Johns Hopkins University and Prince George’s County Public Schools
Partnership for Beginning Special Educators

Advice for applicants
about the workload, rigor, and pace of completing a comprehensive JHU master’s degree while starting a teaching career in PGCPS in special education.

Every year we ask participants from the Partnership to give us advice to pass along to people who are considering applying for this Partnership.

Here are some words of wisdom from our Partnership participants.

■ What’s it like to teach students with mild to moderate disabilities?
  ■ If you’ve not seen special education teaching or don’t have much background experience about teaching students with disabilities, visit some schools now.
  ■ Consider substitute teaching now if you are not familiar with schools and teaching.
  ■ Teaching as a special educator is not like teaching as a general educator.
  ■ If you want to make a difference in the lives of youngsters with disabilities who want to learn, whose future is uncertain, and on whose face you will put a smile, come aboard and join us!
  ■ Make sure you are not a quitter. Be part of the solution. Do not quit on the students!
  ■ You must feel passionate about teaching students with all kinds of special needs.
  ■ Prepare to feel the goosebumps when just one student gets it!
  ■ Teaching students with disabilities requires great amounts of patience, skill, and creativity.
  ■ Don’t be afraid to try new things, even if others in your school are not doing them.

■ What’s it like to take graduate courses while teaching?
  ■ There will be long days and long nights and short week-ends.
  ■ This program can bring out the best in you.
  ■ This is a comprehensive and supportive program that will guide you in becoming a savvy and accomplished special educator.
  ■ If you do not have a desire to do a lot of hard work to become an excellent teacher, this program is not for you.
  ■ Don’t take fun out of your life. Use it as a motivation to get projects done.
  ■ Get started on projects as soon as you have all the pieces. Then there’s less to do at the end.
  ■ Get 1-credit courses out of the way when there’s time. They are such a relief compared to 3-credit courses.
Do not underestimate the warnings that the duration and intensity of courses will be rigorous.
- Get organized.
- If you need help, you’ll get it (be sure to ask for it).
- The program combination of full-time teaching and coursework is extremely demanding in terms of time and amount of work. It will seem as if 24 hours in a day is not enough time.
- You will need to be flexible to meet the demands of this program.
- Be willing to give up much of (most of) your time in the evenings to complete coursework assignments and prepare for lessons.

**What about my personal support system?**
- Do you have a dependable support system?
- Talk with family members and friends about your decision. You will need their support!
- Make sure you seek the support of your friends and family with household responsibilities.
- Rely on your cohort colleagues for support. You will need them, and they will need you.

**How do I know if this Partnership is a good match for me?**
- If you are not committed, don’t do it.
- If you quit easily, don’t do it.
- This will demand a commitment like no other.
- If you are looking for a well-paying job, this program is the wrong place for you.
- If you are an easy-going and laid-back type, do not apply for admission.
- Realistically measure your attitude and drive to commitment.

**What are your final thoughts as I’m making a decision to apply or not?**
- How badly do you want this?
- If it’s about the money, don’t do it.
- Do this because of your passion for teaching students with mild to moderate disabilities and your commitment to excellence.
- Make sure that there is nothing else in the world you would rather do than teach students with disabilities.
- You must take time to think before applying for this program. Are you sure you are ready to sacrifice the time and commitment needed?
- Prepare to give up your life as you see it today because it will change dramatically…forever.
- Good luck!