Winthrop University special education M.Ed. graduates are the change agents of education. This program aims to enhance teachers’ knowledge and application of evidence-based practices related to early intervening services, content enhancement, transitional services, assessment and progress monitoring, and employment success for the greater good of people with disabilities both regionally and throughout the country. In becoming teacher-leaders in special education, M.Ed. candidates will interpret current research and provide leadership to others so that they too will advocate for the educational and ethical needs of students with disabilities.
The M.Ed. in special education is accredited by NCATE, National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education.

The Master of Education in special education prepares the educational leader to deliver family-centered services for families and their children with disabilities. There is an expectation that graduate candidates will participate and complete the program as part of a cohort group (a group of students who enroll in the same course sequence during specified times). Classes will be offered based on this model.

To be eligible for admission to the Master of Education degree program in special education, the applicant, along with meeting the general requirements for admission to graduate study at Winthrop University, must:

1. Submit a verified copy of a current South Carolina Department of Education Class III Certificate or the equivalent from another state;
2. Submit a verified copy of the Specialty Area test of the PRAXIS Examination for the current area of certification or the South Carolina Teaching Area Examination;
3. Pass a writing sample examination administered by the faculty members in the special education program. Call the College of Education at 803/323-2151 to schedule an appointment; and
4. Have an undergraduate grade-point average of 2.75 on a 4.0 scale in the last 60 hours of the graduate candidate’s undergraduate course work or an official score of 900 or above on the General Test of the Graduate Record Examination (verbal and quantitative portions).

“Entering the special education graduate degree program at Winthrop was one of the best decisions I have made in my life thus far. ALL of the professors are not only well knowledgeable in their field, but they are willing to share their knowledge with us so that we can make a difference in the lives of students with disabilities and their families. They take the time to get to know you personally and always have your best interest in mind.”


Mr. Robbie Compton works in the Office of Exceptional Children for the SC DOE as the low incidence disabilities specialist.

Ms. Sally Wilkes works in Columbia, S.C., with medically fragile children in the hospital setting and serves on the South Carolina Board of the International Dyslexia Association

Ms. Debra Leach is an assistant professor of special education and a board certified behavior analyst. Her research interests include autism, early intervention, inclusion, positive behavioral supports, and differentiated instruction. In 2008, she received the autism spectrum disorders grant from the South Carolina Department of Education.

Susanne Okey, an expert in behavior support works to help teachers and families teach students to achieve behaviorally. Additionally, she leads Teaching Fellows in their pursuit of a career.

Elke Schneider is an expert in literacy education and in education adaptations for English Language Learners (ELLs). She is co-directing a three-year federal grant to help teachers work with children who are learning English as a second language. This grant also provides services to Winthrop University faculty to infuse English Language Learner sensitive practices into teacher education courses. She focuses on providing evidence-based literacy education practices to remediate reading, writing and spelling difficulties of students with disabilities.

Brad Witzel, the 2009 Winthrop Graduate Faculty of Year, conducts research with graduate students in the areas of intervention and mathematics education for students with disabilities. Most recently, he worked with Winthrop graduate students and another S.C. institution on a fractions intervention with middle school students in S.C. He has written several articles and is a frequent presenter at international and regional conferences. His most recent publications include an intervention series in mathematics and an IES practice guide on response to intervention.