College of Education and Human Development
Division of Special Education and disAbility Research

Spring 2024
EDSE 547 001: Characteristics of Students with Severe Disabilities
CRN: 23216, 3 – Credits

Instructor: Alexandra Reed	**Meeting Dates:** 1/16/24 – 5/8/24
Instructional Method: Mix of face-to-face meetings and online instruction. See the face-to-face meeting dates below. All other meeting dates will be synchronous online video meetings supplemented by asynchronous online coursework, or purely asynchronous.	
E-Mail: areed11@gmu.edu	**Meeting Day(s):** Wednesday (1/17, 1/31, 2/21, 2/28, 3/20, 4/3, 4/17 ONLY)
Office Hours: by appointment only	**Meeting Time(s):** 4:30 pm – 7:10 pm
Office Location: Krug Hall 110	**Meeting Location:** Fairfax; HORIZN 4001

Note:

1. **This syllabus may change according to class needs.** Teacher Candidates/Students will be advised of any changes immediately through George Mason e-mail and/or through Blackboard.

2. **If you are unable to attend face-to-face sessions, please speak with your advisor** about moving your face-to-face coursework to a future semester and determining if you can take one of the online course offerings (EDSE 501, 517, 590) instead this semester. Any accommodation requests should be submitted to Disability Services.

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Prerequisite(s):
None

Co-requisite(s):
None

Course Description
Examines the academic, social, medical, and behavioral characteristics of individuals with severe disabilities such as intellectual disability, autism, traumatic brain injury, and severe/multiple cognitive, physical and/or sensory disabilities. Focuses on etiology, contributing factors, impact on life and family, the challenges of identifying students with disabilities, and the need for intensive instruction, accommodations, and support.

Course Overview
EDSE 547 focuses on the academic, social, medical and behavioral characteristics of individuals with severe disabilities and the impact these characteristics have on school, family, and life outcomes. The course examines the etiology, contributing factors, identification process, and required intensive instruction of these disabilities.

Advising Contact Information
Please make sure that you are being advised on a regular basis as to your status and progress in your program. Students in Special Education and Assistive Technology programs can contact the Special Education Advising Office at 703-993-3670 or speced@gmu.edu for assistance. All other students should refer to their assigned program advisor or the Mason Care Network (703-993-2470).

Advising Tip
Have you met with an advisor? All students should make an appointment to meet with an advisor to outline a plan for completing coursework and non-course requirements such as testing. To make an appointment by phone or in person, go to http://education.gmu.edu/special-education/advising/.

Course Delivery Method
Learning activities include the following:
1. Class lecture and discussion
2. Application activities
3. Small group activities and assignments
4. Video and other media supports
5. Research and presentation activities
6. Electronic supplements and activities via Blackboard

A percentage of this course will be delivered online using synchronous and/or asynchronous instruction via the Blackboard Learning Management system (LMS) housed in the MyMason portal. You will log in to the Blackboard (Bb) course site using your Mason email name (everything before @masonlive.gmu.edu) and email password. The course site will be available on January 16, 2024.

Under no circumstances, may candidates/students participate in online class sessions (either by phone or Internet) while operating motor vehicles. Further, as expected in a face-to-face class meeting, such online participation requires undivided attention to course content and communication.

Technical Requirements

To participate in this course, students will need to satisfy the following technical requirements:

- High-speed Internet access with standard up-to-date browsers. To get a list of Blackboard's supported browsers see: Browser support (https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Ultra/Getting_Started/Browser_Support)
- Students must maintain consistent and reliable access to their GMU email and Blackboard, as these are the official methods of communication for this course.
- Students may be asked to create logins and passwords on supplemental websites and/or to download trial software to their computer or tablet as part of course requirements.
- The following software plug-ins for PCs and Macs, respectively, are available for free download:
  - Adobe Acrobat Reader: https://get.adobe.com/reader/
  - Windows Media Player: https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/help/14209/get-windows-media-player
  - Apple Quick Time Player: www.apple.com/quicktime/download/

Expectations

- Course Week: Our course week will begin on the day that our synchronous meetings take place as indicated on the Schedule of Classes.
- Log-in Frequency: Students must actively check the course Blackboard site and their GMU email for communications from the instructor, class discussions, and/or access to course materials at least 1 time per week. In addition, students must log-in for all scheduled online synchronous meetings.
- Participation: Students are expected to actively engage in all course activities throughout the semester, which includes viewing all course materials, completing course activities and assignments, and participating in course discussions and group interactions.
- Technical Competence: Students are expected to demonstrate competence in the use of all course technology. Students who are struggling with technical components of the course are expected to seek assistance from the instructor and/or College or University technical services.
- Technical Issues: Students should anticipate some technical difficulties during the semester and should, therefore, budget their time accordingly. Late work will not be accepted based on individual technical issues.
- Workload: Please be aware that this course is not self-paced. Students are expected to meet *specific deadlines* and *due dates* listed in the Class Schedule section of this syllabus. It is the student's responsibility to keep track of the weekly course schedule of topics, readings, activities and assignments due.
- Instructor Support: Students may schedule a one-on-one meeting to discuss course requirements, content or other course-related issues. Those unable to come to a

Mason campus can meet with the instructor via telephone or web conference. Students should email the instructor to schedule a one-on-one session, including their preferred meeting method and suggested dates/times.

- Netiquette: The course environment is a collaborative space. Experience shows that even an innocent remark typed in the online environment can be misconstrued. Students must always re-read their responses carefully before posting them, so as others do not consider them as personal offenses. *Be positive in your approach with others and diplomatic in selecting your words*. Remember that you are not competing with classmates but sharing information and learning from others. All faculty are similarly expected to be respectful in all communications.

- Accommodations: Online learners who require effective accommodations to ensure accessibility must be registered with George Mason University Disability Service.

Learner Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, teacher candidates/students will be able to:

1. State the federal definitions of students with severe disabilities including students with autism, developmental delay, intellectual disability, traumatic brain injury, and multiple disabilities, including sensory, deaf-blindness, speech-language, orthopedic and other health impairments as an additional disability.
2. Describe the history and evolution of severe disability.
3. Describe the characteristics of individuals with severe disabilities whose cognitive impairments or adaptive skills require adaptations to the general curriculum and whose functional skills are significantly different from typically developing peers and therefore require adaptations to the general curriculum for an appropriate education. Discuss and evaluate how the following characteristics impact education, behavior, and social interactions:
4. Age-span and developmental issues;
   a. Levels of severity;
   b. Medical, health, sensory, and positioning and handling needs;
   c. Cognitive functioning;
   d. Speech, language development, and communication;
   e. Emotional and behavioral development and supports;
   f. Social development; and
   g. Cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic factors.
5. Describe the impact of disability on self-determination and self-advocacy skills.
6. Describe historical and legal perspectives, models, theories, philosophies, and trends related to specific student populations.
7. Discuss and examine how educational environments impact students with severe disabilities.
8. Discuss and examine how to build strong parental connections and relationships for families with severe disabilities.

Professional Standards

(Council for Exceptional Children [CEC] and the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium [InTASC]). Upon completion of this course, students will have met the following

professional standards: CEC Standard 1: Learner Development and Individual Learning Differences (nTASC 1,2); CEC Standard 3: Curricular Content Knowledge (InTASC 4,5) & CEC Standard 6: Professional Learning and Ethical Practice (InTASC 9).

Required Texts
Required Texts
Agran, M., Brown, F., Hughes, C., Quirk, C. & Ryndak, D. (2014). *Equity & full participation for individuals with severe disabilities: A vision for the future*. Paul H. Brookes.

Available online in the library:
https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.mutex.gmu.edu/lib/gmu/detail.action?docID=1787398

Recommended Texts
American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). https://doi.org/10.1037/0000165-000

Additional Readings
Any additional readings will be provided electronically by the instructor.

Course Performance Evaluation
Students are expected to submit all assignments on time in the manner outlined by the instructor (e.g., Blackboard, VIA, hard copy).

VIA Performance-Based Assessment Submission Requirement
It is critical for the special education program to collect data on how our students are meeting accreditation standards. Every teacher candidate/student registered for an EDSE course with a required Performance-based Assessment (PBA) is required to upload the PBA to VIA/SLL (regardless of whether a course is an elective, a one-time course or part of an undergraduate minor). A PBA is a specific assignment, presentation, or project that best demonstrates one or more CEC, InTASC or other standard connected to the course. A PBA is evaluated in two ways. The first is for a grade, based on the instructor's grading rubric. The second is for program accreditation purposes. Your instructor will provide directions as to how to upload the PBA to VIA/SLL.

For EDSE 547, the required PBA is Disability Case Study. Please check to verify your ability to upload to VIA/SLL before the PBA due date.

Assignments and/or Examinations
    Performance-based Assessment
    (VIA submission required)
    The performance-based assessment for this course is the *Disability Case Study*. Please see the Blackboard folder for full assignment description.

**College Wide Common Assessment
(VIA submission required)**
N/A

Other Assignments

There are 7 assigned learning modules. All modules will open on Tuesdays at 9:00 am and all work must be submitted by Sundays at 11:59 pm on the specified due date. Within any learning module, students will be presented with a series of readings and activities. All activities and assignments must be submitted on time and be of satisfactory quality to receive full credit. The points for assignments will be listed on Blackboard within each module. Modules will open as the semester progresses; therefore, not all modules will be available on the first day of class.

- Module discussion board posts (7 discussion boards x 10 points each = 70 points): Each module will include 1 discussion board post. Read the directions for each post carefully and complete for full points. At times, students may be required to make an initial post by a particular date and respond to peers by the end of the module.
- Short answer assignment (4 assignments x 15 points each= 60 points): Students will be asked to reflect on questions pertinent to the specified module. Directions for short answer assignments are located within selected modules. These are to be turned in via Blackboard.
- In-Person Class Meetings In-class Assignment: (7 class meetings x 25 points each= 175 points): As part of each class meeting, there will be a short assignment to complete and turned in via Blackboard. Students must be present during class to earn credit for the in-class assignment. Further details will be shared during each synchronous meeting.
- Inclusion Table (Module 5= 50 points): *See detailed instructions within the listed Module.* The purpose is to provide general education teachers information needed to implement instructional programming that accommodates the medical and educational needs of a child with a specific condition who will be included in their classroom. You will complete a table for this assignment.
- Disability Case Study (120 points): *See detailed instructions within the listed module.* Students will complete a table related to a specific disability. Students will provide an overview of the specified disability as well as outline how the specified disability impacts families, and what cultural differences must be addressed; describe the complete needs of individuals with this disorder/disability, presents a range of special education and community-based supports and services that are needed to maximize their achievement and capacity, and discusses the impact of the disability on normal growth and development and the ability to learn, interact socially and live as fulfilled and contributing members of the community.
- Disability, Media, and Ableism: (25 points): *See detailed instructions within Blackboard.* Students will create an "unessay" which will include concepts from course readings, media, and discussions to represent the depiction of disability in popular culture or on educator's social media feeds.

Assignment Summary

Assignment	Points Possible
Module Discussion Boards	70 (10 points each
Short answer assignments	60 (15 points each)
Inclusion table	50
Disability Case Study	120
In-class Assignments	175 (25 points each)
Disability, Media, and Ableism	25 points
Total Points Possible	**500**

Student Evaluations of Teaching:
The student evaluation of teaching, or SET, is an online course survey. You are strongly encouraged to complete this form for each course as this feedback helps instructors and administrators improve your class experiences. Towards the end of the course, you will receive email and Blackboard notifications when the evaluations open. Your anonymous and confidential feedback is only shared with instructors after final grades have been submitted. More information about the SET can be found on The Institute of Effectiveness and Planning website at https://oiep.gmu.edu/set/

Course Policies and Expectations

Attendance/Participation
Students are expected to actively engage in all course activities throughout the semester, which include viewing of all course materials, completing course activities and assignments, and participating in course discussions and group interactions. Please note that while only certain learning elements are assessed through "grades", the instructor can still assess student involvement and engagement using other measures. Blackboard enables the instructor to view such data as login dates, duration of time spent online, access to specific content elements, and more. The instructor will use this data along with course grades to ensure that students are actively engaged in the course. Students struggling to complete work on time or who appear to not be engaging fully with course content will be asked to conference with the instructor. Students are also expected to attend all synchronous class sessions during the course. As adult learners, you make personal decisions about enacting professional responsibilities, including those as a student. Students are expected to arrive on time and stay for the duration of class time. Attendance, timeliness, and professionally relevant, respectful and active participation are expected. In the unlikely event that you are not able to attend, it is your responsibility to ensure that you have covered the material missed. Students who are absent are held responsible for the material covered including assignment discussions/clarifications/explanations and assignments given and due. If you anticipate that you will miss more than two sessions, it is recommended that you drop the class and take it in a semester where you can ensure appropriate attendance.

Late Work
All assignments (e.g., discussion boards original posts, responses, tables, etc.) must be submitted via Blackboard on or before 11:59pm on the stated due date. In fairness to students who submit work on time, points may be deducted for late submissions (up to 10% per day). Assignments will not be accepted more than 1 week late unless prior arrangements with the instructor have been made.

Grading

93-100% = A	87-89% = B+	70-79% = C
90-92% = A-	80-86% = B	<70% = F

*Note: The George Mason University Honor Code will be strictly enforced. See Academic Integrity Site (https://oai.gmu.edu/) and Honor Code and System (https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/). Students are responsible for reading and understanding the Code. "To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the university community, have set forth this honor code: Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work." Work submitted must be your own new, original work for this course or with proper citations.

Professional Dispositions
Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times. See Policies and Procedures (https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/policies-procedures/). Professional dispositions are an essential function of a special educator's job, indicating that these dispositions are critical to develop and assess in special education licensure programs. In the College of Education and Human Development, dispositions are formally and separately evaluated in at least three points in each student's program – a self-evaluation at the start of their program, a self-evaluation at the mid-point of their program, and a university supervisor's evaluation during internship. In special education graduate licensure programs, the initial self-evaluation is completed in a designated course (EDSE 501), the mid-point self-evaluation is completed in designated courses (EDSE 627, EDSE 661, and EDSE 616), and the internship evaluation is completed by instructors in EDSE 783, EDSE 784, and EDSE 785. In addition to these three designated evaluation times, instructors may complete instructor-rated disposition assessments other times throughout the program. When dispositions are assessed, it is important that for areas where a positive disposition is rated as "not proficient," the student takes steps to grow as an educator.

Class Schedule
*Note: Faculty reserves the right to alter the schedule as necessary, with notification to students.

In-Person Meeting Dates

January 17, 2024	4:30-7:10	Horizon 4001
January 31, 2023	4:30-7:10	Horizon 4001
February 21, 2023	4:30-7:10	Horizon 4001
February 28, 2023	4:30-7:10	Horizon 4001

March 20, 2023	4:30-7:10	Horizon 4001	
April 3, 2023	4:30-7:10	Horizon 4001	
April 17, 2023	4:30-7:10	Horizon 4001	

Module	Module Opens	Module Topic	Module Due
1	1/16	Orientation and course overview	1/28
2	1/30	The historical treatment and outcomes for individuals with severe disabilities	2/5
3	2/6	Understanding and planning for individuals with severe disabilities	2/18
4	2/20	Intellectual and developmental disabilities/IDD	3/3
5	3/5	Cerebral Palsy, Physical Disabilities, Medically complex and multiple disabilities	3/17
6	3/19	Autism Spectrum Disorders, Behavioral and psychiatric disorders	3/31
7	4/2	Disability, ableism, special education, and action plans as future educators	4/14

Core Values Commitment
The College of Education and Human Development is committed to collaboration, ethical leadership, innovation, research-based practice, and social justice. Students are expected to adhere to these principles: See Core Values (http://cehd.gmu.edu/values/).

GMU Policies and Resources for Students
Policies
- Students must adhere to the guidelines of the Mason Honor Code. See Honor Code and System (https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/).

- Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing. See Responsible Use of Computing (http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/).

- Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their Mason email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students solely through their Mason email account.

- Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with

George Mason University Disability Services. Approved accommodations will begin at the time the written letter from Disability Services is received by the instructor. See Disability Services (https://ds.gmu.edu/).

- Students must silence all sound emitting devices during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

Campus Resources
- Support for submission of assignments to VIA should be directed to viahelp@gmu.edu or https://cehd.gmu.edu/aero/assessments.

- Questions or concerns regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to Blackboard Instructional Technology Support for Students (https://its.gmu.edu/knowledge-base/blackboard-instructional-technology-support-for-students/).

- Learning Services (learningservices@gmu.edu) - Provides a variety of experience-based learning opportunities through which students explore a wide range of academic concerns. Services include support to students with learning differences, individual study strategy coaching, individualized programs of study, and referrals to tutoring resources. Presentations on a variety of academic topics such as time management, reading, and note taking are available to the university community. The programs are open to all George Mason University students free of charge.

Notice of mandatory reporting of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, and stalking:
As a faculty member, I am designated as a "Non-Confidential Employee," and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason's Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1202. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason's confidential resources, such as the Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) at 703-380-1434 or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 703-993-2380. You may also seek assistance or support measures from Mason's Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing titleix@gmu.edu.

For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, please visit our website College of Education and Human Development (http://cehd.gmu.edu/).

Appendix
Assessment Rubric(s): *Disability Case Study*

Criteria	Does Not Meet Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
Disability Overview and Etiology:	Candidate's description of definitions and characteristics of	Candidate provides definitions and characteristics of learners with moderate to severe	Candidate provides definitions and characteristics of learners with moderate to severe

Definitions and Characteristics	learners with moderate to severe exceptionalities including typical and atypical development in cognitive, physical, and sensory functioning is limited.	exceptionalities including typical and atypical development in cognitive, physical, and sensory functioning.	exceptionalities including typical and atypical development in cognitive, physical, and sensory functioning. In addition, candidate discusses the effect of the exceptionality across the student's lifespan.
Disability Overview and Etiology: Medical Complications and Implications	Candidate partially identifies etiologies and medical complication and implications of conditions related to learners with moderate to severe exceptionalities and discusses the impact those conditions can have on a learner's life is limited.	Candidate identifies etiologies and medical complication and implications of conditions related to learners with moderate to severe exceptionalities and discusses the impact those conditions can have on a learner's life.	Candidate identifies etiologies and medical complication and implications of conditions related to learners with moderate to severe exceptionalities and discusses the impact those conditions can have on a learner's life including psychological and social-emotional characteristics of individuals with exceptionalities.
Disability Overview and Etiology: Identification	Candidate discusses issues related to the identification of learners with moderate to severe exceptionalities, however does not identify issues related to those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.	Candidate discusses issues related to the identification of learners with moderate to severe exceptionalities including those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.	Candidate discusses issues related to the identification of learners with moderate to severe exceptionalities including those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and how those issues effect placement and services available for students with exceptionalities.
Impact on Families	Candidate's discussion of the impact of learners with moderate to	Candidate discusses the impact of learners with moderate to severe exceptionalities on family	Candidate discusses the impact of learners with moderate to severe exceptionalities on family

	severe exceptionalities on family systems and the role of families in supporting development within the educational process is limited. Candidate's discussion of the impact of differences in values, languages, and customs that can exist between the home and school as well as the effect of personal cultural biases and differences that affect one's teaching is limited.	systems and the role of families in supporting development within the educational process. Candidate discusses the impact of differences in values, languages, and customs that can exist between the home and school as well as the effect of personal cultural biases and differences that affect one's teaching.	systems and the role of families in supporting development within the educational process. Candidate discusses the impact of differences in values, languages, and customs that can exist between the home and school as well as the effect of personal cultural biases and differences that affect one's teaching. In addition, candidate discusses their own cultural biases and differences that affect their teaching.
Educational Issues: Continuum of Placements and Services	Candidate partially identifies continuum of placement and services available for learners with moderate to severe exceptionalities.	Candidate identifies the continuum of placement and services available for learners with moderate to severe exceptionalities.	Candidate identifies the continuum of placement and services available for learners with moderate to severe exceptionalities with consideration to the models, theories, and philosophies that form the basis of special education practice.
Educational Issues: Levels of Support and LRE	Candidate fails to relate levels of support to the specific needs of learners' moderate to severe exceptionalities to support them within the least restrictive environment.	Candidate relates levels of support to the needs of learners' moderate to severe exceptionalities to support them within the least restrictive environment.	Candidate relates levels of support to the specific needs of learners' moderate to severe exceptionalities to support them within the least restrictive environment. Candidate discusses specialized materials, curricula,

			and resources for learners with exceptionalities.
Educational Issues: Educational Implications	Candidate's discussion of the educational implications of characteristics of learners with moderate to severe exceptionalities is limited and only partially identifies strategies to support learners including those from culturally diverse backgrounds.	Candidate discusses the educational implications of characteristics of learners with moderate to severe exceptionalities and identifies strategies to support learners including those from culturally diverse backgrounds.	Candidate discusses the educational implications of characteristics of learners with moderate to severe exceptionalities and identifies several evidence-based strategies to support learners including those from culturally diverse backgrounds.
Legal Issues	Candidate's discussion of the impact of the legal, judicial, and educational systems on the rights of learners with moderate to severe exceptionalities is limited.	Candidate discusses the impact the legal, judicial, and educational systems on the rights of learners with moderate to severe exceptionalities.	Candidate discusses the impact of various legal, judicial, and educational systems on the rights of learners with moderate to severe exceptionalities.
Family Resources	Candidate accesses information but identifies limited sources of unique services, networks, and organizations that may not specifically support families and learners with moderate to severe exceptionalities. Candidate's discussion of the	Candidate accesses information to identify sources of unique services, networks, and organizations to support families and learners with moderate to severe exceptionalities. Candidate discusses roles of professional groups and referral agencies in identifying, assessing, and providing services to	Candidate accesses information to identify and evaluate a range of unique services, networks, and organizations to specifically targeted to support families and learners with moderate to severe exceptionalities. Candidate discusses roles of professional groups and referral agencies in identifying, assessing,

	roles of professional groups and referral agencies in identifying, assessing, and providing services to learners with moderate to severe exceptionalities is limited.	learners with moderate to severe exceptionalities.	and providing services to learners with moderate to severe exceptionalities.
Professional Resources	Candidate accesses information but identifies limited professional organizations and publications reporting current research-validated practices that may not be specifically relevant to learners with moderate to severe exceptionalities.	Candidate accesses information to identify professional organizations and publications reporting current research-validated practices relevant to learners with moderate to severe exceptionalities.	Candidate accesses information to identify a range of professional organizations and publications reporting current research-validated practices specifically targeted to learners with moderate to severe exceptionalities.