



WINGS Announces Credential + Master's Degree Program in Partnership with University of the Pacific and CAPSES

WINGS' mission is transforming the lives of individuals with moderate to severe autism and their families through a customized approach to lifetime services, education and advocacy.

We envision a Bay Area where historically marginalized individuals who learn and behave differently are accepted, respected and feel valued.

Program Overview

In partnership with University of the Pacific Benerd College and California Assoc. of Private Special Education Services (CAPSES), WINGS' new credentialing program initiative addresses the urgent need for more special education teachers and helps WINGS serve more students with moderate to severe autism and their families. The initiative enables full-time paid intern teaching positions at WINGS while candidates complete the credentialing and master's degree in special education coursework online. Teachers in WINGS' program sign two-year retention commitments after completing their credentials. WINGS is committed to making this investment so we may continue empowering the next generation of special education teachers.

Curriculum

The UOP Benerd College program gives teachers the opportunity to earn both a master's degree in special education and a credential in about one year for candidates with bachelor's degrees, and in about 2.5 years for candidates with associate degrees. The hybrid format program is hands-on and interactive. ***"Our students learn about and implement research-based best practices in instruction and classroom management with the support of an apprentice framework made up of expert faculty and practicing teachers in the field. Throughout the program, candidates learn behavioral, academic and inclusion strategies pertinent to their continuous experiential learning in the field as interns or student teachers."*** — Benerd College Students attain both of the following preliminary credentials as part of the program: Mild to Moderate Support Needs (MMSN) and Extensive Support Needs (ESN)

Tuition and Funding Opportunity

Tuition and fees are set annually by Benerd College. Graduate tuition rate for the 2025-2026 academic year is \$850 per unit, which includes a 31% discount automatically provided to all graduate students enrolled in a Benerd graduate program. Most WINGS candidates enroll in 36 units, resulting in a total investment of \$30,600. WINGS is seeking grant funding to support our teacher candidates eager to start their careers in special education. For information call WINGS: 650-624-3165.

Autism

In the U.S., 26.7% of children with autism have "profound" (severe) levels, meaning they are minimally verbal, are unable to advocate for themselves and are likely to need 24-hour support throughout their lives. In California alone, even as its population shrank in 2023, **the autism caseload hit an all-time high of more than 177,400.** The **"severe behavior" population is also surging:** over 10 years, the number of these cases grew 1,116%.

Why WINGS

With our small classroom sizes, dedicated one-on-one aides for most students and onsite behavioral, speech and occupational therapists, WINGS is equipped to meet the needs of our demographic—students with severe autism who require extensive support. Teachers who gain hands-on experience with these students will emerge better prepared to thrive in the special education community over the long term.