admitted at this time, future enrollment will be put on hold. This may lead to a delay in program completion.

COURSEWORK

The 36-credit hour sequence of courses was designed to provide students an optimal academic experience. Candidates are expected to adhere to the following sequence. Courses are only offered during the semester indicated and will not be offered again for at least one year. Courses are taught online utilizing Canvas, PSU's learning management system.

COURSE SEQUENCE	
Elementary K-6	**Secondary 6-12**
Year 1 - Summer	
SPED 738 Characteristics of Students with High-Incidence Learning Needs	SPED 738 Characteristics of Students with High-Incidence Learning Needs
SPED 849 Partnerships with Families of Exceptional Children and Youth	SPED 849 Partnerships with Families of Exceptional Children and Youth
Year 1 - Fall	
SPED 755 – Individualized Education Programming	SPED 755 – Individualized Education Programming
SPED 862 General Education Curriculum for Students with High-Incidence Disabilities	SPED 862 General Education Curriculum for Students with High-Incidence Disabilities
Year 1 - Spring	
SPED 779 Teaching Elementary Students with High-Incidence Learning Needs	SPED 780 Teaching Secondary Students with High-Incidence Learning Needs
PSYCH 810 Advanced Educational Psychology	PSYCH 810 Advanced Educational Psychology
Year 2 - Summer	
SPED 750 Assessment in Special Education	SPED 750 Assessment in Special Education
READ 870 Literacy Development and Instruction (K-2)	READ 869 Disciplinary and Digital Literacies
Year 2 – Fall	
SPED 745 Behavior Analysis and Management	SPED 745 Behavior Analysis and Management
READ 871 Literacy Development and Instruction (3+)	READ 871 Literacy Development and Instruction (3+)
Year 2 – Spring	
SPED 761 Practicum I: High-Incidence Learning Needs	SPED 761 Practicum I: High-Incidence Learning Needs
SPED 861 The Professional Special Education	SPED 861 The Professional Special Education

Note: The course sequence is subject to change at the discretion of the Teaching and Leadership department.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Portfolio
As a requirement for graduation, each candidate must create and submit a professional portfolio during the last semester of the program. The portfolio project is divided into two parts; Part I is a philosophy of education that utilizes the Professional Knowledge Base indicators as a foundation to describe personal beliefs regarding special education. Part II is based on the KSDE Standards for teachers of students with high-incidence learning needs.

Licensure Exams
In the state of Kansas, those applying for an initial teaching license must pass the appropriate content assessment for the endorsement(s) sought. These exams are a part of the *Praxis* Subject Assessments. Current testing requirements for the state of Kansas can be found at
https://www.ets.org/praxis/ks/requirements.

The *Praxis* exams are offered only in a computer delivered format. Test-takers may take the exams at any Prometric Testing Center across the nation. Tests are also available for administration through Praxis Test at Home. It is important during registration to list Pittsburg State University as a designated score recipient so your scores will be officially reported to the Office of Teacher Education. Further information, including registration, can be found at the *Praxis* website
www.ets.org/praxis.

Licensure
The Educational Licensing Officer will provide assistance with submitting all license applications. Candidates can expect the following fees associated with licensing and testing.

- Licensure Exams
  - Content exams –$130 - $209 (A content exam is required for each endorsement sought for a teaching license.)
- License application fee - $60 - $70
- KSDE background check fee - $50
- There will be additional application and background check fees for any other state from which licensure is sought.

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PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Teacher candidates are expected to observe and adhere to the professional requirements for educators. Candidates need to be familiar with each of the following in order to uphold policies and legal requirements for educators.

Kansas Educator Code of Conduct

http://www.ksde.org/Portals/0/TLA/Licensure/KS_Ed_Code_Conduct_Brochure031014.pdf

The professional educator shall work in the best interest of their students and honor their responsibilities to their students, school, district, community, state and profession as evidence by:
- o Responsibilities to Student
- o Responsibilities to District
- o Responsibilities to Profession

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html

Student records and information are protected under this federal law. Teachers must be aware of the requirements in order to appropriately maintain required confidentiality.

Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting

http://www.dcf.ks.gov/services/pps/pages/reportchildabuseandneglect.aspx

All teachers, school administrators or other employees of an educational institution are mandated reporters for child abuse and neglect under the Kansas reporting law (K.S.A. 38-2223). Teacher candidates must be aware of their legal responsibility and the required steps to make such a report.

UNIVERSITY SUPPORT SERVICES

Student Success Programs
Student Success Programs provides programs and services to promote the successful transition of new students into a university environment. These programs and services include academic success workshops, tutoring, and other resources. More information about Student Success Programs can be found at: http://www.pittstate.edu/office/student-success-programs/

The Writing Center
The Writing Center is located in 311 Grubbs Hall. The center offers writing workshops and one-on-one consultations for any writing project. Consultations can be face-to-face or online. The services are free of charge for all PSU students. For more information, go to: http://www.pittstate.edu/office/writing_center/

Student Accommodations
Student Accommodations provides support services to currently enrolled PSU students with disabilities which substantially impairs one or more major life activities. Students may qualify for services that accommodate for their impairments and provide equal access to educational opportunity. http://www.pittstate.edu/office/center-for-student-accommodations

Gorilla Geeks
The Gorilla Geeks Help Desk assists students, faculty and staff with various technological needs. Some of the services available include help with GUS and GusPINs, assistance with PSU email accounts, assistance with educational software packages used on campus, basic help with computer hardware or software problems and help with wireless connectivity issues. Gorilla Geek is located in 109 Whitesitt Hall. For more information, go to: https://www.pittstate.edu/it/gorilla-geeks.html

Bryant Student Health Center
The mission of the Bryant Student Health Center is to provide quality healthcare that is accessible, affordable, culturally sensitive and student-focused. Further information, including available services, can be found at: http://www.pittstate.edu/office/health/

Testing Center
The University Testing Center administers tests offered by multiple testing companies. A full description of exams offered and testing availability can be found at: http://www.pittstate.edu/college/education/psychology/testing-center.dot

THE LEARNER AND LEARNING
Professional educators must understand that learning and development patterns vary among individuals, that learners bring unique individual differences to the learning process and that learners need supportive and safe learning environments to thrive.

1. The candidate knows how learning occurs (how learners construct knowledge, acquire skills and develop disciplined thinking processes) and how to use instructional strategies that promote individual growth.
2. The candidate understands that cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional and physical development influences learning.
3. The candidate understands and identifies differences in approaches to learning and performance and designs experiences that incorporate individuals' strengths to promote growth.
4. The candidate understands students with exceptional needs and knows how to use strategies and resources to meet these needs.
5. The candidate knows how to access information about the values of diverse cultures and communities and how to incorporate languages, experiences, cultures and community resources into practice.
6. The candidate understands how to manage the learning environment by organizing, allocating and coordinating the resources of time and space.
7. The candidate knows how to design experiences using strategies that enhance learner motivation and engagement.
8. The candidate understands the processes needed to foster a respectful learning community.

CONTENT
Professional educators must have a deep and flexible understanding of the field and be able to draw upon the central concepts and structures of their discipline as they work with learners. They integrate cross-disciplinary skills (e.g., critical thinking, problem solving, creativity and communication) to help learners apply content to propose solutions, forge new understandings, solve problems and imagine possibilities. Professional educators connect information to local, state, national and global issues.

9. The candidate understands that learners should question, analyze and understand concepts from diverse perspectives.
10. The candidate has a deep knowledge of student content standards and learning progressions in the discipline(s).
11. The candidate knows how to use supplementary resources and technologies effectively to ensure accessibility and relevance for all.
12. The candidate understands how disciplinary knowledge can be applied as a lens to address local and global issues.
13. The candidate realizes that content knowledge is not a fixed body of facts but is complex, culturally situated and ever evolving. S/he keeps abreast of new ideas and best practices in the field.
14. The candidate knows major concepts, assumptions and debates that are central to the discipline.

INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE
Professional educators understand and integrate assessment, planning and instructional strategies in coordinated and engaging ways for effective practice. They understand how to design, implement, interpret and communicate results from a range of assessments.

15. The candidate knows how to engage learners in multiple ways of demonstrating knowledge and skills as part of the assessment process.
16. The candidate understands the positive impact of effective descriptive feedback and knows a variety of strategies for communicating this feedback.
17. The candidate knows how to engage learners actively in the assessment process and to develop each learner's capacity to reflect on and communicate about their individual progress.
18. The candidate understands the theories and processes of curriculum design (appropriate sequencing, developmentally appropriate instruction, builds on learners' prior knowledge and experiences).
19. The candidate understands the process for aligning instruction and assessment with learning targets.
20. The candidate understands how theory, research and best practices impact ongoing planning and instructional practice.
21. The candidate knows how to engage learners in using technology tools and a range of skills to access, interpret, evaluate and apply information.
22. The candidate knows how to incorporate a variety of strategies that stimulate the cognitive processes associated with various kinds of learning (e.g., critical and creative thinking, problem framing and problem solving, invention, memorization and recall).
23. The candidate knows how to apply a variety of developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate instructional strategies to achieve learning targets.
24. The candidate knows how to analyze assessment data to understand patterns and gaps in learning, to guide planning and instruction and to provide meaningful feedback.

PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY
Professional educators create and support safe, productive learning environments. They must engage in meaningful and intensive professional learning and self-renewal by regularly examining practice through ongoing study, self-reflection and collaboration. Professional educators contribute to accomplishing their school's mission and goals and demonstrate leadership by modeling ethical behavior, contributing to positive changes in practice and advancing their profession.

25. The candidate knows how to use information and technology ethically, legally and safely.
26. The candidate understands and knows how to use a variety of self-assessment and problem-solving strategies to analyze and reflect on his/her practice and to plan for adaptations/adjustments.
27. The candidate understands laws related to learners' rights and teacher responsibilities (e.g., IDEA, FERPA, mandated reporting, etc.).
28. The candidate understands schools as organizations within a historical, cultural, political and social context and knows how to work with others across the system to support learners.
29. The candidate knows how to contribute to a common culture that supports high expectations for student learning.
30. The candidate understands the expectations of the profession including codes of ethics, professional standards of practice and relevant law and policy.
31. The candidate knows how to communicate effectively with all members of the learning community.

Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE)
High-Incidence Special Education Standards

1.	The special educator understands the historical and philosophical foundations of special education, the characteristics of the disability, the impacts of the disability on education, and the legal parameters appropriate for each learner's educational needs.
2.	The special educator uses a variety of assessment instruments, procedures, and technologies for learner screening, evaluation, eligibility decisions, instructional planning, progress monitoring, and technology considerations
3.	The special educator uses Individual Educational Programs (IEPs), learning environments, individual learner characteristics, assessment, teacher knowledge of subject matter, and technology for effective instructional planning and implementation.
4.	The special educator uses a variety of evidence-based instructional strategies, including effective adaptations, learner performance, and transitions; to promote learning and improve learner outcomes.
5.	The special educator demonstrates effective communication skills to enhance collaboration and consultation among school professionals, to improve learner outcomes while planning for and implementing effective instruction and services; to implement the IEP, deliver instruction, and evaluate IEP implementation; and, to plan for and implement effective transition services.
6.	The special educator understands the critical elements of language and literacy; identifies and uses evidence-based interventions to meet the instructional needs specific to reading, writing, math and other content areas; and includes the principles of universal design for learning and the use of technology to support literacy and to make data-based decisions.
7.	The special educator demonstrates knowledge and skill in the use of problem solving models, including Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) within the Multi-Tier System of Support (MTSS) framework; conducts Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBA) and develops Behavior Intervention Plans (BIP) to manage behavior and facilitate appropriate behavioral responses; demonstrates cultural sensitivity in the development and use of social skills curricula; and promotes the self-determination skills of learners.
8.	Family and Community Engagement - The special educator understands the importance of family and community engagement in the special education process; includes families in special education program development and implementation; understands the legal rights of families; and works to actively engage and empower families as partners in the education of the learner.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The following section includes frequently asked questions and answers intended to be helpful in understanding the MAT-SPED Program.

Can I enter the MAT program with an emphasis in Special Education if I do not have a degree?
No, a Bachelor's degree with a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher is required, in addition to one year of paraprofessional experience in special education.

What if I do not have a 3.0 undergraduate GPA?
Applicants with less than a 3.0 GPA but greater than a 2.75 may be admitted conditionally; an additional GPA review will occur after the completion of 12 hours in which the candidate must have maintained at least a 3.0 GPA.

How long will it take to complete the program?
The 36-credit hour program is designed to be completed in a two-year sequence of six semesters, with six hours of course work being completed each semester. Courses are to be taken in sequence to maximize the learning experience.

Are courses offered online?
Yes, course content is presented online by utilizing Canvas, PSU's learning management system.

Can I continue to work as a paraeducator as I take classes?
*Candidates **must** be employed as a paraeducator in a level-appropriate high-incidence setting during the entirety of the program **OR** serve as the teacher of record in a level-appropriate high-incidence special education setting.*

When will I become certified to teach?
Candidates hired to be the teacher of record will apply for the limited apprentice license following the first semester of coursework. All other candidates will be eligible for full licensure in the state of Kansas upon completion of the program and appropriate testing.

If I am accepted into the program, when do classes begin?
The two-year cohort program starts once a year during the first summer session.

Who should I contact if I have additional questions?
Contact the Office of Teacher Education; 620-235-6153 or teachered@pittstate.edu.

What will happen if I do not meet the required conditions within the first 12 hours of the program?
Candidates are not allowed to continue in coursework until they have met all conditions to be fully admitted.

Why have I not heard anything from PSU?
You may need to check your GUS email account! Once you've been conditionally admitted, set up your GUS email account and be sure to check it regularly.

Who should I contact if I'm ever having trouble in the class or cannot get in touch with my professor?
Academic questions should be directed to your advisor.

I've been conditionally admitted. How do I enroll myself in classes?
Your advisor will enroll you each semester. Since the program is offered in cohorts, enrollment by your advisor ensures enrollment in the correct courses.

I need to take a break from school so I am not taking courses this semester. What will happen?
Provided there have been no concerns about your academic work or professionalism, you will be re-admitted to the program without issue. You will enter the program at the point which you stopped taking coursework. It is important to note that courses are offered during particular semesters so you may have to wait a full year to return to the program.

How do I know which textbooks to buy?
You need to visit the PSU online bookstore (http://pittstate.bncollege.com/). Click "Textbooks" and then "Find Textbooks."