

**GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY**  
Graduate School of Education  
Special Education Program  
Fall 2010

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**EDSE 401 (sect.003): INTRODUCTION TO SPECIAL EDUCATION**

**CLASS TIME:** Mondays, 4:30 – 7:00 p.m.  
**LOCATION:** Manassas Campus, Occoquan 203

**Course Description**

Survey of current knowledge on individuals with disabilities within the context of human growth and development across the life span. Includes historical factors, legislation, etiology, characteristics, needs, educational strategies, assessment, and support services for individuals with disabilities ranging from mild and moderate to severe. Includes the impact of disabilities on academic, social, and emotional performances. Field experience required. 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 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 401 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 web site:

[http://www.cec.sped.org/ps/perf\\_based\\_stds/common\\_core\\_4-21-01.html](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**

Exceptional Learners: Introduction to Special Education, 11/E

**Daniel P. Hallahan, James M. Kauffman, Paige C. Pullen,**

ISBN-10: 0205571042      ISBN-13: 9780205571048

Publisher: Merrill

Copyright: 2009

### **GMU GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION: STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

- The Graduate School of Education (GSE) expects that all students abide by the following:
  - 
  - Students are expected to exhibit professional behavior and dispositions. See [gse.gmu.edu](http://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](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 Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform the instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester. See <http://www2.gmu.edu/dpt/unilife/ods/> or call 703-993-2474 to access the ODS.
- Students are expected to attend all class sessions during the course; arrive on time; and stay for the duration of the class time. Absences will result in missed in-class assignments and decreased class participation points.

- All out-of-class assignments are to be completed prior to the beginning of class on the date that they are due. If you are absent, the due date does not change and students are responsible to make sure that all assignments are handed in on time. Late assignments will result in a reduction in points.

## EVALUATION

1. class attendance and participation
2. child abuse awareness program and submission to Taskstream
3. field exploratory activities
4. individualized research project
5. comprehensive final exam and submission to Taskstream

*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 (<https://www.taskstream.com/pub/>). 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.*

### Grading criteria

95 – 100 points	= A
90 – 94 points	= A-
86 – 89 points	= B+
80 – 85 points	= B
70 – 79 points	= C
<70 points	= F

## COURSE-SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS

Workload: In-depth reading, study, and work on course requirements require outside class time. Students are expected to allot approximately three hours for class study and preparation for *each* credit hour weekly in addition to time spent on papers and assignments.

Written and Oral Language: APA Style is the standard format for any written work in the GSE. If you are unfamiliar with APA, it would benefit you to purchase the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (5th ed.) You are required to use APA guidelines for all course assignments. This website links to APA format guidelines: <http://apastyle.apa.org/>.

Note: If you have difficulty writing, please utilize the resources provided at the GMU Writing Center. You may be referred to the Writing Center (703-993-1200 or

<http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>) by the instructor; if so, a Proof of Session form will be required when you submit your assignment.

Academic Integrity: Students in this course are expected to exhibit academic integrity at all times. Be aware that plagiarism is presenting someone else's work as your own. Whether the act is deliberate or unintentional is irrelevant. You must take great care to give credit to an author when you borrow either exact words or ideas. Generally, if you use 4 or more words in a row you should use quotation marks and a proper APA citation. Remember that plagiarism is a very serious offense and can result in dismissal from the University. Evidence of plagiarism or any other form of cheating in this class will result in a zero on that assignment and a report of the incident to the Dean's Office.

Email: Please note that your GMU email will be used exclusively for this course: Please activate and forward your gmU email to your most-checked account!!!

Be an Informed Student: Negotiating all the requirements for your Master's and/or VA Licensure is extremely complex. It is recommended that you schedule a phone/email or in-person appointment with the Special Education Advisor, Jancy Templeton ([jtemple1@gmu.edu](mailto:jtemple1@gmu.edu) 703/993-2387). Doing so each semester will ensure that you rectify any outstanding issues, are timely with all necessary paperwork, and are ultimately in good standing to graduate on time.

### COURSE ASSIGNMENTS OVERVIEW

Attendance (10 points): Students are expected to a) attend all classes; b) arrive on time; and c) stay for the duration of the class. Attendance, timeliness, and professionally relevant, active participation are expected. *Missing more than one class or repeated tardiness will result in your participation grade being dropped 5 points for each additional absence/ excessive tardiness.* Please notify me *in advance* by email if you will not be able to attend class.

Participation (10 points): Participation points will be assigned based on my subjective assessment of your participation. If you are in class regularly, appear to be engaged/attentive, contributing to dialog and activities, or asking relevant questions, participation points will be granted.

Child Abuse Awareness Program (5 points):: Students will complete an online child abuse awareness training module at [http://www.vcu.edu/vissta/training/va\\_teachers/](http://www.vcu.edu/vissta/training/va_teachers/) . The site includes 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. Quizzes and scenarios assess student understanding and a certificate of completion is awarded. **You must post your certificate in your electronic portfolio on TaskStream for 501, submitted prior to class on the date of the quiz.**

Pre-Exploratory Reflection Paper (15 points): Adult learners bring varying levels of experience to introductory courses such as this. The Pre-Exploratory Reflection Paper is a 3-5 page paper designed to help you reflect on where you are now, where you wish to go in the future, and what you feel your learning needs are currently. At the conclusion of the paper the student is to

*specifically state* the three activities planned to further the exploration/knowledge-base related to special education.

Field Exploratory Activities (25 points): To address your differing backgrounds, you will have the opportunity to select activities from a menu of options so that you can tailor this portion of the course to address your own learning needs as you build an emerging philosophy of special education. So that you may receive a placement for your field experience, you must access <http://cehd.gmu.edu/endorse/ferf> to complete the information requested. The information submitted on this form will be used to assist the Field Relations Support Specialist in placing students, as well as tracking where self-placed students will complete their field experiences. If you have any questions or concerns, please direct them to Lauren Clark ([lclarkg@gmu.edu](mailto:lclarkg@gmu.edu)), CEHD School Placement Coordinator.

Blackboard or Alternatively Assigned Activities/Assignments (10 points): In lieu of regularly scheduled class, an alternative assignment will be given for 11/22. This may include an assignment which requires a written submission. Details will be provided closer to the date.

Comprehensive Final Exam (25 points): A comprehensive exam covering key course content will be administered, including information presented through lectures, class discussions, cases, chapters, required reading, and videos. Key points of emphasis include the foundations of special education, procedures of special education, the characteristics of each disability area, and effective instructional strategies.

## **Agenda**

Date	Topic	Assignment Due	Preparation
8/30	Introductions Course Overview Assignment/Blackboard/Taskstream Explanation Introduction to the Field		
9/13	Special Education History Eligibility 101	Pre-Exploratory Reflection Paper	chapters 1 & 2
9/20	Eligibility, cont. The ABCs of IEPs		
9/27	Parents and Families		chapters 4
10/04	Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities	CARR Certificate Submission & Quiz	chapter 5
10/12*	Learning Disabilities ADHD Other Health Impairments		chapters 6, 7, & 14
10/18	Emotional and Behavioral Disorders		chapter 8
10/25	Autism Spectrum Disorders		chapter 12
11/01	Assistive Technology communication Disorders		chapter 9
11/08	Deaf or Hard of Hearing Blindness or Low Vision Physical Impairments		chapters 10, 11, & 14
11/15	Low-Incidence, Multiple, and Severe Disabilities		chapter 13
11/22	Alternate Assignment	Field Exploratory Activities Paper	tbd
11/29	Co-Teaching Working With Parents and Families		tbd
12/06	Multicultural and Bilingual Issues Special Gifts and Talents		chapter 3
12/13	Final Exam	Final Exam	

**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.**

\* Tuesday class

## ASSIGNMENT DETAILS



**A Note Regarding Field Observations and Field Experiences...** If you are currently employed in public school as a teacher or instructional assistant, you will create/execute field exploratory activities to enhance your learning. If you do not currently work in a school setting, you will complete field observations in a public school. Regardless of whether you complete field experience activities or field observations, everyone will complete a pre-exploratory reflection paper; the contents of the paper, however, will be slightly different, depending on your situation. Details of both assignments are provided below.

## **Pre-Exploratory Reflection Paper**

### *I. Current Work Situation*

Describe your current work situation. Include information regarding the types of learners in your setting (e.g. LD, ED, etc) –if you are a teacher, IA, etc. If you are not working in a school or learning setting, describe your experiences working with others who have learning needs. Also describe any background experience relative to exceptional learners. Include your current thinking regarding long-term goals in the field.

### *II. Personal Philosophy of Special Education*

Discuss your reasons for taking this class and/or entering this profession, as well as what you believe –at this point- about teaching the exceptional learner. Why do you want to do this? How do you think one should approach this profession? How will what you learn in this class impact you in the future?

### *III. Learning Needs*

What do you wish/need to know more about right now? Identify the direction that the rest of your exploration of the field of special education will take and describe what you propose to do for each of your three field exploratory activities.

### *IV. Specific Activity Plans / Thoughts or Wishes for Learning*

Clearly articulate your plans for the field experience activities (or hope for learning/exposure/experience in field observations). Field experience activities must be different than your current work situation and expand beyond your current comfort zone or knowledge base.

### Ideas to Consider:

- Observe relevant school settings or community settings (e.g., self-contained, co-taught class, job sites, group homes)
- Conduct a home visit for one of your students
- Shadow/Interview an individual in a position of interest to you (e.g. Teacher, Counselor/ Social Worker, Physical Therapist, Principal, Recreation Therapist, Speech Pathologist, etc.)
- Interview an adult/parent with a disability
- Interview the entire family of an exceptional learner

- Attend an eligibility meeting for a student (not one of your own students)
- Attend a child study team meeting (not for one of your own students)
- Examine media-based resources (max of 2 hours allowed; e.g. journals, documentaries, etc.)
- Other (ask instructor to confirm acceptability/assist with ideas for you)

	<b>Points Available</b>	<b>Points Earned</b>
<b>Current Work Situation- Content</b>	4	
<b>Personal Philosophy- Content</b>	4	
<b>Learning Needs- Content</b>	4	
<b>Activity Plans Specifically Stated</b>	3	
<b>Total Points</b>	<b>15</b>	

**Instructor Approval of Proposed Activities:** \_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_ no

**Comments:**

## **ASSIGNMENT DETAILS**

### **Field Experience and Field Observations Paper**

#### **Field Exploratory Activities -EMPLOYED in a public school as a special teacher or IA**

*Note: This project will be used to fulfill the 8 hour field experience requirement for students who are already working with students with disabilities in a public school.*

**Activity Options-** Based on previously identified aspect(s) of the field of special education that you need to explore (identified in pre-exploratory paper), choose and complete activities to enhance your knowledge of that aspect of special education. Paper should include 2-4 pages for *each* activity selected. Include a brief description of the context and what you learned. Document the time spent engaged in the field exploration and the location of the experience at the top of each reflection. Make sure to link between the activities selected and the learning needs you stated.

#### **Field Observations -NOT CURRENTLY EMPLOYED in a public school setting**

*Note: This project will be used to fulfill the 8 hour field experience requirement for students who are NOT already working with students with disabilities in a public school.*

Students **not** currently working in a public school are required to complete two field observations. For *each* observation report you will observe one class in a public school, any grade between 1 and 12, for at least 3 hours in a self-contained classroom or team-taught classroom; however, if team-taught, it needs to be one in which you have knowledge as to who the students with special education needs are. Preschool/Montessori/Private school settings are not acceptable for this assignment.

During the observations, you will not interact with the teacher, staff members, or any students. Instead, you are there to observe, take notes on salient things you observe, and reflect. You are not watching any one student; you are observing the entire class and describing what you see – adults, students, classroom layout, furniture, materials, etc.

Based on your observation, you will write a one- or two-page summary that addresses the guidelines below. Summaries should be detailed and in APA format. The following is a brief guideline to assist students when writing their field observation reports

- class setting
  - team-taught, self-contained, content area
  - number of teachers/IAs
  - descriptive layout of the classroom
- student demographics
  - number of students, gender distribution,
  - grade level
- description of activities observed
  - describe what the adults were doing
  - describe what the students were doing –how they responded to the adults
- description of instructional materials and use of technology
  - text books
  - computers or other types of technology
  - manipulatives
- description of any individualization or specialized instruction for one or more students
- personal thoughts and reflection
  - linking observations and/or thoughts and reflection to text and class discussion

**Name:**

**Assignment Grade:**

**Field Exploratory Activities Scoring Rubric**  
(employed in a school)

	<b>Exemplary</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Acceptable</b>	<b>Inadequate</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Teaching Situation</b> Describes current teaching situation. Includes information regarding the types of learners. Describes background experience relative to exceptional learners. Includes idea of long-term goals in this field (2.5 points)					
<b>Reflection of 1st Activity</b> Brief description of context and what was learned. Time and location documented at the top of reflection. Link between activities selected and learning needs stated. (5 points)					
<b>Reflection of 1st Activity</b> Brief description of context and what was learned. Time and location documented at the top of reflection. Link between activities selected and learning needs stated. (5 points)					
<b>Reflection of 1st Activity</b> Brief description of context and what was learned. Time and location documented at the top of reflection. Link between activities selected and learning needs stated. (5 points)					
<b>Summary Reflection</b> Personal reflection on how the experiences (as a whole) may influence your thinking/actions in the future; how might these activities influence you in the future – personally & professionally? (5 points)					
<b>Writing</b> Paper is written to APA & graduate-level standards and there are <u>very few</u> writing or printing errors. (2.5)					

**Name:**

**Assignment Grade:**

**Field Observations Scoring Rubric**  
(not employed in school)

For EACH Observation	Exemplary	Good	Acceptable	Inadequate	Notes
<b>Introduction/Class/ Setting/Student Demographics</b> Describes teaching situation. Includes information regarding the types of learners. Describes layout of class, grade level, type of class, staffing, school (3 points)					
<b>Description of Activities Observed</b> What adults and students were doing during observation (5 points)					
<b>Description of Instructional Materials and Use of Technology</b> What materials, resources, etc. were being used to support learning (2.5 points)					
<b>Individualized or specialized instruction</b> Evidence of differentiation (2.5 points)					
<b>Personal Thoughts and Reflections</b> Linkages to text and class notes/handouts/ discussions (10 points)					
<b>Writing:</b> Paper is written to APA & graduate-level standards and there are <u>very</u> <u>few</u> writing or printing errors. (2 points)					

**Comments:**