

The Special Education Graduate Program offers teachers a **professional development credential** in five critical skill areas:

- *Creativity and Differentiation*
- *Response to Intervention for Social and Emotional Behavior*
- *Collaboration with Families and Professionals.*
- *Autism*
- *Technology*

This online opportunity is highly interactive and will help address real issues you face in today's classrooms.

### **Benefits of earning a PDC**

- Advance and refine specific critical skills. For each area, you take two specially designed courses (each 3 credits) that focus on developing advanced competence in particular skills and earn a Professional Development Credential (PDC) for that area.
- Become prepared to share your skills with other teachers and become a leader in that area for your school or county.
- Make progress toward your Master's degree: If you choose to continue graduate work, the six credit hours required for your PDC will apply to a Master's degree in Special Education in Mild to Moderate Disabilities, Severe Disabilities, or Gifted, Creative and Innovative Education at WCU.

### ***CRITICAL SKILLS FOCUS AREAS:***

***Creativity and Differentiation***--This pair of courses will help teachers meet the 21<sup>st</sup> century needs of students with high potential through creativity and differentiation. The creativity course will focus on fostering creativity in students by using problem-based and product-based learning in a collaborative learning environment. This course will have a one-week field experience on campus, typically the last week in June. The differentiation course will include ways to adapt content, process, product, and the learning environment to provide appropriate learning experiences for all students, with a focus on gifted students. Required courses, SPED 577 and SPED 500.

***Response to Intervention for Social and Emotional Behavior*** – This set of courses will help participants develop Response to Intervention (RtI) procedures and strategies for developing positive school and classroom climate, preventing behavioral problems, motivating and engaging students, and developing strategies for groups or individual students with social, emotional and behavioral difficulties. Topics will include: school wide positive behavioral intervention and support, culturally responsive classroom management, motivation and engagement, screening and assessments of behavioral and emotional disorders, appropriate tier 2 and tier 3

interventions, data based decision-making, bullying prevention and intervention. Required courses, SPED 555 and SPED 684.

***Collaboration with Families and Professionals*** – This set of courses will enable participants to acquire skills for collaborating with families who have children with moderate, profound or severe disabilities. Specifically participants will develop a) an understanding of what families experience raising a child with disabilities, b) effective communication skills to enhance collaboration and reduce conflicts, c) creating teams to produce effective IEPs, behavior plans, inclusion plans, etc. and skills to interview and conduct informal assessments with families regarding functional skills. In addition, participants will gain information on working collaboratively with paraprofessionals and related support personnel. Skills such as preparing paraprofessionals to implement behavior plans, collect data, implement systematic instruction, etc. will be taught. Other skills will include resolving conflict, collaborative problem solving, assertiveness, and responsive listening. Required courses, SPED 633 and SPED 530.

***Autism*** – This set of courses will enable participants to acquire skills for understanding and teaching students with autism. Specifically, participants will develop an understanding of the characteristics students with autism spectrum disorders experience and how students are diagnosed. Information on the most current and evidence based instructional strategies will be provided to teach students with autism spectrum disorders both academic and functional skills. Information on how to assess the progress of students will also be included. Required SPED 635 and SPED 636.

***Technology*** - This credential includes one graduate level course and one conference/workshop designed to assist participants in using instructional technology to personalize learning, differentiate, and promote 21<sup>st</sup> century skills: collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, and communication. SPED 593 and one Technology conference/workshop.

### **Required Courses**

#### **PDC in Creativity and Differentiation (6 credit hours)**

SPED 577 - Curriculum Differentiation for Gifted Learners

SPED 500 - Creative Thinking and Problem Solving

#### **PDC in RTI for Social and Emotional Behavior (6 credit hours)**

SPED 555 - Culturally Responsive Classroom Management for Exceptional Learners

SPED 684 - Social and Emotional Issues of Exceptional Learners

#### **PDC for Collaboration with Families and Professionals (6 credit hours)**

SPED 633 - Collaboration with Families and Professionals

SPED 530 - Assessment and Functional Skill Instruction in the Adapted Curriculum

#### **PDC for Autism (6 credit hours)**

SPED 635 – Introduction to Autism Spectrum Disorders

SPED 636 – Evidence-Based Methods for Teaching Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders

#### **PDC Technology (3 credit hours + conference)**

SPED 593 - Special Topics: Instructional Technology in Personalized Learning Environments.

Attend one Professional Development Conference on Technology hosted by Western Carolina University

**Admission and Enrollment:**

1. Email Rachel Wike at [rwike@email.wcu.edu](mailto:rwike@email.wcu.edu) or call her at (828) 227-7027 to indicate which PDC you wish to pursue. She will also be happy to help you with the admissions process.
2. Apply to WCU as a Non-degree seeking graduate student. Visit <http://grad.wcu.edu> to apply. You will need official transcripts and a \$65 application fee.
3. [Graduate Distance Education fees apply](#) for tuition purposes.
4. Enroll in the appropriate courses.

For additional information, please contact Lisa Bloom at [bloom@email.wcu.edu](mailto:bloom@email.wcu.edu) or Rachel Wike at [rwike@email.wcu.edu](mailto:rwike@email.wcu.edu); (828) 227-7027.