

# DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

304 Recitation Hall  
 West Chester University  
 West Chester, PA 19383  
 610-436-2579  
 Department of Special Education (<http://www.wcupa.edu/specialEducation/>)  
 e-mail: [gradspecialeducation@wcupa.edu](mailto:gradspecialeducation@wcupa.edu)  
 Dr. Adera ([badera@wcupa.edu](mailto:badera@wcupa.edu)), *Chairperson*  
 Dr. Patterson ([dpatterson@wcupa.edu](mailto:dpatterson@wcupa.edu)), *Assistant Chairperson*  
 Dr. Guerriero ([tguerriero@wcupa.edu](mailto:tguerriero@wcupa.edu)), *Graduate Coordinator*  
 Dr. Houser ([mhouser@wcupa.edu](mailto:mhouser@wcupa.edu)), *Graduate Coordinator*

## Programs of Study

The Department of Special Education offers the Master of Education in Special Education, post-baccalaureate Pennsylvania teacher certification in Special Education, a graduate certificate in Autism Studies (online program), a graduate certificate in Trauma-Informed Education, and a graduate certificate in Universal Design for Learning and Assistive Technology (online program).

The Post-Baccalaureate Certification in Special Education leads to a Pennsylvania Level I certification.

The Master of Education program alone does not lead to Pennsylvania Level I certification in Special Education.

The graduate certificates do not lead to a Pennsylvania Level I certification in Special Education.

The Certificate in Autism (Online) is being offered for practitioners and parents alike who wish to earn a certificate of specialization in autism spectrum disorders.

The Certificate in Universal Design for Learning and Assistive Technology (Online) provides professionals, parents, and other community members instruction and training in assessment, pedagogy, and technology that support the students who rely on UDL and AT for learning.

The Graduate Certificate in Trauma-Informed Education provides professionals presently in or moving into the school setting with knowledge and skills needed to work within a multi-tiered system of support in partnership with communities and families to address the academic, behavior and social-emotional best practices needed to support students impacted by trauma.

## Programs

### Master's Program

- M.Ed. in Special Education (<https://catalog.wcupa.edu/graduate/education-social-work/special-education/special-education-med/>)

### Certificates

- Autism (Online) (<https://catalog.wcupa.edu/graduate/education-social-work/special-education/autism-certificate/>)
- Trauma-Informed Education (<https://catalog.wcupa.edu/graduate/education-social-work/special-education/trauma-informed-education-certificate/>)
- Universal Design for Learning and Assistive Technology (Online) (<https://catalog.wcupa.edu/graduate/education-social-work/special-education/universal-design-learning-assistive-technology-certificate-online/>)

### Certification

- Post-Baccalaureate Certification in Special Education PreK-12 ([https://catalog.wcupa.edu/graduate/education-social-work/special-](https://catalog.wcupa.edu/graduate/education-social-work/special-education/post-baccalaureate-certification-special-education-prek-12/)

[education/post-baccalaureate-certification-special-education-prek-12/](https://catalog.wcupa.edu/graduate/education-social-work/special-education/post-baccalaureate-certification-special-education-prek-12/))

## Admissions

All applicants to one of West Chester University's graduate programs will be held to the graduate admissions requirements (<https://catalog.wcupa.edu/general-information/admissions-enrollment/graduate-admissions/>). When applicable, additional requirements for admission into specific department program(s) may be listed below.

### Admission Requirements for the M.Ed. in Special Education

1. An undergraduate degree from an accredited college or university
2. Two letters of recommendation
3. Application, including goal statements
4. Submission of satisfactory GRE or MAT scores at the 50th percentile if GPA is below the required University GPA of 3.0
5. Foundations of Special Education or equivalent - 3 credits (Must meet PDE Chapter 49.85 requirements)
6. Admission interview (only if deemed necessary)

### Admission Requirements for the Post-Baccalaureate Certification in Special Education PreK-12

The applicant must have the following:

1. A baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited college or university
2. A minimum GPA of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale calculated on the most recent 48 credits of college/university course work and 2.8 total undergraduate cumulative GPA. (If the applicant possesses a master's degree, the GPA requirement applies to that degree.)
3. Foundations of Special Education or equivalent - 3 credits (Must meet PDE Chapter 49.85 requirements)

### Admission Requirements for the Certificate in Universal Design for Learning and Assistive Technology

Admission requirements are a bachelor's degree from an accredited, four-year, degree-granting institution and a 3.0 GPA.

## Policies

All graduate students are held to the academic policies and procedures (<https://catalog.wcupa.edu/graduate/academic-policies-procedures/>) outlined in the graduate catalog. Students are encouraged to review departmental handbooks for program tips, suggested course sequences, and explanations of procedures. When applicable, additional policies for specific department programs may be listed below.

### Degree Candidacy for the M.Ed. in Special Education

Students must apply to be admitted to candidacy after the completion of 12 semester hours of work at West Chester University, including EDF 500 or EDF 501 and two courses from the special education program. Grade point averages must be consistent with standards required in graduate studies at West Chester University (minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0).

### Dual Enrollment

Students enrolled in two or more teacher certification programs, whereby one certification is an initial teacher certification are subject to the following requirements:

1. Baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited college or university
2. Minimum GPA of 2.8 on a 4.0 scale calculated on the most recent 48 credits of college/university course work and 3.0 total undergraduate cumulative GPA. (If the applicant possesses a master's degree, the GPA requirement applies to that degree.)
3. Evidence of having completed college-level studies in English composition (three credits), literature (three credits), and mathematics (six credits).
  - a. Note: Students may be admitted provisionally without these courses; however, they must take them within the first two semesters of graduate work.
4. Teacher Candidacy

Students must do the following:

1. Meet the above program entry requirements
2. File a form in the certification office
3. Receive department approval

## Faculty

### Professors

Beatrice Adera (badera@wcupa.edu) (2010)  
Chairperson, Special Education

B.S., University of Nairobi (Kenya); M.Ed., Ph.D., University of North Texas

N. Kim Doan (kdoan@wcupa.edu) (2008)

B.A., M.A., California State University; Ph.D., University of Virginia

Tara C. Guerriero (tguerriero@wcupa.edu) (2008)

Graduate Coordinator, Special Education  
B.S., M.A., Ph.D., Northwestern University

S. Christy Hicks (shicks@wcupa.edu) (2011)

B.A., M.A.T., Western Carolina University; Ph.D., University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Mary A. Houser (mhouser@wcupa.edu) (2013)

Graduate Coordinator, Special Education  
B.F.A., Kutztown University; M.A.T., The College of New Jersey;  
Ed.D., Fayetteville State University

Vicki A. McGinley (vmcginley@wcupa.edu) (1997)

B.A., University of Pittsburgh; M.A., Ph.D., Temple University

Claire Verden (cverden@wcupa.edu) (2006)

B.S., West Chester University; M.Ed., Temple University; Ed.D., Arcadia University

York Williams (ywilliams@wcupa.edu) (2009)

B.A., North Carolina Central University; M.A., West Chester University; M.Ed., Ph.D., Temple University

### Associate Professors

Colleen E. Commisso (ccommisso@wcupa.edu) (2019)

B.S., M.S., Bloomsburg University; Ph.D., Lehigh University

Dawn Patterson (dpatterson@wcupa.edu) (2015)

Assistant Chairperson, Special Education  
B.S., State University of New York College at Buffalo; M.Ed., Ed.D., University of North Carolina Charlotte

Lesley N Siegel (lsiegel@wcupa.edu) (2018)

B.A., Colorado College; M.A., University of New Mexico; Ph.D., University of Denver

### Assistant Professors

Alyssa Marie Blasko (ablasko@wcupa.edu) (2024)

B.S., Kutztown University; M.Ed., Ph.D., Lehigh University

Ashlee Brown (abrown4@wcupa.edu) (2024)

BCBA, LBS, Ph.D., Temple University

Brittany A. Severino (bseverino@wcupa.edu) (2023)

M.Ed., Ed.D., West Chester University of Pennsylvania

## Courses

### EDA

#### EDA 503. Family Systems in Special Education. 3 Credits.

This course bases its objectives on the knowledge of families of children with disabilities as essential for the child's education. The family is studied so that the prospective student can best know how to work with diverse families and family systems. Distance education offering may be available.

#### EDA 506. Legal Issues in Special Education. 3 Credits.

This course presents information on legislation that governs the delivery of special education services. Attention will be given to teachers challenges in implementation and compliance, and writing legally sound IEPs and SAPs. Distance education offering may be available.

#### EDA 508. Introduction to Early Childhood/Special Education. 3 Credits.

This course is an overview of the field of early childhood special education (ECSE). We will explore the processes of early intervention including screening, assessment, instructional programming, integrating children with and without disabilities, and family involvement. Emphasis is placed on assessing and promoting the development of cognitive, language, social, self-help and motor skills.

Distance education offering may be available.

#### EDA 510. Collaboration. 3 Credits.

Contact department for more information about this course.

#### EDA 511. Inclusion & Collaboration. 3 Credits.

The purpose of this course is to prepare teachers to cultural changes evident in American public education with respect to inclusion and the education of students with disabilities. Students will examine their beliefs about inclusion and collaboration, hear new perspectives on these philosophies, learn how to work collaboratively with other professionals and learn practical methods to support all students in the classroom.

Distance education offering may be available.

#### EDA 513. PreK-12 Aspects of Transition. 3 Credits.

This course is designed to have the prospective teacher build their knowledge about two key concepts of Transition Services and programming: systems and programming. Pre-services teacher candidates will be introduced to the core foundation of transition programming for students with exceptionalities across the PK-12 context, specifically the models, structures, and systems of delivery, addressing support structures that serve students with disabilities as they experience horizontal and vertical transitions throughout the PreK-12 school years, and to adult life. They will then learn about the sequential process to follow when developing an Individualized Education Program, focusing specifically on Transition Services, starting with learning about Transition assessment tools, planning, delivery, and analysis, collaborating with key stakeholders and interagency providers, parents/guardians, and students, and addressing critical transition needs through implementation of service and activities, instructional strategies, related services, and specially designed instruction that promote post-school success.

EDA 513 Prerequisite: Successful completion of EDA 542 and EDA 574.

Distance education offering may be available.

#### EDA 514. PreK-8 Aspects of Transition. 3 Credits.

This course will address support structures that serve students with disabilities as they transition from homebound to and throughout the PreK-8 school system.

EDA 514 Prerequisite: Successful completion of EDA 542 with minimum grade of C-.

Distance education offering may be available.

#### EDA 515. Middle/Secondary Career Development and Transition. 3 Credits.

This course addresses life span issues for persons with disabilities, stressing assessment, planning, and instructional strategies that promote successful movement to and through adult roles.

EDA 515 Prerequisite: Successful completion of EDA 542 with minimum grade of C-.

Distance education offering may be available.

#### EDA 516. Curriculum & Instruction for Individual Learning Differences I. 3 Credits.

This course is designed to prepare students to assist children and youth with disabilities achieve skills in academics and functional life domains.

EDA 516 Prerequisite: Successful completion of EDA 542 with minimum grade of C-.

Distance education offering may be available.

**EDA 517. Technology and Universal Design for Learning. 3 Credits.**

This course provides an introduction to the principles of Universal Design for learning (UDL), the incorporation of assistive technologies to accomplish UDL, and strategies for its inclusion in diverse instructional settings.

Distance education offering may be available.

**EDA 519. Introduction to Assistive Technology. 3 Credits.**

This course focuses on the awareness of assistive technologies as it relates to education, communication, vocation, recreation, and mobility for students with disabilities.

Distance education offering may be available.

**EDA 521. Assistive Technologies for Communication and Participation. 3 Credits.**

This course will present various types of communication disorders and the impact of high and low level technology, specifically, augmentative and alternative communication systems and assistive technologies to support the child with disabilities in the K-12 classroom.

Distance education offering may be available.

Equivalent courses: SLP 521

**EDA 522. Integrating Assistive Technology in the Classroom. 3 Credits.**

This seminar and field is the final course in the Assistive technology Certificate. It is designed for educational professionals and is focused on the integration of assistive technologies into the K-12 classroom.

Distance education offering may be available.

**EDA 523. Curriculum/Instruction for Individual Learning Differences II. 3 Credits.**

This course is designed to support students in the research, development and implementation of instruction for students with disabilities.

EDA 523 Prerequisite: Successful completion of EDA 516 and EDA 574, with minimum grades of C-.

Distance education offering may be available.

**EDA 524. Trauma Informed Schools and Classrooms. 3 Credits.**

This course examines trauma in the context of the learning environment. Students will learn about the developmental effects of trauma and the ramifications of those effects on the classroom and school setting, as well as on peers and other professionals working with the student. Students will also be introduced to proactive and preventative strategies for building social, emotional, and behavioral wellness to address non-academic barriers to learning and also to support students who are experiencing extreme social and emotional difficulties.

EDA 524 Prerequisite: Successful completion of EDA 103 or EDA 542, with a minimum grade of C-.

Distance education offering may be available.

**EDA 525. Culturally Responsive Teaching for Diverse Exceptional Learners. 3 Credits.**

This course is designed to prepare pre-service special educators with background knowledge and critical understanding of culturally responsive practices in order to meet the needs of students at the intersection of culture, language, and disability needs. Students will examine the role culture plays in teaching and learning, develop strategies for culturally responsive collaboration with families and communities, and explore resources for implementing culturally responsive teaching practices as future special educators.

EDA 525 Prerequisite: Successful completion of EDA 103 or EDA 542, with a minimum grade of C-.

Distance education offering may be available.

**EDA 526. Building Resiliency in the Classroom for Children Impacted by Trauma. 3 Credits.**

Much of the knowledge and skills are taken from The Child Trauma Academy and as such, this course will serve as a prerequisite course to EDA 528 for those students wishing to become a certified trainer in the Neurosequential Model of Intervention for Educators (NME). Its principles derive from "neurodevelopmental-informed, biologically respectful perspectives on human development and function" specifically addressing brain based development to help those in the education system understand traumatized children's behavior and performance and incorporate appropriate interventions in the school and individual classrooms.

Distance education offering may be available.

**EDA 527. Educating Students with Significant and Complex Support Needs. 3 Credits.**

This course is designed to provide teacher candidates with the knowledge base required to work effectively with students with significant and complex needs in the classroom. Particular emphasis will be placed on this population's unique needs, including physical, medical, behavioral, and communication.

EDA 527 Prerequisite: Successful completion of EDA 103 or EDA 542; and EDA 544, all with minimum grades of C-.

Distance education offering may be available.

**EDA 528. Field and Seminar: Assessment and Intervention for Children Impacted by Trauma. 3 Credits.**

This course is the field and seminar follow-up to EDA 526 and is required for all students wishing to be certified as trainers in NME model of intervention. In offering this course, WCU is in partnership with Neurosequential Network (NMN). The NMN directs a community of practice working to develop and deliver innovations to address the needs of maltreated and traumatized children, youth and adults. Educators will be trained specifically in the Neurosequential Model of Intervention for Education (NME). For educators, NME draws upon its principles from "neurodevelopmental-informed, biologically respectful perspectives on human development and function" specifically addressing brain based development to help those in the education systems understand traumatized and maltreated children's behavior and performance and incorporate appropriate interventions in the school and individual classrooms. It is from this model and its principle from which this course is designed. During this course, students will complete 30 seminar hours and 15 field based hours to complete requirements.

Distance education offering may be available.

**EDA 530. Teaching Children with Autism. 3 Credits.**

This course serves as an in-depth analysis of unique educational needs of students with autism spectrum disorders. Students will learn about the educational issues surrounding autism spectrum disorders including history, etiology, current legislation, instructional strategies, and issues related to transition. In addition students will develop a working sense of classroom assessment and intervention strategies specific to educational settings for students with autism spectrum disorders.

Distance education offering may be available.

**EDA 542. Foundations of Special Education. 3 Credits.**

This course is designed to acquaint the prospective teacher with the historical legal evolution of the field, special education processes, and the characteristics of individuals with disabilities.

Distance education offering may be available.

**EDA 544. Classroom Management. 3 Credits.**

Exploration of current practices in the management and modification of behavior. The professional's role in achieving a better basis for meaningful communication with the special child. Problems that may interfere with teacher effectiveness are discussed.

EDA 544 Prerequisite: Successful completion of EDA 542 with minimum grade of C-.

Distance education offering may be available.

**EDA 574. Assessment and Special Education. 3 Credits.**

This course is designed to introduce students to instructional assessment in special education and the development of relevant education plans to meet federal regulations.

EDA 574 Prerequisite: Successful completion of EDA 542 with minimum grade of C-.

Distance education offering may be available.

**EDA 580. Contemporary Issues and Trends. 3 Credits.**

Current trends, problems, and issues in special education, teacher education, research, and administration will be explored. Emerging concepts relating to special education will be emphasized.

EDA 580 Prerequisite: Successful completion of EDA 542 with minimum grade of C-.

Distance education offering may be available.

**EDA 582. Special Education Modified Student Teaching and Seminar. 1-3 Credits.**

This is a required course for students pursuing special education certification at the post-baccalaureate level. The student will receive direct experience with students with disabilities receiving special education services. Field clearances required.

EDA 582 Prerequisite: Successful completion of EDA 516, EDA 521, EDA 542, EDA 544, and EDA 574; and EDA 514 or EDA 515, all with minimum grades of C-.

Distance education offering may be available.

**EDA 591. Final Project. 3 Credits.**

This course will focus on the process of teacher inquiry. Students will draw upon their learning from their previous MEd coursework and professional practice to identify an actionable issue in their teaching practice or community setting tied to educating students with disabilities. Students will review the scholarship on their topic and develop a project in one of the following categories: self-study of teacher practice, curriculum development, or community-based project design and disseminate their work in a scholarly format.

EDA 591 Prerequisite: Successful completion of ERM 500 with minimum grade of C-.

Distance education offering may be available.

**EDA 592. Workshop In Special Education I. 1-3 Credits.**

Contact department for more information about this course.

Repeatable for credit.

**EDE****EDE 506. Infant And Toddler Development & Environment. 3 Credits.**

Physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development of the child newborn to two years is studied. The use of developmental tests for the diagnosis of infant and toddler needs is related to the structuring of an appropriate learning environment.

**EDE 507. Preschooling Learning Environment. 3 Credits.**

Methods and materials, developmentally appropriate for children 2-5, are presented. Readiness assessments, curricular discussions, and teaching approaches are addressed across the full spectrum of child development.