



What Does an Intervention Specialist Do?

Special education teachers may teach students in small groups or on a one-on-one basis. Special education teachers work with students who have learning, mental, emotional, or physical disabilities. They adapt general education lessons and teach various subjects to students with mild to moderate disabilities. They also teach basic skills to students with severe disabilities.

Duties

Special education teachers typically do the following:

- Assess students' skills and determine their educational needs
- Adapt general lessons to meet students' needs
- Develop Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for each student
- Plan activities that are specific to each student's abilities
- Teach and mentor students as a class, in small groups, and one-on-one
- Implement IEPs, assess students' performance, and track their progress
- Update IEPs throughout the school year to reflect students' progress and goals
- Discuss students' progress with parents, other teachers, counselors, and administrators
- Supervise and mentor teacher assistants who work with students with disabilities
- Prepare and help students transition from grade to grade and from school to life outside of school

Special education teachers work with students from preschool to high school. They instruct students who have mental, emotional, physical, or learning disabilities. For example, some help students develop study skills, such as highlighting text and using flashcards. Others work with students who have physical disabilities and may use a wheelchair or other adaptive devices. Still others work with students who have sensory disabilities, such as visual or hearing impairments. They also may work

with those who have autism spectrum disorders or emotional disorders, such as anxiety and depression.

Special education teachers work with general education teachers, specialists, administrators, and parents to develop IEPs. Students' IEPs outline their goals, including academic or behavioral milestones, and services they are to receive, such as speech therapy. Educators and parents also meet to discuss updates and changes to IEPs.

Special education teachers must be comfortable using and learning new technology. Most use computers to keep records of their students' performance, prepare lesson plans, and update IEPs. Some teachers also use assistive technology aids, such as Braille writers and computer software, that help them communicate with their students.

Special education teachers' duties vary by their work setting, students' disabilities, and specialties.

Some special education teachers work in classrooms or resource centers that include only students with disabilities. In these settings, teachers plan, adapt, and present lessons to meet each student's needs. They teach students individually or in small groups.

In inclusive classrooms, special education teachers instruct students with disabilities who are in general education classrooms. They work with general education teachers to adapt lessons so that students with disabilities can more easily understand them.

Some special education teachers work with students who have moderate to severe disabilities. These teachers help students, who may be eligible for services until age 21, develop basic life skills. Some teach the skills necessary for students with moderate disabilities to live independently, find a job, and manage money and their time. For more information about other workers who help individuals with disabilities develop skills necessary to live independently, see the profiles on [occupational therapists](#) and [occupational therapy assistants and aides](#).

SUGGESTED CITATION:

Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, Special Education Teachers, at <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/education-training-and-library/special-education-teachers.htm> (visited January 18, 2023).