

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

**EDSE 665.639
Families of Children With Special Needs (3:3:0)
Fall 2010
4:30-7:10 Thursdays
Bull Run Hall 247, Prince William Campus**

Professor: Monimalika Day, Ph.D.

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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 that support 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

Turnbull, A., Turnbull, R., Erwin, E., & Soodak, L., Shogren, K.A.(2010) Families, professionals, and exceptionality: Positive outcomes through partnership and trust. Columbus, OH: Prentice Hall. ISBN-13: 9780137070480

Novel of your choice that focuses on a family of a child with disability. Select any one novel from the list.

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

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.

Harry, B. (2010) Melanie, bird with a broken wing. Baltimore: Paul. H. Brookes

Required Articles or Chapters

Day, M., Demulder, E.K., & Stribling S. M. (in press 2010). Using the process of cultural reciprocity to create multicultural, democratic classrooms. In Salili, F., & R. Hoosain (Eds.), *Democracy and Multicultural Education.* Information Age Publishing.

- Shapiro, J.P. (2005). No pity: People with disabilities forging a new civil rights movement. In Plous, S. (ed), *Prejudice and discrimination*. McGraw Hill
- Thorp, E.K. (1997). Increasing opportunities for partnership with culturally and linguistically diverse families. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 32, 261-269.

Additional Course Resources

- Beck, M. (1999). *Expecting Adam*. New York: Berkley Books.
- Edwards, K. (2005). *The memory keeper's daughter*. New York: Penguin.
- Housden, M. (2003). *Hannah's gift*. Bantam.
- Reston, J. (2006). *Fragile innocence*. New York: Harmony Books.
- Gonzalez, N., Moll, L., & Amanti, C. (2005). *Funds of knowledge*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Chen, D., Brekken, L., & Chan, S. (1995). *Culturally responsive and family focused training*. Northridge, CA: California State University Northridge, Project CRAFT.
- 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.
- Harry, B., Kalyanpur, M., & Day, M. (1999). *Building cultural reciprocity with families: Case studies in special education*. Baltimore: Paul Brookes.
- Lynch, E., & Hanson, M.J. (1998). *Developing cross-cultural competence: A guide for working with children and their families*. Baltimore: Paul Brookes.

Useful Websites:

National Coalition for Parents in Education <http://www.ncpie.org/>

Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center <http://www.peatc.org/>

National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities <http://www.nichcy.org>

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.

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 = 95 – 100	A- = 90 – 94	B+ = 87 – 89	B = 83 – 86
B- = 80 – 82	C = 70 – 79	F = < 70	

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

Course Grading

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|----|---|------|
| 1. | Participation and preparation for class | 15 % |
| 2. | Personal Journal/ Reading Reflections | 20% |
| 3. | Focused discussion on novel | 10% |
| 3. | Collaboration Opportunities | 25% |
| 4. | Family Project | 30% |

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 – 20 points)

1. Reading Reflections

(Individual work) Post journal entries on blackboard

These assignments require students to reflect on the course readings and related class discussions. This should take the form of a journal. Students may write entries in a notebook or maintain an electronic journal. Students will benefit more from this course when they use class meetings and assignments as a jumping off point for further thought and reflection and maintain a weekly reflective journal. Students must submit 4 selected journal entries on blackboard by the dates specified below.

Consider the following questions and issues when writing your journal.

- What are the key points or arguments posed by the author/s? Identify 3 or 4 issues.
- In what ways does the reading relate to the student's family experience?
- In what ways do cultural experiences of the student influence their work with families?
- How would the student apply the information from this reading to their work with families?

Students should consider interviewing their own family members, to understand the family system's theory and identify early memories that may influence practice. Students may explore differences in the family in which they grew up and their family growing up and current family.

Your ability to do this assignment is enhanced when you journal on a regular basis. This is very informal. We will respond as if it were a dialogue. You are not graded on what you say or how you say it but that you say something that reveals your ability to engage in critical thinking.

Assignment due:**Sept 16, Sept 23, Oct 28 and Nov 18****Focused discussion on novel (Individual reading and class discussions-10 points)**

You are required to read a novel written from the perspective of a family member of a person who has a disability. During three class discussions you will be asked to share information from this novel with your classmates and engage in a critical dialogue. The instructor will give you guidelines on issues you need to focus on each discussion.

Collaboration Opportunities (Team work – 25 points)

This assignment asks students to look critically at current practices and opportunities for partnerships with families in your setting. If they are not 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, in what ways families receive messages that are welcoming, 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 their own 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. Then, 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.

Assignment due:**October 14, 2010****Family Story Project: *This is the NCATE 7 Family and Culture Performance-Based Assessment that shows evidence of meeting CEC Standard 3.* (30 points)****Family Story Project
(Individual work)**

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. Get to know that family and use this as an opportunity to see the experience of parenting a child with a disability through a different lens. Consider this as a way to learn someone's story – how did this family come to be in this place? What are their cultural values and perspectives? What is their perspective about their child or children? Find at least two opportunities to interact with them in a way other than the teachers typically interact with families – e.g., informally away from school if possible.

Memo # 1. Initial Contact. The student must write a (2-3 page) memo about their initial contact with the family. It should include: 1) a rationale for why this family was chosen; 2) an explanation of the ways the family's culture may be different from that of the student; 3) observations regarding how society views the disability of the child and the culture of the family (from Step 2); and 4) the student must make an honest attempt to identify and describe any assumptions they have about this family in this paper. **Memo #1 is due October 7.**

As the students move into the next phase of the project, they must think about how to interact respectfully across cultures. In other words, they must challenge themselves to hear the voices/values of others on their own terms. This will be difficult and, may be, uncomfortable. Students must consider how they can get to know another person and his or her culture on his or her own terms? Observe and ask. If the student observes or hear something that seems strange, wrong, or weird they must engage the family in dialogue explore the meaning of the actions. Students must think about why this may be a part of their way of seeing or being in the world.

Memo 2: Interactions and reflections. By the end of October students must meet with the family and interview the parents or guardians. They must try to learn as much as they can through *meaningful* exchanges. Students must challenge themselves to understand the family's view of disability, and how they make sense of the world – how the person's reality of the world is different from their own.

Students should consider the amount of time they have and the ease with which they will be able to engage persons of another culture. First, students should arrange to spend time with the family member (not as an anthropologist trying to “interview the Other”...but as an individual trying to engage respectfully with the person on his or her own terms). They must do this in a relaxed framework. In other words, students should try not to be terribly formal. Students must write a memo of 5-7 pages describing their experience and examining their previous assumptions given new information and experience. **Memo #2 is due November 11.**

Memo # 3. Child Observation at a family event. By the end of November, students must conduct an observation of the child in a family event. It can be a routine event or a special event. They must spend at least an hour with the family. Students must write a 5-7 page memo describing what they saw/heard and the key events. They should engage the family in an informal conversation to find out about the meanings of their actions, describing and making meaning of their own learning experience with this person. Students should include: 1) what they learned about the family in this second interaction 2) what they learned about themselves through these interactions, and 3) what this experience might mean for them as a special educator. **Memo #3 will be due December 9 (Submit revised Memos #1 and #2 also at this time.)**

In-Class Presentation: All students are required to present what they have learned as a story. Each student presentation will be a total of 15 minutes – 20 minutes student presentation and 5 minutes and peer/instructor questions and discussion. *This should not*

sound like a clinical case presentation. It is important to be creative during the presentation. Students should consider how they would like their story to be told.

December 2 and December 4 (Instructor will assign each student a presentation date.)
(Total points 30)

Assignment due:

**Memo 1 on October 7; Memo 1 and 2 on November 11 and
Memo 1, 2 and 3 on December 9**

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.

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

Class Session Topics and Assignment Due Dates

Date	Class Topics	Readings and Assignments
Sept 2 Thurs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Overview of the Class ▪ Review of syllabus ▪ Beginning with your stories ▪ Understanding our multiple identities and how they affect your work with families 	
Sept 9 Thurs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collaboration with families of children with special needs ▪ The process of cultural reciprocity ▪ Introduction to dilemmas 	Read: Day, Demulder & Stribling (2010) Chapter from Harry, Kalyanpur & Day (1999)
Sept 16 Thurs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Family System's Perspective ▪ Consider your own family, how would you describe it from a systems perspective? Consider a family with whom you have worked, how does systems theory help you understand them? ▪ Identify partner for Collaboration Opportunities assignment 	Read: Turnbull, Chapters 1 and 2 Assignment Due: Submit reading journal 1 on blackboard
Sept 23 Thurs 7:30-8:45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The developmental process of parenting <p>Fall for book event in Fairfax campus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Journey of Karen Roberts parent of a child with special needs and a special educator 	Read: Turnbull, Chapter 3 and 4
Sept 30 Thurs	Work on the collaboration project with partner	Assignment Due: Submit reading journal 2 on blackboard

Date	Class Topics	Readings and Assignments
Oct 7 Thurs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Socio-cultural Perspective on Disability ▪ IDEA and NCLB – vision, goals and implementation ▪ Cont developmental process of parenting 	<p>Read: Chapter from Plous (2005)</p> <p>Turnbull Chapters 3 and 4</p>
Oct 14 Thurs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Historical View on Family Role Education Programs ▪ Consider your own school experience. What roles did your family play? What barriers did they confront? What messages were they given? 	<p>Read: Turnbull, Chapters 5 and 6</p> <p><i>Assignment Due: Collaboration project due</i></p>
October 21 Thurs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Family Strengths and Coping 	<p>Read: Turnbull, Chapter 7</p> <p>Gallagher, Fialka, Rhodes & Arceneaux</p>
Oct 28 Thurs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Historical Perspective on Role of Professionals 	<p>Read: Turnbull, Chapters 8 & 9</p>
Nov 4 Thurs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Family Partnership in Assessment <p><i>Note: May need to reschedule on a Saturday due to NAME conference.</i></p>	<p>Read: Turnbull Chapters 9</p>
Nov 11 Thurs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Special Issues: Homelessness & Poverty ▪ Resources for Families 	<p>Read: Complete novel and Turnbull Chapter 11</p> <p><i>Assignment Due: Submit reading journal 1 on blackboard</i></p>

Date	Class Topics	Readings and Assignments
Nov 18 Thurs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Family partnership in Intervention 	Read: Turnbull Chapters 12 <i>Assignment Due: Submit reading journal 4 on blackboard</i>
Nov 25 Thurs	Thanksgiving	
Dec 2 Thurs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Family Story Sharing 	
Dec 9 Thurs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Family Story Sharing 	<i>Assignment Due: Final Project Paper – Submit Family Story Memos 1,2& 3</i>

Summary of assignments and due dates

September

September 16, 2010
September 30, 2010

Reading Journal 1
Reading Journal 2

October

October 7, 2010
October 14, 2010
October 28, 2010

Family Story Memo 1
Collaboration Project
Reading journal 3

November

November 4, 2010
November 18, 2010

Family Story Memo 1 and 2
Reading Journal 4

December

December 2
December 9

Presentation family project
Presentation family project
Family stories project memos 1, 2 and 3
(All 3 memos are due at this time)