



3100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 600 | Arlington, VA 22201  
(P) + 1.703.620.3660 | (Toll Free) 888.232.7733 | (F) 703.264.9494  
[exceptionalchildren.org](http://exceptionalchildren.org)

## **In Simple Terms: Supporting Explanations for the 2020 CEC K-12 Initial Practice-Based Professional Preparation Standards for Special Educators**

### **Basis for the Standards**

CEC standards are written primarily for programs preparing special educators and are designed to assess candidate knowledge and skills that are necessary as they begin their career. The standards also demarcate entry level knowledge and skills that are strengthened through an educator’s professional development throughout their career. The standards might also be used by State Education Associations when developing teacher preparation regulations or by Local Education Associations when planning a continuum of professional development activities for teachers.

Given the current availability of research related to effective practice, as well as research and the wisdom of practice that have been used to reimagine a more effective, practice-based approach to teacher preparation (e.g., NCATE, 2010), the time is right to call on this knowledge base to reconsider standards for special educators. In particular, the work of major funded centers has consolidated this information and provides a knowledge base for reconceptualizing standards and the organization and function of EPPs.

Over the past decade, research from several fields has supported the use of a practice-based approach to educating beginning teachers. Drawing from professions as diverse as medicine, aviation, and plumbing, this research has shown that preparation is substantially enhanced by defining critical practices and systematically providing candidates opportunities to learn to use these practices with feedback in natural or simulated settings (Ericsson & Pool, 2016; McLeskey & Brownell, 2015). Teacher educators have begun to employ this research in preparation programs, with the goal of producing teachers who are classroom-ready upon program completion (Maheady, Patti, Rafferty, & del Prado Hill, 2019; McDonald, Kazemi, & Kavanaugh, 2013). This research has also been incorporated into standards for teacher preparation programs (NCATE, 2010; CAEP, 2013) which have shifted from “a norm which emphasizes academic preparation and coursework loosely linked to school-based experiences [to] programs that are fully grounded in clinical practice and interwoven with academic content and professional courses” (NCATE, 2010, p. ii).

The foundation of practice-based teacher preparation programs is a core curriculum that consists of frequently used practices that have been shown to improve academic or behavioral outcomes for students (McLeskey, Billingsley, Brownell, Maheady, & Lewis, 2019). Research in general and special education, and more generally in the learning sciences, has begun to identify many of these practices (APA, 2015; Deans for Impact, 2015; Harn, Fritz, & Berg, 2014; McLeskey et al., 2017; Sugai, Simonsen, Bradshaw, Horner, & Lewis, 2014; Windschitl, Thompson, Braaten, & Stroupe, 2019). Further, national centers (e.g., CEEDAR Center, SWIFT Center) have developed resources to disseminate this information and provide support to those engaged in teacher preparation and professional development as they learn to use these practices (e.g., Benedict et al, 2016; Sailor, 2016). These research and development activities have provided teacher educators with clear direction regarding approaches that may be used to improve teacher preparation and ensure that beginning educators are well prepared to meet the academic and social/behavioral needs of students with disabilities.

## 2020 K12 Standards and Components with Brief Explanation of Components

<b>Standard 1: Engaging in Professional Learning and Practice within Ethical Guidelines</b>	
Candidates practice within ethical and legal guidelines; engage in ongoing self-reflection to design and implement professional learning activities; and advocate for improved outcomes for individuals with exceptionalities and their families while considering their social, cultural, and linguistic diversity.	
<b>Component</b>	<b>How it appears in practice</b>
<b>Component 1.1</b> Candidates practice within ethical guidelines and legal policies and procedures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candidates have knowledge base of applicable laws that protect students with disabilities and that frame the backbone of the field of special education.</li> <li>• Candidates have a high level of professional competency and integrity, exercise informed professional judgement, and practice within the codes of ethics in the profession.</li> </ul>
<b>Component 1.2</b> Candidates advocate for improved outcomes for individuals with exceptionalities and their families while addressing the unique needs of those with diverse social, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candidates advocate for resources and the professional learning conditions to help individuals with exceptionalities meet instructional, behavioral, social, and transition goals and outcomes.</li> <li>• Together with families, candidates may identify strategies to facilitate the child’s development of peer relationships, self-regulation, independence, and safety within the home, classroom, and/or community.</li> </ul>
<b>Component 1.3</b> Candidates design and implement professional learning activities based on ongoing analysis of student learning; self-reflection; professional standards, research, and contemporary practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candidates engage in professional learning activities and participate actively in peer and professional learning communities that benefit individuals with exceptionalities and their families, colleagues, and their own professional growth.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candidates design and implement professional development plans by regularly reflecting on their professional performance and adjusting their practices to improve the impact on students, families, and other professionals</li> </ul>
<p><b>Standard 2: Understanding and Addressing Each Individual’s Developmental and Learning Needs</b>  Candidates use their understanding of human growth and development; multiple influences on development; individual differences; diversity, including exceptionalities; and families and communities to plan and implement inclusive learning environments and experiences that provide individuals with exceptionalities high-quality learning experiences reflective of each individual’s strengths and needs.</p>	
<b>Component</b>	<b>How it appears in practice</b>
<p><b>Component 2.1</b> Candidates apply understanding of human growth and development to create developmentally appropriate and meaningful learning experiences that address individualized strengths and needs of students with exceptionalities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candidates know how all individuals grow and develop and they understand developmental milestones. They facilitate learning by recognizing each student’s differences in experiences, capacities, needs, interests, and backgrounds by uses instructional approaches, methods, and strategies that are appropriate for each individual.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Component 2.2</b> Candidates use their knowledge and understanding of diverse factors that influence development and learning including differences related to families, languages, cultures, and communities, and to individual differences, including exceptionalities, to plan and implement learning experiences and environments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candidates ensure inclusive learning environments that enable individuals with exceptionalities and diverse backgrounds to meet high standards. Candidates design environments, curriculum, and instruction in ways that are accessible to all learners and that use each learner’s strengths to promote growth.</li> </ul>

**Standard 3: Demonstrating Subject Matter Content and Specialized Curricular Knowledge**

Candidates apply their understanding of the academic subject matter content of the general curriculum and specialized curricula to inform their programmatic and instructional decisions for learners with exceptionalities.

<b>Component</b>	<b>How it appears in practice</b>
<b>Component 3.1</b> Candidates apply their understanding of academic subject matter content of the general curriculum to inform their programmatic and instructional decisions for individuals with exceptionalities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Candidates possess solid foundational understanding of the general content area curricula and design appropriate learning and performance accommodations and modifications for students with exceptional learning needs.</li></ul>
<b>Component 3.2</b> Candidates augment the general education curriculum to address skills and strategies that students with disabilities need to access the core curriculum and function successfully within a variety of contexts and the continuum of placement options to assure specially designed instruction is developed and implemented to achieve mastery of curricular standards and individualized goals and objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Candidates understand that individual learners may require more specialized curricula than is appropriate for typically developing peers. Candidates identify the appropriate specialized curricula and develop individualized goals and objectives aligned as appropriate with that curricula to meet the needs of each learner.</li></ul>

**Standard 4: Using Assessment to Understand the Learner and the Learning Environment for Data-Based Decision Making**

Candidates assess students' learning, behavior, and the classroom environment in order to evaluate and support classroom and school-based problem-solving systems of intervention and instruction. Candidates evaluate students to determine their strengths and needs, contribute to students' eligibility determination, communicate students' progress, inform short and long-term instructional planning, and make ongoing adjustments to instruction using technology as appropriate.

<b>Component</b>	<b>How it appears in practice</b>
<b>Component 4.1</b> Candidates collaboratively develop, select, administer, analyze, and interpret multiple measures of student learning, behavior, and the classroom environment to evaluate and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Candidates actively and collaboratively engage with educational professionals and families in ongoing, data-based decision making to evaluate and improve school and classroom environments,</li></ul>

<p>support classroom and school-based systems of intervention for students with and without exceptionalities.</p>	<p>instruction, and intervention across varying levels of support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candidates may also be members of student problem-solving teams using evaluation data for the purpose of supporting individual and/or groups of students with and without exceptionalities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Component 4.2</b> Candidates develop, select, and administer multiple, formal and informal, culturally and linguistically appropriate measures and procedures that are valid and reliable, to contribute to eligibility determination for special education services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candidates work collaboratively with teams to administer assessments and interpret results in contributing to eligibility determination while understanding constructs of validity and reliability and their impact on assessment selection and interpretation of results to minimize bias.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Component 4.3</b> Candidates assess, collaboratively analyze, interpret, and communicate students' progress toward measurable outcomes using technology as appropriate, to inform both short- and long-term planning, and make ongoing adjustments to instruction.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candidates engage in ongoing data-based decision making to inform immediate classroom practices, short-term goal development, and long-term planning using data regarding students' performance. These multi-sourced formative assessments should delineate individual student's strengths and academic and/or behavioral needs related to curricular standards and goals, and be used to develop, implement, evaluate, and revise instruction and interventions as needed.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Standard 5: Using Effective Instruction to Support Learning</b>  Candidates use knowledge of individuals' development, learning needs and assessment data to inform decisions about effective instruction. Candidates use explicit instructional strategies; employ strategies to promote active engagement and increased motivation to individualize instruction to support each individual. Candidates use whole group instruction, flexible grouping, small</p>	

group instruction, and individual instruction. Candidates teach individuals to use meta-/cognitive strategies to support and self-regulate learning.

Component	How it appears in practice
<p><b>Component 5.1</b> Candidates use findings from multiple assessments, including student self-assessment, that are responsive to cultural and linguistic diversity and specialized as needed, to identify what students know and are able to do. They then interpret the assessment data to appropriately plan and guide instruction to meet rigorous academic and non-academic content and goals for each individual.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candidates effectively utilize an assessment-instruction cycle to examine, adjust, guide, and improve instruction by (1) interpreting formative assessments, (2) confirming the interpretation, (3) generating and selecting alternative instructional approaches, (4) considering and implementing instructional adaptations, (5) evaluating learning and engagement, and (6) providing feedback to students by communicating levels of proficiency and accomplishment.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Component 5.2</b> Candidates use effective strategies to promote active student engagement, increase student motivation, increase opportunities to respond, and enhance self-regulation of student learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active student engagement strategies, including effective questioning and guided discussion, are purposefully selected and incorporated into instruction to reflect students' learning profiles and activate prior knowledge.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Component 5.3</b> Candidates use explicit, systematic instruction to teach content, strategies, and skills to make clear what a learner needs to do or think about while learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candidates make content explicit by providing a clear statement regarding the purpose for learning the content, strategy, or skill, and making explicit connections to existing knowledge and skills. Candidates also provide a clear explanation of the content, strategy, or skill to be learned, focus instruction on the steps that lead to learning, and use scaffolds and feedback to guide the learner.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Component 5.4</b> Candidates use flexible grouping to support the use of instruction that is adapted to meet the needs of each individual and group.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candidates understand that the purpose of small group instruction is to tailor teaching to meet the learning needs of each student by providing more focused, intensive instruction. Candidates reference learning goals, appropriate standards, and student learning profiles to configure groups effectively.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Component 5.5</b> Candidates organize and manage focused, intensive small group instruction to meet the learning needs of each individual.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candidates use homogeneous groups to provide focused, intensive instruction for children who have common instructional needs and configure these groups to address high priority short-term content goals and objectives.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Component 5.6</b> Candidates plan and deliver specialized, individualized instruction that is used to meet the learning needs of each individual.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The purpose of specialized, individualized instruction is to provide more intensive and different instruction to learners individually or in small groups whose needs are not sufficiently met in whole or small groups. Learners might need more practice with a skill, further clarification of a concept, or a more enriching learning opportunity.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Standard 6: Supporting Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Growth</b> Candidates create and contribute to safe, respectful, and productive learning environments for individuals with exceptionalities through the use of effective routines and procedures and use a range of preventive and responsive practices to support social, emotional and educational wellbeing. They follow ethical and legal guidelines and work collaboratively with families and other professionals to conduct behavioral assessments for intervention and program development.</p>	
<p><b>Component</b></p>	<p><b>How it appears in practice</b></p>



<p><b>Component 6.1</b> Candidates use effective routines and procedures to create safe, caring, respectful, and productive learning environments for individuals with exceptionalities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environments are structured to maximize success and safety for all students. Candidates build positive, caring relationships by taking initiative to learn students’ strengths, interests, and needs and by responding to them in authentic and respectful ways. Through their words and actions, candidates create welcoming and inclusive classroom communities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Component 6.2</b> Candidates use a range of preventive and responsive practices documented as effective to support individuals’ social, emotional, and educational well-being.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candidates consider the students’ surroundings, strengths, areas of need, communication and language abilities, and task demands as well as other triggers that could lead to potential challenges to create an environment where expectations are clear and predictable, where instructional routines and classroom procedures are used to support students and keep them actively engaged during instruction or other classroom activities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Component 6.3</b> Candidates systematically use data from a variety of sources to identify the purpose or function served by problem behavior to plan, implement, and evaluate behavioral interventions and social skills programs, including generalization to other environments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candidates use direct and indirect methods, as well as formal and informal assessment measures to determine purpose, motivation and/or function of student behavior.</li> <li>• Candidates use multiple sources of data to identify or develop effective practices for class-wide or individual level interventions and to evaluate effects of behavioral interventions.</li> </ul>

**Standard 7: Collaborating with Team Members**

Candidates apply team processes and communication strategies to collaborate in a culturally responsive manner with families, paraprofessionals, and other professionals within the school, other educational settings, and the community to lead meetings, plan programs, and access services for individuals with exceptionalities and their families.

<b>Component</b>	<b>How it appears in practice</b>
<b>Component 7.1</b> Candidates utilize communication, group facilitation, and problem-solving strategies in a culturally responsive manner to lead effective meetings and share expertise and knowledge to build team capacity and jointly address students' instructional and behavioral needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Candidates develop capacity in their team members by encouraging the sharing of multiple perspectives, soliciting feedback, and responding in a supportive manner to build consensus for the identification of student learning and behavioral needs and the development, implementation and monitoring of practices to meet students' individual needs.</li></ul>
<b>Component 7.2</b> Candidates communicate, coordinate, and collaborate with families and other professionals within the educational setting to assess, plan, and implement effective programs and services that promote progress toward measurable outcomes for individuals with and without exceptionalities and their families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Effective teamwork requires ongoing information sharing, collaboration, and coordination with families, paraprofessionals, and other professionals, including related service providers, utilizing technology as appropriate to effectively assess and communicate assessment information in clear and understandable terms and plan for and implement effective individualized educational and transition programs and services for individuals with exceptionalities.</li></ul>
<b>Component 7.3</b> Candidates communicate, coordinate, and collaborate with professionals and agencies within the community to identify and access services, resources, and supports to meet the identified needs of individuals with exceptionalities and their families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Candidates understand the importance of and need to communicate, coordinate, and collaborate on an ongoing basis with related services and other professionals and agencies within the community to remain current with what resources</li></ul>

	<p>are available and how they can be accessed and used by individuals with exceptionalities and their families.</p>
<p><b>Component 7.4</b> Candidates work with and mentor paraprofessionals in the paraprofessionals' role of supporting the education of individuals with exceptionalities and their families.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Candidates understand the importance of working with paraprofessionals and the potential roles of the paraprofessional based on the needs of individual learners and the educational setting. With scaffolding and collaborative support from supervising teachers, candidates may plan for and coordinate the activities of paraprofessionals in order to implement individualized plans, such as IEPs, behavioral intervention plans, and transition plans.</li></ul>