



## Message from the Department Chair

Welcome to the Special Education Newsletter. The Department of Special Education (SED) is excited to have you be a part of our family. The Department, as you know, is one of the most respected in the country. We don't settle for the ordinary—we strive for the extraordinary.

This year, our students continue to take advantage of many opportunities. Many students have added an ESL endorsement as a part of their program, and we have a few who are completing requirements for a Bilingual endorsement. Also, students are taking advantage of our summer study abroad options. We are continuing efforts to supply urban special education teachers through our Innovative Network of Future Urban Special Educators (INFUSE) which collaborates with both the Chicago Pipeline to the Chicago Public Schools and the recently added Decatur Teacher Education Pipeline. Please stay tuned because we will have a major announcement regarding TeachLivE, a virtual reality classroom that many of our courses will be using soon.



Stacey Jean Beck  
Chairperson

This newsletter will help you keep up with all that is going on in the Department, including requirements and opportunities. There is a new look as we shortened the newsletter by using links to other websites and reduced the number of actual articles. Besides the information in this newsletter, you can also keep up with current SED events on social media:

Whether you are new to our Department or in your final year, we are excited that you are a member of our special education family and we wish you much success throughout the academic year!

Sincerely,

Stacey

## Advisor Information

If you have questions and/or concerns, request an appointment with an academic advisor or contact by e-mail. Appointments can be scheduled on-line, by visiting the front desk in The Lauby Teacher Education Center-Lower Level of DeGarmo Hall, Room 56, or by calling Connie Steffen at 309-438-1690.

**Megan Baxter**

[Schedule an appointment](#)

**Janet Caldwell**

[Schedule an appointment](#)

**Jane Koscielak**

[Schedule an appointment](#)

## Keep on Schedule with University Calendars

### ISBE News & Updates:

#### Testing Changes

- Effective July 2017, a minimum composite score for either the ACT or SAT may be achieved by combining multiple sub-scores from multiple previous test dates. Students must still meet the minimum writing portion.
- ISBE also accepts the SAT to meet the test of Basic Skills requirement. The state of Illinois is currently using the SAT instead of the ACT for current High School juniors. This may lead to changes in the coming years in test availability.

Go to <https://education.illinoisstate.edu/teacher/gateways/tap.php> to check for details on meeting the Basic Skills requirement, including directions for calculating your superscore.

#### Licensing Updates

You may hear a buzz about big changes in licensure requirements among your friends or faculty from the TCH department. Those big changes do not affect you as a Special Education major unless you are pursuing a Middle Level Endorsement.

Current Middle Level Endorsements will be available until January 31, 2018. After that the required courses change. Any changes made at that time would affect DHH, LBS 1, or LVB majors who are completing requirements for Middle Level Endorsements, but have not yet received their license with the endorsement.

It may be difficult for students to add some middle level endorsements to their current program even though the new course requirements for endorsing a K-12 license continue to be 24 hours. ISBE recently announced these requirements so ISU may not have the methods classes in your field of interest. Additionally, the

content tests may be impossible to pass if students take only the 24 hours required.

### Special Education Teacher (PK-21) Middle Grade Endorsements

Time period	Endorsed on or before 1-31-18	Endorsed on or after 2-1-18
Course Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 18 semester hours in a content area</li> <li>• 6 semester hours of middle school professional education coursework. (PSY 302, TCH 233)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 21 semester hours in a content area</li> <li>• 3 semester hours in content specific middle grades methods</li> </ul>
Tests Required	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content test</li> <li>• General Middle Grades test (<i>only required if educator is seeking endorsement outside the 4 core Middle Grade areas: Math, Science, Social Science &amp; Language Arts</i>)</li> </ul>

It is ALWAYS good practice to apply for your license within a week of graduation because laws may come into effect that will disqualify you from earning endorsements for which you have worked. Fall 2017 graduates who expect to earn the middle level endorsement must especially be alert to complete the licensing process promptly or they will no longer meet the qualifications for their endorsement.

### Information on the Early Childhood Special Education Letter of Approval

Read More

### Considering a Double Major?

Two options for a double major within the department have been developed to meet the needs in the school systems. The first is a **dual major in Low-Vision/Blindness (LVB) and Learning Behavior Specialist (LBS)**. The plan of study is possible to complete in 5 years if a student chooses this option during freshman year and takes a few classes during the summer. Students will be fully certified in both fields upon taking the necessary state tests and completing the program successfully.

The second option is more challenging and would require **at least 5 years with intensive summer school**. This is the **Deaf/Hard of Hearing (DHH) and Learning Behavior Specialist (LBS) Dual Major**. The drawback to this program is its length and intensity, and students who choose this option must consider it carefully. Both the program and state tests must be completed successfully for certification in the two fields.

The advantages to the dual major are the increased flexibility that you will gain as a teacher. A very high percentage of those students receiving services from LVB or DHH graduates will have multiple disabilities. By receiving additional training for

LBS certifications, you will be better able to meet the needs of your students. For students planning to teach LBS, the addition of LVB certification may allow you to meet needs of students that may go unmet because of the shortage of teachers for students with visual impairments.

The Honors Program at ISU allows students opportunities to customize their educational experience using cutting-edge resources to enrich learning.

[Read More](#)

Information about SED departmental honors.

[Read More](#)



**INFUSE** (Innovative Network of Urban Special Educators) is an urban-focused course sequence beginning in the freshman year for SED majors. INFUSE was created to address the need for high-quality special education teachers in urban areas in Illinois, with specific emphasis on preparing future urban special educators to teach in Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and the Decatur Public Schools. As one of the first of its kind in the U.S., this specialized sequence will systematically fuse urban education and special education preparation together at the under-graduate level. Upon completion, students enrolling in INFUSE will demonstrate a commitment to teach in urban areas.

**Redesigned courses** critically examine social issues that intersect with disability, including:

- Disproportionality in special education and disciplinary practices,
- Cultural views of disability,
- Culturally and linguistically appropriate pedagogy and evidence- and research-based practices,
- Meaningful inclusion of families and communities in the education of children in urban settings.

As part of their redesigned courses, students involved in INFUSE take part in meaningfully layered immersion experiences in Chicago and Decatur. Students observe instruction in classrooms, interact with students and staff, engage in

meaningful dialogue with local community organizations, take part in service-learning activities, and experience the linkage between strong community partnerships and successful urban schools.

The INFUSE redesigned courses and instructors are listed at <https://ncue.illinoisstate.edu/programs/courses/>.

Further, LBS students involved in INFUSE have the opportunity to complete *both* field-base and student teaching semesters in Chicago Public Schools or Decatur Public Schools. This enables student to complete a full-year clinical across two separate school sites in an urban district. For more information about INFUSE, contact Dr. April L. Mustian, Faculty Liaison and Coordinator, (309) 438-5752 or at [amustia@ilstu.edu](mailto:amustia@ilstu.edu).

### STEP-UP Testimonial by Nicole Tromotola - CPS

My STEP-UP fellowship was beyond insightful! There is no class prior to student teaching semesters that gave me an experience through which I was immersed into the community. During my time in STEP-UP, I resided in Pilsen with an amazing family. I was fortunate enough to be placed at Jungman Elementary, which is where I am this upcoming semester for field base. During my four weeks, I was in a low incidence classroom with students in kindergarten and first grade. STEP-UP Chicago not only gave me resources, but also an incredible teaching experience that allowed me to better understand the students and families that I served. It was a phenomenal experience: my CT was a great role model for not only me, but for the students. As for my community based organization, I worked at The Resurrection Project. I helped with tasks within the office and got to see all the things TRP does for the residents of Pilsen. STEP-UP is a rigorous program, but the experience I've gained as a future educator is well worth the intense schedule!!

### STEP-UP Testimonial by Hannah Misar – CPS

Over the course of this last month, I could not have asked for a better experience than to fully emerge myself in a community I was not familiar with. I was in Albany Park which is one of the most diverse communities in the nation. Everywhere you walked you saw different restaurants, shops, people, and heard different languages being spoken. In 4 short weeks Albany Park made me feel at home.

Although I already wanted to teach in CPS, this opened many doors to bringing community, culture, and acceptance into my future classroom. I interned at the Boys and Girls Club where I walked in everyday to hear children playing, laughing, communicating, but more importantly, growing. Students learn leadership and mentor skills through the organization in which they will bring back into their community.

I encourage everyone to challenge themselves as a professional and join STEP-UP in order to educate our youth of the future generation.

## STEP-UP Testimonial by Jessica Piske - DPS

STEP-UP is the most hands-on urban teaching experience you will get at ISU. Every moment of every day, I learned something about what it means to be an urban teacher, whether it be from my supervisors, Decatur teachers, my students, my community organization or simply members of the community that I met on the bus. I was placed at an elementary school day camp in Decatur. I taught STEM Engineering lessons and was able to come up with the lesson on my own with the help of other Fellows. Engineering is not my strong suit so it pushed me out of my comfort zone and gave me the opportunity to teach different grade levels, differentiate per grade level and try out different co-teaching styles. I was placed at a community organization called Independence Pointe (used to be known as Easter Seals) in Decatur. I was able to work in their Applied Behavioral Analysis and in the many programs they offer in the ABA. I was able to work with children with ASD. I got to assess children, work on IEP's, teach how to use PECS, use reinforcement and many other things that I have learned about in my SED courses.

Most often in class we practice teaching techniques with the people in our class but I was able to apply what I learned from my classes in an actual environment with students. STEP-UP is an incredible experience to pursue if you are interested in urban education.

## STEP-UP Testimonial by Stephanie Schremp – CPS

Step-Up allows future teachers of Chicago Public Schools to become fully immersed in the community they are teaching and working in. I was able to make connections and learn from so many individuals that I encountered daily such as my cooperating teacher, community based organization, or others that have lived in the community for many years. The community I was placed in was East Garfield Park, on the West Side. In the morning I taught ESY at Westinghouse College Prep, and was able to work with individuals with a variety of disabilities. In the afternoon I was placed at Breakthrough, which is an amazing community based organization in East Garfield Park.

There are a variety of programs for individuals ranging from pre-k, to adult. I was placed in the early childhood center, and was able to work with families and kids that lived in the neighborhood. I would play with the kids on the playground, read stories, and implement lessons for them. When parents would pick their kids up at the end of the day, I was able to interact with them as well. It was a great feeling when I saw the kids and their parents in the community and they immediately recognized me, even after a few short weeks.

I am already planning on going back to my community to visit! These connections made through Step-Up will be greatly utilized as I look for a job in special education starting in December. If any student is considering teaching in CPS, this is definitely the right program for you! Step-Up provides you with experience, knowledge and confidence as a future teacher.

## STEP-UP Testimonial by Travis Volmer – CPS

For a month this summer, I was living in Pilsen with my host family. During this time, I got to work at Jungman Elementary school in the ESY program and with The Resurrection Project to promote and develop their housing projects. With the Resurrection Project, I was also able to help with the peace rally they had been working on and was able to partake in the march as well.

Throughout this experience, I have been able to develop a relationship with different members of the community and the knowledge of how I can create these connections in my future career. It was these people that I met that allowed me to feel so welcomed in the neighborhood. Walking away from this experience, I feel much more prepared for my future and am excited to dive right into my Field Based experience in East Garfield Park.

[View STEP-UP and other experiences with high need communities.](#)

## Study Abroad

Students in any of the Special Education majors can fit in a summer or semester of studying abroad if they begin planning for it early. Students need to plan freshman courses very carefully and go abroad during sophomore year if they want to do this and graduate in 4 years. Summers are a little more flexible, but still require careful planning. Since the Study Abroad classes are through ISU, the Special Education Tuition Waiver does cover the tuition. New opportunities are being developed. Check out the destinations currently available here:

All COE Destinations

## The University Research Symposium for ISU undergraduate and graduate students is held each spring.

Share your research project with others by presenting a poster. It is also a great chance to learn from other students by going through the display.

Read More

## Scholarships and Tuition Waivers

College of Education  
Scholarships

State of Illinois SED  
Teacher Tuition Waiver

## Required Testing for Special Education Majors

### **ACT + Writing, SAT, or Test of Academic Proficiency (TAP)**

One of these must be completed for Gateway 1 Admission to Professional Studies. There are 3 choices to demonstrate that you have the basic skills necessary to become a teacher. See the information at <https://education.illinoisstate.edu/teacher/gateways/tap.php> to learn how to report your ACT + Writing or SAT scores for your Teacher Education records. If you do not complete the requirement with one of these test, you will be blocked from required courses (SED 360 will be the first one affected) and will not move on to fieldwork and student teaching semesters so you would not graduate on time. .

*NOTE: The TAP number is 400, however most students find it more expedient to meet the requirement with one of the other 2 tests.*

**The Special Education General Curriculum Test** should be completed following completion of TCH 208 and/or 209 and is required for Admission to Student Teaching (Gateway II). Be sure to see the tips in this newsletter.

*NOTE: The test # for SED General Curriculum Test is 163.*

**The Content Test for each individual major sequence** must be completed with a passing score prior to registration for student teaching. Complete this test according to this plan:

- **LBS1 – toward the end of the 251 practicum semester – Test #155**
- **DHH – toward the end of the 247 practicum semester – Test #151**
- **LVB – toward the end of the 246/357 semester – Test #150**

This test is required for Admission to Student Teaching (Gateway II).

**Additional Content Tests or Language Proficiency Exams** as required for endorsements or letters of approval *to* be added to your license. These tests should be taken as soon as you have adequate training and experience to pass them.

The Registration Bulletins, study guides and practice tests for all the above required tests can be downloaded from the website [www.il.nesinc.com](http://www.il.nesinc.com). Additional study information about Test #163 follows in this newsletter.

**Registration deadlines are 6 weeks to 2 months before the tests. Dates and locations are listed at [www.il.nesinc.com](http://www.il.nesinc.com). Registration is a 2-step process. A payment is made before the testing site, date, and time may be selected.**

*NOTE: Students taking state tests will be required to enter their social security numbers on the tests. It is important that the number entered is correct so it does not delay certification upon graduation.*

## Tips for the Special Education General Curriculum Test

### Special educators must pass this test before they can student teach

The Special Education General Curriculum Test is different from the other state tests in that it is only 65 items long. Most students state that the content is all familiar, but it has been many years since they had exposure to some of the information so retrieval can be pretty challenging. The four sections of the test are Reading, Science, Social Studies, and Math. Each section assesses both **knowledge of the content** and **an understanding of appropriate teaching techniques**. Students are advised to take this test after completing TCH 208. Students who also take TCH 209 may benefit by waiting until they have completed part or all of that class.

The tips below were submitted before the development of a study guide that is now available at the library. **Wynne, Sharon A. (2008). *ICTS special education general curriculum 163: Teachers certification exam*. Boston: XAMonline, Inc.** Students have found this helpful. The library copy is on 2<sup>nd</sup> floor and may not be taken out of the library.

It is also helpful to do the online practice test for the Elementary/Middle Level Content Test 110 at the ICTS website. That test covers similar content, but has more questions so the study guide is more exhaustive. All of the things below continue to be helpful as well.

Students who have taken the test in the past have passed on a variety of tips. Here is a brief summary:

- Follow recommended test taking practices such as getting adequate rest and eating a good breakfast.
- Reduce your anxiety by allowing plenty of time to take the test over in case you have a low score. Adequate preparation will also help with anxiety so take time to study the 4 areas covered by this test.
- Take your time and check your work as you complete the test using recommended strategies.
- Review the content that is on this test:
  - Take the online practice test.
  - Go through the objectives online and gather the related information.
    - Review notes and materials from TCH 208 and 209 to help with the reading section.
    - Look over notes from geology classes or earth science classes from college, as well as textbooks for Illinois 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students to enhance your performance on the science section.
    - Use resources like 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grade social studies texts, American History programming on the History channel, Illinois and US Constitution review guides to prepare for the social studies section.
    - Review material from math classes, especially if you have had methods classes, in order to prepare for the math section.
    - Teachers' manuals are especially good review tools since they include teaching techniques.
  - Several students felt there was a high frequency of questions pertaining specifically to the state of Illinois in the middle two sections.
- Most students do not recommend taking this test with another test even though it is short and the state offers that option.