

**George Mason University  
Graduate School of Education**

EDSE 540/5S1: Characteristics of Students with Disabilities who Access  
the General Education Classroom  
Spring 2010

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**Class day/time:** Wednesday (7:20 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.)  
**Class location:** OCL (Kellar Annex 1, KA103)

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

EDSE 540 covers theories and specific conditions in learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities, and emotional disturbance. The course will examine the impact of learning and behavioral disabilities on academic and social/emotional performance. Diversity within student populations is addressed throughout the course. Experiential, observational, and interactive strategies are used to facilitate fulfillment of the outcomes established for this 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 learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities, and emotional disturbance. 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.

**RECOMMENDED TEXT:**

American Psychological Association. (2002). *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Washington, DC.

## 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 discussions with the instructor and peers cooperatively and collaboratively; mirroring their future roles as special educators.

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

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

CEC/NCATE STANDARDS	STUDENT OUTCOMES	COURSE REQUIREMENTS
<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 school and society.	<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 with the education for students identified as having a learning disability.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reading assignments</li><li>• Small group discussion</li><li>• Journal abstracts</li></ul>
<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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Define <i>learning disability</i> and <i>emotional disturbance</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 and/or emotional disturbances.</li><li>• Compare at least three conceptual models of behavioral deficits with three conceptual models that explain learning 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 and emotional disturbances for a parent and suggest possible interventions for home and school.</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>
<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>

- **Blackboard:**  
GMU's Blackboard will be used to post important information and presentations for this course and for you to check grades, complete assignments, and communicate with your classmates and instructor. You are responsible for checking Blackboard at least once a week and right before class to make sure you are informed about class/GMU issues.

Your **GMU email address** is entered in the Blackboard system.  
The following is how you will access the Blackboard-GSE Login Page:  
Enter the URL <http://courses.gmu.edu> into your browser location field.  
Click on the **Login** button.  
Enter your **email information**  
Click **Login** or hit **Enter**.

## **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 to earn the **10 point class participation grade**. Attendance, timeliness, and professionally relevant, active participation are expected. At the beginning of each class, students are expected to “sign-in,” verifying their attendance. 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. Missing **more than one class, inadequate class participation, or repeated** tardiness will result in your participation grade being dropped to a Zero. Please notify me *in advance* by phone or email if you will not be able to attend class.
- **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 College of Education. 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/> 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 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. Go to <http://mail.gmu.edu>. Click on Options tab at the top of the page. Click on Settings link on the left of the page. Type in your most-checked email account in the box labeled Mail Forwarding.
- **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.
- Students are expected to exhibit professional behavior and dispositions. See <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](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 course. See [www.gmu.edu/student/drc](http://www.gmu.edu/student/drc) or call 703-993-2474 to access the ODS.

## MAJOR COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

### 1. Three Position Papers: (15% of final grade)

**Due dates: (2/3/2010; 2/17/2010; 3/17/2010)**

- Each class member is expected to complete three (3) position papers on current issues in special education. Position papers should briefly outline why you agree or disagree with a particular practice, supporting your position with the textbook, independent research, or personal experience. Position papers should not exceed three (3) pages.
- Topics:
  - Position paper 1: Do you agree with the practice of labeling students in order to make them eligible for special education and related services? Why or why not?
  - Position paper 2: After reading about the specific characteristics of students with learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities, and emotional disturbance, do you think it is educationally relevant to separate these students into three distinct categories of disability? Does the categorical label change the way you may approach your instruction of the student?
  - Position Paper 3: Do you believe that students with learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities, and emotional disturbance benefit from being part of an inclusive classroom? Why or why not?

### 2. Case Study Report (25% of final grade)

**Due Date: 4/14/2010**

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:

- 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
- Observational information (at least two class periods of observations specifically related to student goals, objectives, and accommodations)
- Parent interviews (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.
- Be prepared to present your case study in class orally

### **TASKSTREAM SUBMISSION: Electronic Portfolios**

This assignment is the “signature” assignment for the student portfolio and must be submitted digitally to Taskstream, your electronic portfolio under **CEC Standard 3**. If this is your first GMU Special Education class, you will need to self-enroll into Taskstream. There is a folder under Course Documents on Blackboard that contains step-by-step directions for Taskstream. Every class you take in this program will have a signature assignment that must be submitted. In addition, you will be submitting other documents from your courses to complete your portfolio.

**Note: Every student registered for any EDSE course as of the Fall 2007 semester is required to submit signature assignments to TaskStream (regardless of whether a course is an elective, a one time course or part of an undergraduate minor). TaskStream information is available at <http://gse.gmu.edu/programs/sped/>. Failure to submit the assignment to TaskStream will result in reporting the course grade as Incomplete (IN). Unless this grade is changed, upon completion of the required submission, the IN will convert to a F nine weeks into the following semester.**

### **3. Abstracts of Journal Articles (25% of final grade)**

#### **Due Dates: (3/31/2010)**

- 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 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 Documents 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 one-page summary. The abstract should be typed and include an introduction to the student's needs, followed by 3 summaries with an APA style citation at the top of the page. Each entry should consist of two parts labeled 1.-Summary and 2.-Critique. Finally, a conclusion that ties together the 3 summaries' 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 than three (3) years old. **You must use your own words to summarize.**

**4. Final Exam (25% of final grade)**

**Due Date: 5/5/2010**

- An exam that covers course content will be administered as an in-class examination. The exam will be based on case studies and include IEP-writing.

**EVALUATION**

**POINTS**

• Position Papers (3)	15 (3 x 5 pts. ea.)
• Class Participation	10
• <b>Case Study</b>	<b>25</b>
• Journal Abstracts	25
• Final Exam	25
	<u>Total</u> 100

**GRADING CRITERIA**

- 95-100% = A
- 90-94% = A-
- 85-89% = B
- 80-84% = B-
- 70-79% = C
- < 70% = F



**Course Calendar (subject to change based on class needs)**

Class	Date	Topics	Reading Assignment	Due This Class Session
1	1/20/2010	Introductions Syllabus Review  Special Education Context: Legislative Background		
2	1/27/2010	Overview of Mild Disabilities	Chapters 1 and 2	
3	2/3/2010	Students with Mild Intellectual Disabilities*	Chapter 3	Position Paper #1
4	2/10/2010	Students with Emotional Disabilities*	Chapter 4	
5	2/17/2010	Students with Learning Disabilities*	Chapter 5	
6	2/24/2010	IEPs: Legal requirements and writing effective goals*	Supplemental reading (Instructor will provide)	Position Paper #2
7	3/3/2010	The Inclusive Classroom*	Chapter 6	
8	3/17/2010	Learning and Teaching*	Chapters 7	Position Paper #3
9	3/24/2010	Instructing Students with Mild Disabilities*	Chapter 8	
10	3/31/2010	Classroom Management*	Chapter 9	Abstracts of Journal Articles*
11	4/7/2010	Teaching Social Skills*  Building Family Partnerships*	Chapters 10 and 11	

12	4/14/2010	Case Study Presentations		Case Study Paper (TASKSTREAM assignment)
13	4/21/2010	Case Study Presentations		
14	4/28/2010	Case Study Presentations		
15	5/5/2010	Final Exam in class		

\*This course will incorporate the evidence-based practices (EBPs) relevant to characteristics of students with mild disabilities, etiology of mild disabilities, and inclusionary practices. 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.

## Case Study Assignment Scoring Rubric

Case Study	Points Possible	Points Received
Writing/APA	1	
Student's Demographic Data	2	
Description of School and Neighborhood	2	
Educational History	5	
IEP Goals and Objectives	3	
Parent Interviews	3	
Additional Recommendations	3	
Summary and Synthesis	3	
Observational Information/Appendices (Student work, etc.)	3	
Total Points	25	

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

## Journal Abstracts Scoring Rubric

Case Study Presentation	Points Possible	Points Received
APA Style and Writing Quality	2	
Introduction to Student's Needs (based on your case study)	5	
Quality of Summaries	5	
Quality of Critiques	5	
Conclusion/Appropriateness of Recommendations	8	
Total Points	25	

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_