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As the recognized leader for special education professional standards, the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) develops standards, ethics, practices, and guidelines to ensure that special educators are better prepared for successful, long-term careers.

The Professional Preparation Standards define the specialized expertise special educators must master for safe and effective practice and are used to inform preparation programs, accreditation processes, and credentialing agencies. CEC has, and continues to use, a collaborative process that ensures its standards are current, research-based, and designed to fully address the knowledge and skills special educators must master. CEC has developed and maintains six sets of professional standards.

Formal Standard Title	Abbreviations(s)	Last Revision
Advanced Standards for Special Education Preparation	Advanced Standards	2012**
Initial Practice-Based Professional Preparation Standards for Special Educators	2020 K12 Standards; Initial K12	2020
Initial Practice-Based Professional Preparation Standards for Early Interventionist/Early Childhood Special Educators*	EI/ECSE; Early Childhood	2020
Initial Standards for Gifted Educator Preparation*	Initial Gifted	2012**
Advanced Standards for Gifted Educator Preparation*	Advanced Gifted	2012
Advanced Administrator of Special Education Professional Leadership Standards*	Administrator Standards	2021

*These standards were developed with the help/sponsorship of a division; they are not considered the "Division" or "CEC/Division" standards and should not be referred to in this manner.

** Standards currently under revision process

Terminology

It is important to ensure that audiences have a common understanding when referring to work related to CEC's standards, national recognition, and accreditation processes, as various organizations may use terms differently and/or interchangeably. The following terms and accompanying definitions below are guidelines for use within CEC processes to ensure common understanding and coherence amongst documents and processes.

Standards: The Professional Standards define the specialized expertise special educators must master for safe and effective practice. These standards are used to inform special educator preparation programs, accreditation organizations, and credentialing agencies. CEC has six sets of professional standards.

Initial-Level Program: Initial-level programs prepare candidates for their first special educator license and/or credential. An initial-level program may be at the undergraduate or graduate level.

Advanced-Level Program: Advanced-level programs are designed to support current special educators who seek to deepen their skills and broaden their knowledge base by seeking an additional license and/or credential. Though most advanced level programs will be at the graduate level, the terms are not interchangeable.

Specialty Sets: The specialty sets delineate the essential knowledge and skills that beginning special education professionals must possess to be ready to begin their practice in specific areas. Specialty sets are designed to be used in conjunction with a corresponding set of CEC standards.

National Recognition: The process for the programmatic review of specialty licensure areas conducted in partnership with the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) for Educator Preparation Providers (EPPs) seeking CAEP Accreditation. Programs that demonstrate meeting the CEC Standards during their review will be awarded the status of National Recognition.

Accreditation: CEC Accreditation refers to the process of which educator preparation programs seek a formal evaluation of meeting CEC Standards. CEC Accreditation applies to the program only and does not credential an individual person or group of people.

Citing the standards

To cite CEC's standard(s) you may use the "Purple Book" (Practice-Based Standards for the Preparation of Special Educators)

Berlinghoff, D. & McLaughlin, V.L. (Eds.) (2022). *Practice-Based Standards for the Preparation of Special Educators*. Council for Exceptional Children

or use:

Council for Exceptional Children (year standards were released/revised). *Formal name of the standard* (Formal name of the set of Standards: Standard number & component). Retrieved from: <https://exceptionalchildren.org/standards>

Example:

Council for Exceptional Children (2020). *Engaging in Professional Learning and Practice Within Ethical Guidelines* (Initial Practice-Based Professional Preparation Standards for Special Educators: Standard 1). Retrieved from: <https://exceptionalchildren.org/standards/initial-practice-based-professional-preparation-standards-special-educators>