GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

# George Mason University Graduate School of Education Program: Special Education

EDSE 440/540: Characteristics of Students with disabilities who access the general curriculum Spring 2009

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### *Course Description*

Examines the characteristics of students with mild disabilities. Emphasis on etiology, contributing factors, conditions that affect learning, the challenges of identifying students with disabilities, and the need for academic, social and emotional accommodations and support. Diversity within student populations is addressed throughout the course. Experiential, observational, and interactive strategies, including use of technological advances are used to facilitate fulfillment of the outcomes established for the course. Field experience is required. Prerequisites: none.

*Student Outcomes*

The purpose of this course is to assist students in developing a solid foundation for understanding learning acquisition and behaviors of children with mild disabilities. EDSE 540 is also designed to prepare students to interact with other professionals about children with these disabilities. Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to demonstrate the CEC standards in relation to the student outcomes identified in Table 1.

**REQUIRED TEXT:**

Henley, M., Ramsey, R., & Algozzine, R. (2009). *Characteristics of and Strategies for Teaching Students with Mild Disabilities* (6th ed.). Boston: Pearson Education Inc., Allyn and Bacon.

**Alignment of Outcomes and Requirements with Key CEC/NCATE Standards**

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| **CEC/NCATE STANDARDS** | **STUDENT OUTCOMES** | **COURSE REQUIREMENTS** |
| **Standard 1: Foundations**  Special educators understand the field as an evolving and changing discipline based on philosophies, evidence0-based principles and theories, relevant laws and policies, diverse and historical points of view, and human issues that have historically influenced and continue to influence the field of special education and the education and treatment of individuals with disabilities both in school and society. | * Describe the field of learning disabilities from its origins to policies and practices of today. * Compare the history of education for students with emotional and behavioral disorders with the education for students identified as having a learning disability. | * Reading assignments * Small group discussion * Journal abstracts |
| **Standard 2: Development and Characteristics of Learners**  Special educators understand the similarities and differences in human development and the characteristics between and among individuals with and without exceptional learning needs (ELN). Special educators understand how exceptional conditions interact with the domains of human development and they use this knowledge to respond to varying abilities and behaviors. Special educators understand how disabilities impact families, and the individual’s ability to learn, interact socially, and live as contributing community members. | * Define *learning disability* and *emotional disturbance.* * Describe how educators and other professionals determine the differencebetween *normal* and *atypical* behaviors. * Describe characteristics of young children and adolescents with learning disabilities and/or emotional disturbances. * Compare at least three conceptual models of behavioral deficits with three conceptual models that explain learning disabilities. | * Reading assignments * Small group discussions * Case Study * Presentations |
| **Standard 3: Individual Learning Differences**  Special educators understand the effects that an exceptional condition has on learning in school and throughout life. Special educators understand that beliefs, traditions, and values across and within cultures affect relationships among and between students, families, and school. Special educators seek to understand how primary language, culture, and familial backgrounds interact with the disability to affect academic and social abilities, attitudes, values, interests, and career options. Learning differences and their interactions are the basis for individualizing instruction to provide meaningful and challenging learning. | * Discuss the various etiologies in relation to biological, family, cultural, and school perspectives. * Identify various procedures and practices that motivate reluctant learners to complete class work and develop skills that build self-understanding and confidence as learners. * Describe and discuss a range of learning disabilities and emotional disturbances for a parent and suggest possible interventions for home and school. | * Case study report * Reading assignments * Field Observations * Final exam |
| **Standard 6: Language**  Special educators understand typical and atypical language development and the ways in which disabilities can interact with an individual’s experience with and use of language. | * Describe at least one theory of how children develop language.\* | * Small group discussion * Class activities * Final exam |
| **Standard 8: Assessment**  Assessment is integral to the decision-making and teaching of special educators and special educators use multiple types of assessment information for a variety of educational decisions. Special educators use the results of assessments to help identify exceptional learning needs and to develop and implement individualized instructional programs, as well as to adjust instruction in response to ongoing learning progress. | * Describe informal assessment procedures for determining knowledge and skills of children with various learning disabilities and emotional/behavioral problems. * Based on informal assessment procedures, design appropriate clinical teaching strategies for children with various learning disabilities and/or behavior problems. * Describe what an Individualized Education Program (IEP) is and how it is developed. | * Small group discussion * Class activities * Case study report * Journal Abstracts * Student presentation * Final exam |

## Nature of Course Delivery

Class sessions may include a variety of formats and integrate instructional technology with lecture, discussion, guest presenters, video, and small group activities. Students will be expected to engage in dialog with the instructor and peers cooperatively and collaboratively; mirroring their future roles as special educators.

**EXPECTATIONS:**

The Graduate School of Education (GSE) expects that all students will abide by the following:

* Students are expected to exhibit professional behavior and dispositions. See http://www.gse.gmu.edu for a listing of these dispositions.
* Students must follow the guidelines of the University Honor Code. See <http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/#TOC_H12> for the full honor code.
* Students must agree to abide by the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing. See <http://mail.gmu.edu> and click on Responsible Use of Computing at the bottom of the screen.
* Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the GMU Disability Resource Center (DRC) and inform the instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester. See [www.gmu.edu/student/drc](http://www.gmu.edu/student/drc) or call 703-993-2474 to access the DRC.
* For student evaluation, program evaluation, and accreditation purposes, students will be required to submit a signature assignment from each of their Special Education courses to Taskstream, an electronic portfolio system. In addition, students completing Midpoint and Final Portfolio courses will use Taskstream to create a full portfolio of their work based on assignments completed throughout their program. For this reason, students will need to retain electronic copies of all course products to document their progress through the GSE Special Education program.  In addition to the signature assignment, products from this class can become part of your individual program portfolio used in your portfolio classes that documents your satisfactory progress through the GSE program and the CEC performance based standards.

* Advising contact information:   
    
  Please make sure that you are being advised on a regular basis as to your status and progress through your program. You may wish to contact Jancy Templeton, GMU Special Education Advisor, at [jtemple1@gmu.edu](mailto:jtemple1@gmu.edu) or 703-993-2387. Please be prepared with your G number when you contact her.

The instructor expects that all students will abide by the following:

* Use APA guidelines for all course assignments. This website links to APA format guidelines. [http://www.psywww.com/resource/apacrib.htm](http://www.psywww.com/resource/apacrib.htm#http://www.psywww.com/resource/apacrib.htm )
* Use person-first language in our class discussions and written assignments (and ideally in our professional practice). Please refer to “Guidelines for Non-Handicapping Language in APA Journals” <http://www.apastyle.org/disabilities.html>
* Please subscribe to the GMU/GSE Special Education list serve to receive important program updates and announcements. You can subscribe (join) or unsubscribe (sign-off) the listserv via e-mail:   
  1.  Address an e-mail message to [listserv@listserv.gmu.edu](mailto:listserv@listserv.gmu.edu)   
  2. Put the following in the body of the message:   
   subscribe SPECIAL-EDUCATION-PROGRAM-L yourfirstname yourlastname   
   A confirmation message will be sent to your e-mail address asking you to confirm your subscription request. You must reply to this message with ok in the body of the message. Leave the subject unchanged.
* Your gmu email address is the email address that will be used for communication in this course. Please make sure your gmu email is activated and checked regularly for communications from the instructor as well as university announcements. It is possible to forward your gmu email to another account.
* **GMU’s** Blackboard will be used to post important information for this course. You will use it to extend your learning through exposure to resources beyond the text. The following is how you will access the **Blackboard:**

Enter the URL <https://gmu.blackboard.com> into your browser location field.

Enter your GMU e-mail **Username & Password** assigned to you.

Note: This is a new version of BB that the university is using. For difficulties accessing BB, call ITU support center at 703- 993-8870 or email [courses@gmu.edu](mailto:courses@gmu.edu)

* All assignments should reflect graduate-level spelling, syntax, and grammar. If you experience difficulties with the writing process you may need to access the GMU Writing Center during this course to improve your skills (<http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>). APA guidelines (5th edition) apply for all written (word-processed) assignments. All work produced outside of class must be typed.
* Students are expected to (a) attend all classes during the course, (b) arrive on time, (c) stay for the duration of the class time, and (d) complete all assignments by due dates provided*.*
* Common sense and instructor discretion will be the governing forces in dealing with any circumstances that may arise that are not explicitly addressed in this syllabus.

## General Comments:

* Arrangements must be made with the instructor ***in advance*** to submit assignments after deadlines. Points will be deducted from work submitted late. Written documentation of extenuating circumstances will be required to alter deadlines.
* The instructor is solely responsible for assigning grades. Student non-compliance with stated academic, honor, attendance, or participation expectations will result in a ‘0’ for the associated evaluation. Because class participation is a factor in grading, the instructor may use absence, tardiness, or early departure as de facto evidence of non-participation.
* Grades of "A" in this course are earned by students who do exemplary, distinguished work. The A/A- student participates actively and thoughtfully in class; completes all required reading assignments and related assignments in a timely and professional way; shows coherence and thoroughness in work products; completes well-organized, well-written work samples; and consistently demonstrates the ability to make connections between theory and practice.

## Evaluation

1. Class attendance and participation
2. Abstract of journal articles
3. Case study report, presentation, and posting to True Outcomes
4. Class presentation of topic selected
5. Exam

## Points will be deducted for work submitted late.

**GRADING CRITERIA**

95-100% = A

90-94% = A-

85-89% = B

80-84% = B-

70-79% = C

< 70% = F

### ASSIGNMENTS

## Class Attendance and Participation (10 pts.):

**Attendance and participation are essential**; class time will provide opportunities for (1) completion of and preparation for a variety of activities, (2) contribution of effective teaching strategies and content application ideas during discussion, and (3) reflection on readings, assignments, and your past experiences. Students are expected to be consistently well-prepared to participate in class as active, thoughtful discussants. **This means that you must prepare all assigned readings prior to coming to class.** **After 2 unjustified absences 2 points per day absent will be deducted.**

**Presentation on effective interventions for students with mild disabilities (20 pts.):**

Each student will choose an area of interest (e.g. reading, writing, math, behavioral management) and will investigate research-based interventions on the area of interest. A list of effective interventions will be provided. Then, each student will prepare a 30-minute presentation on the intervention (s) investigated. The presentation should include an introduction to the topic, description of the intervention (s) (with appropriate citations), and examples of how to apply the intervention. In addition, a hands-on activity should be developed as part of the presentation as well as hand-outs for classmates.

**Abstract of Journal Articles (20 points)**

Each student will summarize three (3) journal articles that are relevant to the needs of the student chosen for the case study. Papers chosen for this requirement must be from peer-reviewed published journals (no ERIC documents!) and should be data-based examinations of issues relevant to the ED / LD/ MR field. Appropriate sources for journal articles include: Exceptional Children, The Journal of Learning Disabilities, Learning Disabilities Quarterly, The Journal of Special Education, Learning Disabilities Research and Practice, Remedial and Special Education, Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, etc. A word document of common journals is included under Course Resources on Blackboard.

The purpose of this assignment is **twofold**: **first** to identify research-based findings that are relevant to the needs of your case study student and **second**, to distill the major points of the article to a two-page summary. The abstract should be typed (double spaced) and following APA style. The paper should include a brief introduction to the students needs, followed by 3 summaries with an APA style citation at the top of each article. Each entry should consist of two parts labeled 1.-Summary, 2.-Critique. Finally, a conclusion that ties together the 3 summaries and findings should be presented as an action plan for assisting the student to meet an identified need. All articles should be from current literature and should not be more that three (3) years old. **You must use your own words to summarize. Overall, your paper should be 10-12 pages long.**

**\*Case Study and Presentation (30 pts):**

A comprehensive case study on a student with an intellectual, emotional and/or learning disability will be completed. The case study should include the following components:

**Part 1**

* Student’s demographic data
* Description of school and student’s community
* Educational history (schools attended, reason for referral, pre-referral interventions, results of multidisciplinary evaluation, special education classification, description and location of educational service provision, related services)
* Educational goals and objectives, classroom accommodations

**Part 2**

* Observational information (at least two class periods of observations specifically related to student goals, objectives, and accommodations)
* Parent /teacher interviews (related to education goals, objectives, accommodations, and any other relevant issues.)

**Part 3**

* Additional recommendations, educational accommodations, and/or modifications
* Summary and synthesis (comparison of student’s characteristics with those described in the textbook or other research, i.e., Which characteristics were identified in your student? Integrate at least three (3) sources from the literature with what you observed in your case study.)
* Appendices – to include student work samples, parent/teacher interview questions/answers.
* Be prepared to present your case study in class orally

**Note: Journal abstracts assignment will help you complete this part of the assignment. However, you need to reword your ideas.**

**\***This assignment has been designated as the performance based assessment for this course. The Special Education Program will evaluate student work in its relation to meeting the CEC Content Standards as part of NCATE requirements. Students in this class will be expected to submit their designated assignment to True Outcomes (web-based portfolio system) for a faculty member in the Special Education program to score on a 4-point rubric. Although your score on this rubric will not affect your grade in this class, your submission of the assignment to True Outcomes will impact your grade. Students are expected to post their assignment to True Outcomes electronically by the last day of class. Additionally information on this process will be provided.

**Final Exam (20 pts):**

Take-home exam covering course content will be administered.

**COURSE TOPICS**

**Schedule (subject to change based on class needs)**

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| Date | Topics | Assignments Due |
| Jan 21st | Introduction to the course/ Syllabus Review  Overview of Mild Disabilities |  |
| Jan 28th | Context of special education  Legislation relevant to the education of individuals with mild disabilities  Overview of Mild Disabilities | Chapter 1 & 2 |
| Feb 4th | Dual Language Assessments  Guest Speaker: Sonia Arellano (FCPS)  Students with Mild Intellectual Disabilities | Chapter 3  BB readings |
| Feb 11th | Students with Emotional disabilities | Chapter 4  BB readings |
| Feb 18th | Students with Learning Disabilities | Chapter 5  BB readings |
| Feb 25th | Multicultural perspectives on the identification and treatment of learning disabilities, emotional disturbances, and intellectual disabilities. | BB readings |
| March 4th | Early intervention  Guest speaker: Mona Assaf  **Individual presentation meetings** | BB readings  **Part 1 – Draft of the case study DUE** |
| March 11th | Classrooms and Learning for students with Mild Disabilities/ Effective instruction for all students/ Study skills | Chapters 6 & 7  BB readings |
| March 18th | Instructing Students with mild disabilities/ Enhancing motivation and affect/ Attention & Memory  Research based interventions learning strategies | Chapter 8  BB readings  **Individual**  **Presentations** |
| March 25th | Classroom Management/Improving classroom behavior/ Teaching Social Skills  Research based interventions learning strategies | Chapter 9 & 10  BB readings  **Individual**  **Presentations** |
| April 1st | Reading Day | **Part 2- Draft Case study Due** |
| April 8th | Transition to post secondary environments  Transition planning  Guest speaker: Chris Moy (ODS) / Dr. Heidi Graff (GMU LIFE program) | BB readings  **Journal Abstracts DUE** |
| April  15th | Working with families: Building Partnerships  Guest speaker: | Chapter 11 |
| April  22nd | Writing Effective IEP’s | BB readings  Exams will be distributed |
| April 29th | Case study 5 minutes presentations  Summary of learning  Last day of classes!  Course evaluations | **Final Case Study DUE** |
| May 6th | Final Exam | **Due by 4:30- electronic copy** |