

*George Mason University
College of Education and Human Development
Early Childhood Education Program*

**EDSE 665
Families of Children With Special Needs (3:3:0)
Fall 2010 – Mondays 4:30 – 7:10 pm – Innovation 205**

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Course Description

Prerequisite: Admission to the Early Childhood Special Education program or permission of the instructor. Focuses on strategies for developing culturally appropriate family-professional partnerships to benefit children with special needs. Explores theories and research supporting a family-centered approach. Includes family and professional rights and responsibilities in the special education process.

Nature of Course Delivery

The class will have lecture, discussion, group work formats and will require active participation of all students.

Learner Outcomes

This course is designed to enable students to

1. Discuss theories and research supporting a family-centered approach to special education.
2. Discuss the role of cultural context in attitudes, beliefs, values, and child rearing practices.
3. Analyze personal values, beliefs, and cultural biases that influence their work with families.
4. Describe underlying principles and ways to work with families that are both effective and enabling.
5. Identify strategies that support and assist families to identify their priorities, resources, and concerns for their children with special needs.
6. Create tailored opportunities for collaborating with families in the ongoing education of children with special needs.
7. Utilize family systems theory to describe and understand family perspectives.
8. Identify specific components of IDEA that support family voices in the special education process.

9. Adopt a strengths-based problem solving perspective when analyzing dilemmas related to partnering with families.
10. Demonstrate understanding of the theories and techniques of family-centered intervention, including issues related to families from diverse backgrounds and multicultural education.

Professional Standards

This concentration is approved for licensure in the Commonwealth of Virginia and it complies with the standards for teacher licensure established by the Council for Exceptional Children. The course content has been designed to address the following standards and competencies.

Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)

- Standard 3 Family and Culture

Virginia Early Childhood Special Education Endorsement Competencies

- Understanding of the theories and techniques of **family-centered intervention**

Required Texts

1. Turnbull, A., Turnbull, R., Erwin, E., & Soodak, L. (2011). *Families, professionals, and exceptionality: Positive Outcomes Through Partnerships and Trust (6th edition)*. Columbus, OH: Prentice Hall. ISBN: 9780137070480
2. GMU EDSE 665 Course Packet Fall 2010 - www.universityreaders.com

Required Articles

Thorp, E.K. (1997). Increasing opportunities for partnership with culturally and linguistically diverse families. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 32, 261-269.

Recommended Texts

Jonathan, K. (2005). *The shame of the nation*. New York: Three Rivers.

Kalyanpur, M., & Harry, B. (1999). *Culture in special education: Building reciprocal family-professional relationships*. Baltimore: Brookes.

Lynch, E., & Hanson, M.J. (2004). *Developing cross-cultural competence: A guide for working with children and their families*. Baltimore: Paul Brookes.

Additional Course Resources

Beck, M. (1999). *Expecting Adam*. New York: Berkley Books.

Chen, D., Brekken, L., & Chan, S. (1995). *Culturally responsive and family focused training*. Northridge, CA: California State University Northridge, Project CRAFT.

Edwards, K. (2005). *The memory keeper's daughter*. New York: Penguin.

Fadiman, A. (1997). *The spirit catches you, and you fall down: A Hmong child, her American doctors, and the collision of two cultures*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux Housden, M. (2003). *Hannah's gift*. Bantam.

- Flynn, N., Thorp, E., Evans, K., & Takemoto, C. (2001 ed.) *Multicultural early childhood team training*. Fairfax, VA: Helen A. Kellar Institute for Human disAbilities, Fairfax, VA.
- Gonzalez, N., Moll, L., & Amanti, C. (2005). *Funds of knowledge*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Harry, B., Kalyanpur, M., & Day, M. (1999). *Building cultural reciprocity with families: Case studies in special education*. Baltimore: Paul Brookes.
- Plous, S. (ed.). (2003). *Understanding prejudice and discrimination*. Boston: McGraw Hill.
- Reston, J. (2006). *Fragile innocence*. New York: Harmony Books.
- Staton, J. (1995). *Listening to Families*. Washington, DC: Association for Marriage and Family Therapy. (15-part video series).

Course Requirements

General Requirements

1. The completion of all readings assigned for the course is assumed. Because the class will be structured around discussion and small group activities, it is imperative that students keep up with the readings and participate in class.
2. Class attendance is important. If, due to an emergency, students will not be in class, they must call the instructor and leave a message.
3. The university requires that all pagers and cell phones be turned off before class begins.
4. It is expected that assignments will be turned in on time (the beginning of the class in which they are due). However, it is recognized that graduate students occasionally have serious problems that prevent work completion. If such a dilemma arises, students should speak to the instructor in a timely fashion.

Attendance

Attendance in class is important to students' learning; therefore, students are expected to make every effort to attend class sessions. Absences, tardiness, and leaving early may negatively affect course grades. The following policy is from the university course catalog:

Students are expected to attend the class periods of the courses for which they register. In-class participation is important not only to the individual student, but also to the class as a whole. Because class participation may be a factor in grading, instructors may use absence, tardiness, or early departure as de facto evidence of nonparticipation. Students who miss an exam with an acceptable excuse may be penalized according to the individual instructor's grading policy, as stated in the course syllabus.

Written Assignments

All written assignments prepared outside of class will be evaluated for content and presentation as graduate-level writing. The American Psychological Association, Sixth Edition (APA) style will be followed for all written work. All written work unless otherwise noted must be completed on a word processor and should be proofread carefully. (Use spell check!) If students are not confident of their own ability to catch errors, they should have another person proofread their work. When in doubt, they should check the APA manual. Portions of the APA manual

appear at the Style Manuals link on the GMU library web guide at <http://library.gmu.edu/resources/edu/>.

Students will

1. Present ideas in a clear, concise, and organized manner. (Avoid wordiness and redundancy.)
2. Develop points coherently, definitively, and thoroughly.
3. Refer to appropriate authorities, studies, and examples to document where appropriate. (Avoid meaningless generalizations, unwarranted assumptions, and unsupported opinions.)
4. Use correct capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and grammar.

The Performance-Based Assessment **MUST** be posted to Task Stream when the assignment is due. **NO final grades will be posted until all materials are on Task Stream.**

Grading Criteria

A = 105 – 110	A- = 99 – 104	B+ = 96 – 98	B = 91 – 95
B- = 88 – 90	C = 77 – 87	F = < 77	

A+ is possible if work is of exceptional high quality and includes work above and beyond that required for the course.

Grading Policy

All CEHD undergraduate and graduate students are held to the university grading policies as described in the Academic Policies section of the current catalog, which can be accessed at <http://catalog.gmu.edu/>. Those students enrolled in a CEHD Licensure Graduate Certificate program, however, must earn a B- or better in all licensure coursework. A degree-seeking graduate student will be dismissed after accumulating grades of F in two courses or 9 credits of unsatisfactory grades (C or F) in graduate courses. A 3.0 grade point average is required for completion of the graduate degree.

Submission of Performance-Based Assessment

This course has a Program Performance-Based Assessment (PBA) that **MUST** be uploaded and submitted to Task Stream for evaluation when the assignment is due. **Only PBAs posted to TaskStream will be graded.** This means that **NO** final grades will be posted until all materials are on Task Stream.

CEHD Syllabus Statements of Expectations

All students must abide by the following:

- Students are expected to exhibit professional behavior and dispositions. See <http://gse.gmu.edu/facultystaffres/profdisp.htm> for a listing of these dispositions.
- Students must follow the guidelines of the University Honor Code. See <http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/#Anchor12> for the full honor code.
- Students must agree to abide by the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing. See <http://www.gmu.edu/facstaff/policy/newpolicy/1301gen.html>. Click on responsible Use of Computing Policy 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 <http://www.gmu.edu/student/drc/> or call 703-993-2474 to access the DRC.

Assignments

Attendance and Participation (15 points)

Because active participation and engagement are imperative for optimal learning, preparation for and participation in in-class activities will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Students attend class, arrive on time, and stay for the entire class period.
- Students complete readings and prepare for class activities prior to class as is evidenced by their ability to discuss and write about the concepts presented and examined in the texts as well as participate fully in related activities.
- Students are actively involved in in-class learning experiences as is evidenced by (1) participating in all activities, (2) engaging in small and large group discussions, (3) completing written work related to the activities, and (4) supporting the participation and learning of classmates.
- Students show evidence of critical reflective thinking through in-class discussions, activities, and written reflections.

Personal Journal/ Reading Reflections (Individual work – 15 points)

These assignments require that students reflect on the course content and discussions as they relate to their own family experience and how that may impact their work with families of children with disabilities. This should take the form of a journal. Students may write in a notebook or maintain an electronic journal. If students choose to hand write their reflections, they need to make sure they are legible. Students will benefit more from this course when they use classes as a jumping off point for further thought and reflection and maintain a weekly reflective journal.

Students will consider the following questions and issues when writing their journal:

- What are your thoughts about the readings?
- In what way do the readings relate to your family experience?
- In what ways do your cultural experiences influence your work with families?

Students will take this opportunity to interview their own family members (especially if you are getting together with family for holidays and celebrations), to identify early memories that may influence their practice. They will consider differences in their family growing up and their current family.

The journal is informal, primarily serving as a tool for reflection and analysis. The instructor will respond to journal entries as if it were a dialogue. Students are not graded on what they say or how they say it but that they say something that reveals their ability to engage in critical

thinking. The journal must include a minimum of six reflective entries (two entries each month-September, October, and November).

Family Partnership & Collaboration Opportunities (Individual work – 30 points)

This assignment asks students to look critically at current practices and opportunities for partnerships with families in their setting. If students are not currently teaching, they should contact their classmates and visit their program. In their paper, students should do the following:

- 1) Describe the physical and social setting, what opportunities there are for family collaboration, ways families receive messages that are welcoming, and how families from varied cultures might experience the environment. Look at the entire school environment, the secretary, the PTA, the pictures on the walls etc. Then, look very closely at the classroom/setting and analyze it as well.
- 2) Analyze the practices of this program from the perspective of the readings;
- 3) Analyze these practices from the perspective of the families in this setting based upon their understanding of the individual and cultural perspectives of the families;
- 4) Analyze these practices from the perspective of providing family-centered services to families from various backgrounds.
- 5) Provide a proposal for how current practices in this program can be improved to promote family centered practices.

Students will be given some time to discuss this in-class with a peer and will, then, turn in their paper the following week. They must provide specific references to the readings used in class.

Family Story Project (40 points): *This is the NCATE 7 Family and Culture Performance-Based Assessment that shows evidence of meeting CEC Standard 3.*

Over the first month of the class, students are to identify a family whose socio-cultural context is different from their own, whose lens is likely to be different from their own. They will get to know that family through meaningful exchanges and use this as an opportunity to see the experience of parenting a child with a disability through a different lens. They will consider this as a way to learn someone's story. Students will consider the following questions:

- How did this family come to be in this place where you have met them?
- What do you need to understand about the family's culture in order to understand them?
- What is the family's perspective about their child or children?

Students will find at least three opportunities to interact with the family in a way other than they would otherwise typically interact with them – e.g., informally away from school if possible.

The paper for this project will have four components – the family story, family cultural research, personal reflections, and story file.

The Family Story. Students will describe the family and their story using a family systems framework. Students will identify the characteristics of the family as a whole, the characteristics of individual members, describe any unique circumstances, discuss the family processes and interactions, and consider the developmental stage of the family.

Family Cultural Research. Students will read at least three references that provide a window on the family's cultural context and discuss what they learned and how to interact respectfully across cultures.

Personal Reflections. Students will describe how they went about learning the family story, describe their reaction to the family's story and how their view changed, if it did, over the semester. Students will discuss what they learned about themselves through their interactions with this family and exposure to a culture different from their own. Students will also analyze what they learned from the perspective of the class readings and class discussions and discuss the family story in the light of their own family story.

Story File. Over the semester, students will collect examples of stories that tell the experience of families from newspapers, magazines, etc. For each entry, they will consider how that story helped them better understand the experience of families and how it helped them think about how to tell someone's story empathically and in a way that engages readers. These entries may be handwritten. When they have compiled the stories, they will attach a summative reflection that describes how these have contributed to their ability to tell the story of a family.

Students will have an opportunity to share this project in class.

Family / Teacher Resources (10 points)

Students will identify resources to support a family-educator partnership with the family they studied for their Family Story Project. As students learn about the family, they will identify needs of the family or particular challenges an educator may face in working with the family. Students will identify research, resources, and community support systems to meet the needs of the family and/or strengthen the family-educator partnership. The information gathered may be specific to identified needs of the family, and/or reflective of the relationship between the family and educator. Students will share a handout that summarizes this information during their in-class presentation of the family story.

Note: To determine whether the campus is closed due to inclement weather, call 703-993-1000 or go to www.gmu.edu.

Course Schedule

Date	Topics	Readings & Assignments Due
Aug 30	Syllabus review, beginning with our stories	
Sept 6	HOLIDAY	
Sept 13	Family System's Perspective Identify partner for collaboration opportunities assignment	Turnbull: Chs. 1 & 2
Sept 20	The Developmental Process of Parenting	Turnbull: Chs. 3 & 4
Sept 27	Historical View on Family Roles in Education Programs	Turnbull: Ch. 5 1st journal reflection due
Oct 4	Socio-Cultural Perspective on Disability	Turnbull: Ch. 6
Oct 12 TUES	Collaboration With Families of Children With Special Needs	Turnbull: Ch. 7 Course Packet 1 – Building cultural reciprocity with families
Oct 18	Historical Perspective on Role of Professionals	Turnbull: Ch. 8 Course packet 2- Carissa: A Family with a Vision-On a Mission Family story due
Oct 25	Resources for Families	Turnbull: Ch. 9 Course Packet 4 – Skilled Dialogue: Strategies for Responding to Cultural Diversity in Early Childhood 2nd journal reflection due
Nov 1	Special Issues: Homelessness and Poverty	Turnbull: Ch. 10
Nov 8	Family Strengths and Coping	Course Packet 3 – Rafael: “La Alegria de La Casa” Family culture research due
Nov 15	Family Partnership in Assessment & Intervention	Turnbull – Ch. 11 & 12
Nov 22	Family Partnerships, Collaboration & The Use of Family Stories	3rd journal entry due
Nov 29	Family Story and Resource Sharing	Family partnership & collaboration opportunities due
Dec 6	Family Story and Resource Sharing	Story File due
Dec 13	Family Story and Resource Sharing	Family story project reflections due

**Course schedule subject to change based on class needs at discretion of the professor.*