

CEC Special Education Specialist Advanced Preparation Standards¹

Among the sine qua non characteristics of mature professions are the identification of the specialized knowledge and skill and the assurance to the public that practicing professionals possess the specialized knowledge and skill to practice safely and effectively (Neville, Herman, & Cohen, 2005).

Through credentialing of professionals and professional recognition of preparation programs, special educators assure the public that practicing professionals have mastered the specialized skills for safe and effective practice.

Reflective of the personalized needs of individuals with exceptionalities, agencies prepare and credential special educators in a variety of specialty areas. To address these important specialty preparation areas, CEC has developed the seven CEC Preparation Standards on a three-step foundation. CEC uses a rigorous consensual validation process to identify sets of knowledge and skills for entry-level and advanced special educators in the variety of specialty areas. These specialty sets capture the professional knowledge base, including empirical research, disciplined inquiry, informed theory, and the wisdom of practice for their area of expertise for each proposed knowledge and skill. As a part of the validation process, CEC uses a rigorous consensual validation process (CEC Validation Study Resource Manual, 2010).

CEC synthesizes the specialty sets into seven major preparation standards organized around: learners and learning environments, curricular knowledge, assessment, specialized pedagogical skills, and professional and collaborative skills. CEC has further analyzed the seven preparation standards into key elements with which preparation programs align program assessments of special education candidates for CEC Professional Program Recognition.

Headings and Foci for the CEC Advanced Preparation Standards	
Learner and Learning	
1	Assessment
Content Knowledge and Professional Foundations	
2	Curricular Content Knowledge
Instructional Pedagogy	
3	Program, Services, and Outcomes
4	Research and Inquiry
Professionalism and Collaboration	
5	Leadership and Policy
6	Professional and Ethical Practice
7	Collaboration

While the CEC Preparation Standards cross special education specialty areas, CEC uses the specialty sets to inform and differentiate the content, contexts, and issues among and between the respective specialty areas (e.g., early childhood, mild/moderate, developmental disabilities, and learning disabilities). Preparation program faculties align their program assessments to the seven preparation standards with the key elements and program reviewers review for alignment between the program assessments and the seven preparation standards with the key elements.

¹ NCATE approved November 2012

CEC Advanced Preparation Standard 1

Assessment

1.0 *Special education specialists use valid and reliable assessment practices to minimize bias.*

Key Elements

1.1 Special education specialists minimize bias in assessment.

1.2 Special education specialists design and implement assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of practices and programs.

Supporting Explanation

The raison d'être for special education lies in the specialized professional knowledge and skills to individualize² or personalize learning in both specialized and general curricula for individuals with exceptionalities.

Since its earliest days, special education has been based on the understanding of individuals and the contexts in which they live and learn in order to plan for the education of individuals with exceptionalities. This begins with the understanding of and respect for similarities and differences in human growth and development, and it extends to designing and implementing assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of practices and programs. To assure relevant and valid assessment information, nonbiased procedures are critical in the selection of assessment instruments, methods, and procedures for both individuals and programs. Frequently, special education specialists are a resource to school teams in selecting accommodations in assessments to minimize bias and ensure validity.

Special education specialists bring experience and engage in reflection to inform their understanding of human diversity and its influence on families, cultures, and schools, and their interaction with the delivery of education services. They use this experience to personalize instruction for individuals with exceptionalities. The identification and use of strategic accommodations and modifications depend on the understanding of specific individuals and their contexts.

With respect to assessment of individuals with exceptionalities, special education specialists apply their knowledge and skill to all stages and purposes of assessment in decision-making including: prereferral and screening, preplacement for special education eligibility, and monitoring and reporting learning progress in the general education curriculum and in other individualized educational program goals.

CEC Advanced Preparation Standard 2

Curricular Content Knowledge

2.0 *Special education specialists use their knowledge of general³ and specialized⁴ curricula to improve programs, supports, and services at classroom, school, community, and system levels.*

² As used herein the term "individualize" is used as synonymous with terms such as "personalize", "customize", "adapt", and "differentiate".

³ As used, "general curricula", means the academic content of the general curriculum including math, reading, English/language arts, science, social studies, and the arts.

Key Elements	
2.1	Special education specialists align educational standards to provide access to challenging curriculum to meet the needs individuals with exceptionalities.
2.2	Special educators continuously broaden and deepen professional knowledge, and expand expertise with instructional technologies, curriculum standards, effective teaching strategies, and assistive technologies to support access to and learning of challenging content.
2.3	Special education specialists use understanding of diversity and individual learning differences to inform the selection, development, and implementation of comprehensive curricula for individuals with exceptionalities.

Supporting Explanation

Special education specialists have a comprehensive knowledge of special education as an evolving and changing discipline based on philosophies, evidence-based principles and theories, relevant laws and policies, diverse and historical points of view, and issues that have influenced and continue to influence special education and the education of and services for individuals with exceptionalities both in school and in society. Special education specialists use their deep understanding of how to coordinate educational standards to the needs of individuals with exceptionalities to support all individuals with exceptionalities to access challenging curriculum standards.

Special education specialists work within the limits of their professional skill, and facilitate access to the general education curricula and special supplementary curricula, e.g. academic, strategic, social, emotional, transition, independence curricula to individualize meaningful and challenging learning for individuals with exceptionalities.

Special education specialists continuously broaden and deepen their professional knowledge, and expand their expertise with instructional, augmentative, assistive technologies, curriculum standards, and effective teaching strategies to support learning.

CEC Advanced Preparation Standard 3 Programs, Services, and Outcomes

3.0	<i>Special education specialists facilitate the continuous improvement of general and special education programs, supports, and services at the classroom, school, and system levels for individuals with exceptionalities.</i>
Key Elements	
3.1	Special education specialists design and implement evaluation activities to improve programs, supports, and services for individuals with exceptionalities.
3.2	Special education specialists use understanding of cultural, social, and economic diversity and individual learner differences to inform the development and improvement of programs, supports, and services for individuals with exceptionalities.
3.3	Special education specialists apply knowledge of theories, evidence-based practices,

⁴ As used, “specialized curricula” means the content of specialized interventions or sets of interventions including, but not limited to academic, strategic, communicative, social, emotional, and independence curricula.

and relevant laws to advocate for programs, supports, and services for individuals with exceptionalities.
3.4 Special education specialists use instructional and assistive technologies to improve programs, supports, and services for individuals with exceptionalities.
3.5 Special education specialists evaluate progress toward achieving the vision, mission, and goals of programs, services, and supports for individuals with exceptionalities.

Supporting Explanation

Special education specialists apply their knowledge of cognitive and behavioral science, learning theory, evidence-based practice, and instructional technologies to improve programs, services, and supports for individuals with exceptionalities.

Special education specialists continuously broaden and deepen their professional knowledge, and expand their expertise with instructional, augmentative, and assistive technologies, curriculum standards, and effective teaching strategies to support access to learning.

They use their understanding of the effects of cultural, social, and economic diversity and variations of individual development to inform their development of a continuum of programs and services to ensure the appropriate instructional supports for individuals with exceptionalities and their families

Special education specialists have a sufficient facility with the breadth and scope of instructional augmentative, assistive technologies so that they select alternatives that will improve programs, supports, and services for individuals with exceptionalities and their families, and facilitate others' selection and use.

CEC Advanced Preparation Standard 4 Research & Inquiry

4.0 <i>Special education specialists conduct, evaluate, and use inquiry to guide professional practice.</i>
Key Elements
4.1 Special education specialists evaluate research and inquiry to identify effective practices.
4.2 Special education specialists use knowledge of the professional literature to improve practices with individuals with exceptionalities and their families
4.3 Special education specialists foster an environment that is supportive of continuous instructional improvement and engage in the design and implementation of research and inquiry.

Supporting Explanation

Research and inquiry inform the professional practice of special education specialists. As professionals, special education specialists view science as the principal source for information on effective practice.

Special education specialists know models, theories, philosophies, and research methods that form the basis for evidence-based practices in special education, and they use research to improve instructional techniques, intervention strategies, and curricula.

Special education specialists evaluate the appropriateness of research methodologies in relation to the validation of practices, and use the literature to inform professional practice.

Special education specialists foster a collegial environment supportive of continuous instructional improvement, and engage in the design and implementation of research with professional colleagues.

In addition, special education specialists design and implement research and evaluation activities to evaluate progress toward the organizational vision, mission, and goal, and the effectiveness of programs, services, and supports for individuals with exceptionalities.

CEC Advanced Preparation Standard 5

Leadership and Policy

5.0 <i>Special education specialists provide leadership to formulate goals, set and meet high professional expectations, advocate for effective policies and evidence-based practices and create positive and productive work environments.</i>
Key Elements
5.1 Special education specialists model respect for and ethical practice for all individuals and encourage challenging expectations for individuals with exceptionalities.
5.2 Special education specialists support and use linguistically and culturally responsive practices.
5.3 Special education specialists create and maintain collegial and productive work environments that respect and safeguard the rights of individuals with exceptionalities and their families.
5.4 Special education specialists advocate for policies and practices that improve programs, services, and outcomes for individuals with exceptionalities.
5.5 Special education specialists advocate for the allocation of appropriate resources for the preparation and professional development of all personnel who serve individuals with exceptionalities.

Supporting Explanation

Special education specialists model respect for all individuals and encourage challenging expectations for individuals with exceptionalities. Special education specialists use their knowledge of the needs of different groups in a pluralistic society to support and use linguistically and culturally responsive practices.

Special education specialists hold high professional self-expectations and help others more completely understand the needs of individuals with exceptionalities.

Special education specialists create and maintain collegial and productive work environments that respect and safeguard the rights of individuals with exceptionalities and their families,

They support quality education for individuals with exceptionalities, and advocate for policy based on solid scientific evidence. In addition, they advocate for appropriate resources to ensure that all personnel involved have effective preparation.

Special education specialists use their knowledge of the needs of different groups in a pluralistic society to promote evidence-based practices and challenging expectations for individuals with exceptionalities.

They mentor others and promote high expectations for themselves, other professionals, and

CEC Advanced Preparation Standard 6 Professional and Ethical Practice

6.0 <i>Special education specialists use foundational knowledge of the field and professional Ethical Principles and Practice Standards to inform special education practice, engage in lifelong learning, advance the profession, and perform leadership responsibilities to promote the success of professional colleagues and individuals with exceptionalities.</i>
Key Elements
6.1 A comprehensive understanding of the history of special education, legal policies, ethical standards, and emerging issues informs special education specialist leadership.
6.2 Special education specialists model high professional expectations and ethical practice, and create supportive environments that safeguard the legal rights and improve outcomes for individuals with exceptionalities and their families.
6.3 Special education specialists model and promote respect for all individuals and facilitate ethical professional practice.
6.4 Special education specialists actively participate in professional development and learning communities to increase professional knowledge and expertise.
6.5 Special education specialists plan, present, and evaluate professional development focusing on effective and ethical practice at all organizational levels.
6.6 Special education specialists actively facilitate and participate in the preparation and induction of prospective special educators.
6.7 Special education specialists actively promote the advancement of the profession.

Supporting Explanation

A deep understanding of the history of special education, legal policies, ethical standards, and emerging issues informs the leadership of special education specialists. They use this broad foundation to construct their own professional understanding of special education professional practice and to facilitate others' understanding the education of and services for individuals with exceptionalities and their families in both school and society.

Special education specialists understand how and why special education organizes its programs and services in relation to school systems and other agencies. They model and facilitate high professional expectations and ethical practice to create supportive environments that safeguard the legal rights and improve outcomes for individuals with exceptionalities and their families.

They design and deliver ongoing professional development designed to improve practice at all relevant organizational levels. Special education specialists plan, present, and evaluate

professional development based on models that apply the principles of adult learning theory and focus on the use of effective practice at all organizational levels.

Special education specialists view themselves as lifelong learners, and model their commitment to improving their own professional practice by participating in professional development continuously. Special education specialists actively plan and engage in activities that foster their own as well as their colleagues' professional growth with evidence-based practices. In addition, they develop and use personalized professional development plans and facilitate the development and use of personalized professional development plans of colleagues.

Special education specialists recognize their responsibility to promote the advancement of the profession including facilitating and participating in the preparation and induction of prospective special educators.

CEC Advanced Preparation Standard 7 Collaboration

7.0 <i>Special education specialists collaborate with stakeholders to improve programs, services, and outcomes for individuals with exceptionalities and their families.</i>
Key Elements
7.1 Special education specialists use culturally responsive practices to enhance collaboration.
7.2 Special education specialists use collaborative skills to improve programs, services, and outcomes for individuals with exceptionalities
7.3 Special education specialists collaborate to promote understanding, resolve conflicts, and build consensus for improving program, services, and outcomes for individuals with exceptionalities.

Supporting Explanation

Special education specialists have a deep understanding of the significance of collaboration for education colleagues, families, related service providers, and others from the community and use collaboration to promote understanding, resolve conflicts, and build consensus.

Based on the theory and research on elements and models of effective collaboration, special education specialists use their skills to improve programs, services, and outcomes for individuals with exceptionalities. They possess current knowledge of the related ethical and legal issues, and use culturally responsive practices to enhance collaboration.

Glossary

Individuals with Exceptionalities

Individuals with exceptionalities include individuals with sensory, physical, emotional, social, cognitive differences, developmentally delays, exceptional gifts and talents; and individuals who are or have been abused or neglected whose needs differ sufficiently so as to require personalized special education services in addition to or in tandem with regular educational services available through general education programs and other human service delivery systems.

Special Education Service

Special education services are personalized services that appropriately credentialed special educators provide directly or indirectly to individuals with exceptionalities.