EDSE 501: Introduction to Special Education

Course Description

This course provides a survey of current knowledge on individuals with disabilities within the context of human growth and development across the life span. Content includes historical factors, legislation, etiology, characteristics, needs, educational strategies, including existing and emerging technologies, assessment, and support services of/for individuals with disabilities ranging from mild, moderate to severe levels of varying disabilities. The course will study the impact of disabilities on academic and social/emotional performances. Field experience is required. Prerequisites: none.

Student Outcomes

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

• Describe how educators and other professionals determine the difference between “normal” and “atypical” behaviors.
• Describe the legal and historical development of the field of special education.
• Describe various theoretical models and perspectives in the field of special education.
• Describe research in etiological factors associated with all disability areas.
• Describe social, cognitive, intellectual, and academic characteristics associated with all disability areas.
• Describe historical points of view and contribution of culturally diverse groups to the field of special education.
• Describe the role of families in the educational process.
• Describe past, present, and future models of assessment and intervention, including technological advances.
• Discuss issues and trends in special education, including legislation and litigation, and use of innovative technology.

Relationship of Courses to Program Goals and Professional Organizations

EDSE 501 is part of the George Mason University, Graduate School of Education, and Special Education Program for teacher licensure in the Commonwealth of Virginia in the special education. The program aligns with the standards for teacher licensure established by the Council for Exceptional
Children, the major special education professional organization in the United States. As such the curriculum for the course includes competencies for teaching students with disabilities from preschool through grade 12.

The CEC Standards are listed on the following website:
http://www.cec.sped.org/ps/perf_based_stds/common_core_4-21-01.html

CEC standards that will be addressed in this class include some of the following CEC Core standards:

Standard 1 - Foundations
Knowledge:
- Models, theories, and philosophies that form the basis for special education practice.
- Laws, policies, and ethical principles regarding behavior management planning and implementation.
- Relationship of special education to the organization and function educational agencies.
- Rights and responsibilities of students, parents, teachers, and other professionals, and schools related to exceptional learning needs.
- Issues in definition and identification of individuals with exceptional learning needs, including those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Issues, assurances and due process rights related to assessment, eligibility, and placement within a continuum of services.
- Family systems and the role of families in the educational process.
- Historical points of view and contribution of culturally diverse groups.
- Impact of the dominant culture on shaping schools and the individuals who study and work in them.
- Potential impact of differences in values, languages, and customs that can exist between the home and school.

Skill:
- Articulate personal philosophy of special education.

Standard 2 - Development and Characteristics of Learners
Knowledge:
- Typical and atypical human growth and development.
- Educational implications of characteristics of various exceptionalities.
- Characteristics and effects of the cultural and environmental milieu of the individual with exceptional learning needs and the family.
- Family systems and the role of families in supporting development.
- Similarities and differences of individuals with and without exceptional learning needs.
- Similarities and differences among individuals with exceptional learning needs.
• Effects of various medications on individuals with exceptional learning needs.

Standard 3 - Individual Learning Differences
Knowledge:
• Effects an exceptional condition(s) can have on an individual’s life.
• Impact of learners’ academic and social abilities, attitudes, interests, and values on instruction and career development.
• Variations in beliefs, traditions, and values across and within cultures and their effects on relationships among individuals with exceptional learning needs, family, and schooling.
• Cultural perspectives influencing the relationships among families, schools, and communities as related to instruction.
• Differing ways of learning of individuals with exceptional learning needs including those from culturally diverse backgrounds and strategies for addressing these differences.

Nature of Course Delivery

Learning activities include the following:
1. Class lecture, discussion, and participation.
2. Videotapes and other relevant media presentations.
3. Study and independent library research.
4. Applications with relevant hardware and software.
5. Application activities, including in class evaluation of intervention research and materials.
6. Class presentations of case studies papers.
7. Written case study and observation reports using the American Psychological Association format.

Representative Required Texts


Other readings from original research assigned by instructor.

NOTE:
This syllabus may change according to class needs.
If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability or if you have emergency medical information to share with instructor or need special
arrangements, please call and/or make an appointment with instructor as soon as possible.

Evaluation

1. Class attendance and participation
2. Field observation report
3. Case study
4. Case study presentation
5. Exam

Points will be deducted for work submitted late.

It is recommended that students retain copies of all course products to document their progress through the GSE special education program. Products from this class can become part of your individual professional portfolio used in your portfolio classes that documents your satisfactory progress through the GSE program and the CEC performance based standards.

Grading criteria

95 –100% = A
90 – 94%  = A-
80 – 89%  = B
70 – 79%  = C
<70         = F

REPRESENTATIVE ASSIGNMENTS

*Field Observations and Report:

Observations of students with disabilities in school settings will be completed. Observation reports containing information including the following: (a) student-teacher and student-student interactions in classrooms or other organized settings that serve students with disabilities; (b) identification of teaching methods and strategies that appear to be beneficial to students with disabilities as well as those you consider inappropriate; and (c) how the observation and interactions reflect views articulated by readings from class.

*Case Study:

A comprehensive case study on a student with disabilities will be completed. This case study will include the following components: (a) student’s demographic data; (b) description of school and neighborhood; (c) educational history (schools attended, reason for referral, placement); (d) IEP goals and objectives,
classroom accommodations; (e) observational information; (f) teacher interviews; (g) additional recommendations, educational accommodations, and/or modifications; (h) summary and synthesis (Comparison of student’s characteristics with those described in the textbook, i.e., Which characteristics were identified in your student? Integrate sources from the literature with what you observed in your case study.); and (i) appendices such as student work samples, teacher interview questions/answers.

*Quiz:

Students will review the online child abuse recognition training module at [http://www.vcu.edu/vissta/training/va_teachers/](http://www.vcu.edu/vissta/training/va_teachers/) and be tested on the definitions and indicators of child abuse and neglect, how to respond to signs of abuse and to report abuse, the legal requirements of Virginia teachers to report abuse, state support services, and the actions that follow reports of abuse.

*Exam:

Exam covering course content will be administered.

*These assignments are probable entries for the student portfolio

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