

Special Education

Working with children with disabilities provides one of the most challenging yet rewarding careers a person can have.

Special Education teachers work as part of a team within school systems. They advise other teachers on methods for teaching disabled children in their classrooms and may run a resource room where disabled students come for specialized instruction.

Contact us

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 Visit the Education Department
 Web site at www.sau.edu/education
 For general information about
 St. Ambrose or how to apply:
 Admissions Office
 563/333-6300 or 800/383-2627
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Degrees offered and requirements

St. Ambrose offers a Bachelor of Arts in education with a Special Education endorsement. A Bachelor of Education degree also is offered for the individual who already has a bachelor's or master's degree and is seeking teacher licensure. Since these students already have earned a degree, they are exempt from having to take the general education requirements. All other requirements in the Teacher Education Program apply.

St. Ambrose University offers two undergraduate special education programs. The Instructional Strategist I program provides a mild/moderate elementary endorsement, and the fifth-year Special Education Secondary Endorsement program provides the Instructional Strategist I secondary endorsement and the Instructional Strategist II learning disabilities/behavior disorders endorsement.

Before gaining full admission to the St. Ambrose Teacher Education program, students must have a 2.7 cumulative GPA, maintain a 3.00 or B average in their major and provide documentation of meeting the College Basic Academic Subjects Examination (C-BASE) requirements. Freshman undergraduates intending to get an endorsement in special education usually enroll in introductory courses in education or psychology along with general studies.

The requirements specific to the fifth-year Special Education endorsement are:

- Hold junior level status (completion of 60 credit hours)
- Obtain a positive recommendation from an education advisor and one member of the Special Education program
- Possess an overall GPA of 3.0 or above
- Completion of field experience and practicum

Program highlights and courses

The Teacher Education Program at St. Ambrose includes areas of study necessary to prepare competent and professional classroom teachers and enables students to receive an initial license to teach in Iowa agencies and schools. The program is approved by the Iowa Department of Education. Through agreements with other states, graduates may apply for certification after receiving an Iowa license.

In the Instructional Strategist I endorsement program, students have the opportunity to combine classroom learning with experiences in the field directed toward working with students with mild/moderate disabilities in special education and inclusive settings. Strategies and methods for implementing research-based practices into actual teaching situations are considered. Courses include Foundations of Special Education; Characteristics of Learners with Mild/Moderate Disabilities; Collaboration with Families and Professionals; Managing Behavior and Social Skills Integration; Assessment in Special Education; Curriculum: Content and Materials for Learners with Mild/Moderate Disabilities; and Methods for Teaching Elementary Learners with Mild/Moderate Disabilities.

The fifth-year Special Education Secondary Endorsement program is designed to assist in the development of teaching skills specific to working with adolescents with special needs. Within this endorsement program, St. Ambrose offers courses that include Inclusion Strategies for Students with Special Needs; Behavior Intervention Techniques; Assessment

in Special Education; Collaborative Consultation, Career Management and Transitioning for the Disabled; and Teaching Students with Learning Disabilities and Mental Disabilities.

Field experience/practicum experience and student teaching

Field experience begins early in the Education major's career, and this field time is spent in the classroom observing and working with students. Student teaching is usually in the last semester before graduation, and the placement is all day, every day, for one semester. The field experience and student teaching assignments are made by the Education Department to public or private agencies or schools in the Quad City area. Additional coursework or employment during this final semester is discouraged.

Resources and co-curricular activities

Special Education students at St. Ambrose University have their own student chapter of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). The overall purpose of the CEC professional organization is to promote future leaders in the education of children and youth with exceptionalities as well as promote programs designed to inform students of special education and to encourage them to become involved with their peers.

Students interested in pursuing teaching as a career also are encouraged to seek admission to Kappa Delta Pi, an honorary educational association designed to recognize those who have contributed to the field of education.

Career prospects

According to the Iowa Department of Education, 41 percent of Iowa's teachers are eligible to retire within the next ten years, and there is a growing shortage of teachers in the areas of mathematics, science, computer science, special education and English as a second language. Of the St. Ambrose Education majors who responded to a post-graduation questionnaire, those seeking employment as teachers had a 95 percent placement rate over the past four years.

Education graduates not only teach in classrooms but also are employed as school librarians, reading specialists, curriculum specialists, and guidance counselors.

About the faculty

William Hitchings PhD, Professor

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Prof. Hitchings has published in the areas of learning disabilities theory and practice in higher education settings. He received his doctorate in special education and organizational behavior from the University of Iowa and has been at St. Ambrose since 1991.

Robert Ristow PhD, Professor and Dean

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Deanna Stoube MEd, Assistant Professor, Reading Clinic Director
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Prof. Stoube's research interests include teacher perceptions of reading instruction at the middle level and the use of literacy centers in upper elementary classrooms. She received her MEd from St. Ambrose and is currently working on her PhD in elementary education at the University of Iowa. She joined the St. Ambrose faculty in 2001.

Barbara Wiese PhD, Associate Professor

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Prof. Wiese's research interests involve exploring ways to support students with special needs in general education classrooms and how to include the use of para-educators in the classroom environment. She received a PhD in special education from the University of Iowa. Prof. Wiese joined the faculty in 1999.