



**George Mason University  
Graduate School of Education  
Fall 2010**

**EDSE 440: Characteristics of Students with Disabilities Who Access the General Education Curriculum**

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**Meeting Dates:** Sept. 1 – Dec.  
**Class day/time:** Wed., 4:30 -7:10  
**Class location:** Robinson A 245

**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. 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. CEC standards that will be addressed in this class include some of the ED and LD disability-specific standards (Standard 1: Foundations; Standard 2: Development and characteristics of learners; Standard 3: Individual learning differences) and some of the CEC Core Standards: 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)

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

CEC/NCATE STANDARDS	STUDENT OUTCOMES	COURSE REQUIREMENTS
<p><b>Standard 1: Foundations</b>            Special educators understand the field as an evolving and changing discipline based on philosophies, evidence-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</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe the field of learning disabilities from its origins to policies and practices of today.</li> <li>• Compare the history of education for students with emotional and behavioral disorders, students with learning disabilities students with</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading assignments</li> <li>• Small group discussion</li> <li>• Journal abstracts</li> </ul>

<p>school and society.</p>	<p>mild intellectual disabilities.</p>	
<p><b>Standard 2: Development and Characteristics of Learners</b>  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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define <i>learning disability, emotional disturbance, and mild intellectual disabilities</i>.</li> <li>• Describe how educators and other professionals determine the difference between <i>normal</i> and <i>atypical</i> behaviors.</li> <li>• Describe characteristics of young children and adolescents with learning disabilities, emotional disturbances, and/or mild intellectual disabilities.</li> <li>• Compare at least three conceptual models of behavioral deficits with three conceptual models that explain learning disabilities and/or mild intellectual disabilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading assignments</li> <li>• Small group discussions</li> <li>• Case Study</li> </ul>
<p><b>Standard 3: Individual Learning Differences</b>  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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss the various etiologies in relation to biological, family, cultural, and school perspectives.</li> <li>• Identify various procedures and practices that motivate reluctant learners to complete class work and develop skills that build self-understanding and confidence as learners.</li> <li>• Describe and discuss a range of learning disabilities, emotional disturbances, and mild intellectual disabilities for a parent and suggest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Case study report</li> <li>• Reading assignments</li> <li>• Field Observations</li> <li>• Final exam</li> </ul>

	possible interventions for home and school.	
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<p><b>Standard 6: Language</b> 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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe at least one theory of how children develop language.*</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small group discussion</li> <li>• Class activities</li> <li>• Final exam</li> </ul>
<p><b>Standard 8: Assessment</b> 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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe informal assessment procedures for determining knowledge and skills of children with various learning disabilities and emotional/behavioral problems.</li> <li>• Based on informal assessment procedures, design appropriate clinical teaching strategies for children with various learning disabilities and/or behavior problems.</li> <li>• Describe what an Individualized Education Program (IEP) is and how it is developed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small group discussion</li> <li>• Class activities</li> <li>• Case study report</li> <li>• Journal Abstracts</li> <li>• Student presentation</li> <li>• Final exam</li> </ul>

**Relationship of Course to Program Goals and Professional Organizations**

EDSE 540 is part of the College of Education and Human Development, Graduate School of Education, and Special Education Program for teacher licensure in the Commonwealth of Virginia in the special education areas of Emotional Disturbance and Learning Disabilities. The program aligns with the standards for teacher licensure established by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), the major special educational professional organization in the United States. As such, the curriculum for the course includes competencies for teaching students with emotional disturbances and learning disabilities in kindergarten through grade 12.

**Student Expectations:**

*George Mason University Email:* <https://msserver3.gmu.edu/> From this link, follow the directions for activating an email account. GMU makes such accounts available at no cost to students. Every student is required to establish a GMU email account to access Blackboard and other important university correspondence that will be sent to GMU email accounts only. Once an email account has been established, it is possible to forward email sent to the GMU account to another email account. Students are responsible for any information shared electronically and should check e-mail regularly.

*George Mason Blackboard:* <http://courses.gmu.edu>. From this link, you will find a variety of materials related to this course. The site will be updated as the course progresses. **Students are responsible** for any information shared via Blackboard and should check the site regularly

*George Mason Patriot Web:* <https://patriotweb.gmu.edu>. This is a self-service website for students, faculty, and staff of George Mason University. A wealth of useful links, information, and online forms are available on this website including program of studies details, application for graduation, request for transfer of credit, and internship application.

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

*Graduate School of Education Dispositions Criteria:* Students are expected to exhibit professional behavior and dispositions. See <http://www.gse.gmu.edu/> for a listing of these dispositions.

*George Mason University Honor Code:* [http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/#TOC\\_H12](http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/#TOC_H12) This URL defines student and faculty conduct to promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community. The honor code deals specifically with cheating and attempted cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing.

*Students with Disabilities:* [www.gmu.edu/student/drc](http://www.gmu.edu/student/drc) 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 the website or call 703-993-2474 to access the ODS.

*Responsible Use of Computing:* <http://mail.gmu.edu> Students must agree to abide by the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing. From the link above, click on the Responsible Use of Computing link found at the bottom of the screen.

**Evidence-Based Practice Statement:** This course will incorporate the evidence-based practices (EBPs) relevant to characteristics of students with mild disabilities, etiology of mild disabilities, and inclusionary practices. These EBPs are indicated with an asterisk (\*) in this syllabus. Evidence for the selected research-based practices is informed by meta-analysis, literature reviews/synthesis, the technical assistance networks which provide web-based resources, and the national organizations whose mission is to support students with disabilities. We address both promising and emerging practices in the field of special education. This course will provide opportunities for students to take an active, decision-making role to thoughtfully select, modify, apply, and evaluate EBPs in order to improve outcomes for students with disabilities.

**Nature of Course Delivery:**

Learning activities include the following:

1. Class lecture, discussion, cooperative group work, and participation.
2. Videotapes and other relevant media presentations.
3. Study and independent library research.
4. *Blackboard e-Education Learning System* applications.
5. Application activities, including in class evaluation of intervention research and materials.
6. Class presentations

**Required Text:**

Henley, M., Ramsey, R., & Algozzine, R. (2009). *Characteristics of and Strategies for Teaching Students with Mild Disabilities* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.

(Supplemental)

American Psychological Association. (2009). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

**Class expectations:**

- **Attendance:** 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. Attendance, timeliness, and professionally relevant, active participation are expected. Attendance and professional participation at all sessions is very important because many of the activities in class are planned in such a way that they cannot necessarily be recreated outside of the class session. When absence from class is unavoidable, students are responsible for getting all class information (e.g., handouts, announcements, notes, syllabus revisions, etc.) from another class member prior to the class meeting that follows the absence. Additional information on attendance can be found under the Course Assignments.
- **Workload:** In-depth reading, study, and work on course requirements require outside class time. Students are expected to allot class study and preparation time weekly in addition to time spent on papers and assignments. **The result of late**

**work will be the loss of 5 points per day until the assignment is received by the instructor.** If you are absent, you still need to submit the work prior to class or by the due date. Individual situations will be addressed with individual students outside of class.

- **Written and Oral Language: APA Style** is the standard format for any written work in the College of Education. If you are unfamiliar with APA, it would benefit you to purchase the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (6th ed.) You are required to use APA guidelines for all course assignments. This website links to APA format guidelines: <http://apastyle.apa.org>

We will use **person-first language** in our class discussions and written assignments (and ideally in our professional practice). We will also strive to replace the term “Mental Retardation” with “Intellectual Disabilities” in our oral and written communication in accordance with terminology choices in the disability community.

- **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 the class will result in a zero on that assignment and a report of the incident to the Dean’s Office.
- **Computers, Cell Phones, Blackberries, and Recording Devices**  
Personal computers will NOT be used in this class. Class notes will be posted on Blackboard prior to class and will also be shown during class if you prefer not to print out a copy.  
The use of electronic devices that produce sound or otherwise interfere with the learning of others (i.e., cell phones, pagers) is prohibited during class. Please turn these devices off before the start of class. Texting and other non-class use of cell phones or similar devices is also prohibited during class sessions.

### **Undergraduate Grading Criteria**

95-100% = A

90-94% = A-

85-89% = B

80-84% = B-

70-79% = C

< 70% = F

Your performance in the course will be rated upon the following:

Class Attendance & Participation Activities	15%
Abstract of Journal Articles	20%
Case Study & Presentation	25%
Presentation of effective interventions	20%
Final exam	20%
Total	100%

It is recommended that students retain electronic and hard copies of ALL course assignments. Products from this class can become part of one's individual professional portfolio used to document satisfactory progress towards licensure as based on the CEC standards.

**Evaluation:**

1. Class attendance and participation (15 points)
2. Abstract of journal articles (20)
3. Case study & presentation (25 points)
4. Presentation of effective interventions (20 points)
5. Final Exam (20)

**MAJOR COURSE ASSIGNMENTS**

**Attendance and Participation in Class Activities (15 points)**

Students are expected to attend class and actively participate in all assignments, group activities, and class discussions. Active participation includes the asking of questions and the presentation of one's own understanding with regard to the readings and lectures as well as interactive discussion and participation in activities with other class members. Active participation also includes listening and respectful consideration of the comments of others. This will require all students to complete the required readings, activities, and assignments for that specific class meeting. Additionally, during class meetings there will be opportunities to earn points for successful completion of in-class activities. If you are not in attendance and thus not able to participate when these activities occur, assigned points cannot be earned.

**After two absences, two points per absence will be deducted in addition to the loss of participation points.**

**Case study/Presentation on effective interventions for students with mild disabilities (20 points)**

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(s) will prepare a 20 minute presentation on the intervention investigated. The presentation should include an introduction to the topic, description of the intervention (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 handouts for classmates.

## **\*\*Case Study**

A comprehensive case study on a student with ED/ LD/ ID or autism will be completed. The case study should include the following components (these are your headings):

- 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)
- IEP goals and objectives, classroom accommodations
- Observational information (at least two class periods of observations specifically related to student goals, objectives, and accommodations)
- Teacher interview (related to education goals, objectives, accommodations, and any other relevant issues.)
- 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 interview questions/answers.

**\*\*This is the Signature Assignment for this course and you will be submitting the Case Study assignment electronically to Taskstream at the end of the semester. Final grades will NOT be posted until you have submitted your Signature Assignment to TaskStream. TaskStream information is available at <https://www.taskstream.com>**

### **Abstracts of Journal Articles (20 points)**

Each student will summarize two (2) 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/ ID 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...

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-three page summary (for each article).

Each abstract should be typed (double spaced) and follow the format provided. At the end of the third abstract, provide a Conclusion section that ties together the 3 summaries' findings and suggest how the information learned from the abstracts can be used to assist the needs of the student in your case study.



All articles should be from current literature and should not be more than six years old.  
**Your paper should be 8-10 pages long.**

**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 special needs arrangements, **please call and/or make an appointment with instructor as soon as possible.**

### Course Calendar

Class	Topics	Assignments/ Due Dates
<b>Sept. 1</b> (1)	Introduction to the course Syllabus review Overview of mild disabilities	
<b>Sept. 8</b> (2)	Foundations of Special Education Relevant legislation	Chapter 1
<b>Sept. 15</b> (3)	Overview of Students with Mild Disabilities	Chapter 2
<b>Sept. 22</b> (4)	Students with Mild Intellectual Disabilities Definitions, Identification, Characteristics, Teaching Approaches	Chapter 3
<b>Sept. 29</b> (5)	Students with Emotional Disabilities Definitions, Identification, Characteristics, Teaching Approaches	Chapter 4
<b>October 6</b> (6)	Students with Specific Learning Disabilities Definitions, Identification, Characteristics, Teaching Approaches	Chapter 5  Journal Abstracts DUE by 4:30
<b>October 13<sup>th</sup></b> (7)	The Inclusive Classroom Inclusion Collaboration	Chapter 6

<b>October 20<sup>th</sup></b> (8)	Learning and Teaching	Chapter 7
<b>October 27<sup>th</sup></b> (9)	Instructing Students with Mild Disabilities Accommodations, Modifications, Strategies	Chapter 8
<b>November 3<sup>rd</sup></b> (10)	Classroom Management PBS, FBA	Chapter 9 Individual Presentations
<b>November 10<sup>th</sup></b> (11)	Teaching Social Skills	Chapter 10 Individual Presentations
<b>November 17<sup>th</sup></b> (12)		Individual Presentations
<b>November 24<sup>th</sup></b> (13)	No Class – Thanksgiving Holiday	
<b>December 1<sup>st</sup></b> (14)	Case study 5 min. presentations Summary of learning Course evaluations	Due by 4:30 – Case Study to Taskstream
<b>December 8<sup>th</sup></b> (15)	Final Exam	Due by 4:30 (Blackboard)

**Rubrics will be posted on Blackboard.**