Special education teachers work with children and adults who have special needs. University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire’s Department of Special Education has the following options for students wishing to major or minor in special education: a comprehensive major in cognitive disabilities, learning disabilities or early childhood, and a minor in learning disabilities. Within these emphases, a student can choose learning disabilities, learning disabilities and cognitive disabilities, learning disabilities and middle childhood through early adolescence; or adaptive education in art, music, and physical education. The Department of Special Education also offers a certificate in emotional/behavioral disabilities for middle childhood through early adolescence or early adolescence through adolescence.

Typical interests and values of special education majors:
- Desire to help children learn
- Curiosity
- Imagination
- Creativity
- Patience and understanding for individuals with different needs

Knowledge and skills gained from studying special education:

Knowledge:
A special education major’s knowledge draws on many different subject areas. From basic knowledge gained from the foundations of education curriculum, to specific areas such as behavioral management, a special education major or minor will obtain a well-rounded education in the instruction of special education.

Skills:
- Organization and communication
- Ability to assess learning
- Analytical thinking
- Ability to motivate
- Teaching
- Imagining alternatives
- Creating ideas
- Identifying resources
- Providing support for others
- Coordinating tasks
- Decisions making with others

Related student and professional organizations:

Student:
- Student Council for Exceptional Children
- Future Teachers’ Club (K-12)
- Best Buddies
- Student Wisconsin Education Association

Professional:
- National Education Association
- Council for Exceptional Children
- DEC: The Division for Early Childhood

Career fields related to special education:

Potential Employers:
Special education majors can use their credentials to obtain jobs in public or private schools as teachers, supervisors, and administrators; other graduates may work in state education agencies. With further education, some special education majors and minors work in colleges and universities.

Potential Job Titles:
Teacher of the Orthopedically Impaired
Rehab Teacher for Adults
Teacher of the Visually Impaired
Itinerant Teacher of Visually Impaired
Primary Grades Special Education Teacher
7th & 8th Grade Learning Disabilities Teacher
6th Grade Cross Categorical Teacher
Learning Disabilities Teacher
Elementary Mild Disabilities Teacher
CD K-8 Grade Teacher
Camp Director
Language Audiologist
Student Teacher Advisor
Hearing Impaired Educator
Adapted PE Teacher
Autism Center Coordinator
CDS Teacher

Jobs You Might also Consider...
Speech-Language Pathologist
Education Administrator
Early Childhood Educator
Social/Community Service Manager
Fund Raiser
Youth Camp Director
Grant Writer
Rehabilitation Counselor

Sample entry level jobs held by UW-Eau Claire special education graduates:
- Special Education Teacher, Aldine School District, Houston, TX
- Head Start Teaching Assistant, Ho Chunk Nation, Black River Falls, WI
- Community Coach, Department of Corrections, Eau Claire, WI
- Cognitive Disabilities Teacher Grades 9-12, Green Bay Public Schools, Green Bay, WI
- Special Education Teacher, Fraser Academy, Minneapolis, MN
- Autism Spectrum Disorder Teacher, ISD 191, Inver Grove Heights, MN

Learn more about special education:
Department of Special Education
- Contact UW–Eau Claire’s Department of Special Education, HSS 249, 836-5511

Getting started at Career Services:
- Meet with a career counselor
- Take interest inventory and self-assessment tests
- Utilize Blugold Career Success Network, a database of UW–Eau Claire alumni & friends available for informational interviewing
- Utilize Blugold CareerLink, an online job search database specifically for UWEC students and alum

Resources at Career Services:
Yellow Section-
- Sigi 3 handouts:
  - Any Education Major
  - Early Childhood Education

- Teacher, Early Childhood
- Teacher, Special Education

Books sections:
- Education, Childcare & Training
- Non-Profit Careers

Orange Section-
- Summer camps section
- “The Internship Series: For the Common Good: Internships with Community and Social Service Agencies”

Blue Section-
- Multiple resources on creating portfolios to obtain a career in education as well as a section specifically devoted to education majors

Opportunities to enhance skills in special education:
Experiential Learning Opportunities
Students have many opportunities to gain hands-on experience in working with children and adults with disabilities. Some of these opportunities include volunteering for Special Olympics, working at camps that help people with disabilities, as well as volunteering at schools. By working with special education populations, you will have a better understanding of what a teaching career in special education would be like.

Directed Studies or Independent Study Class
By participating in a directed studies or independent study class, students will be able to research an area that they find particularly interesting. Contact your adviser about enrolling in SPED 495 or 499.

What you can do now:
- Work with the Campus Autism Program, CAP, an on-campus student teaching program that works with autistic children learning to speak.
- Become a teacher assistant for a professor in the Department of Special Education.
- Teach young children through the on-campus Jumpstart program.
- Job shadow a professional in your area of interest or conduct informational interviews.
- Volunteer at a local assisted living home.