

## **Syllabus**

EDSE 557: Foundations of Literacy for Severe Disabilities

Spring 2010

**Wednesdays 4 – 10pm**

**Instructor:** Melissa Ainsworth, Adjunct Instructor

**Contact Information:** [mainswor@gmu.edu](mailto:mainswor@gmu.edu) I check email daily.

**Office Hours:** If you need to talk, you may contact me via email and we can arrange a phone or face-to-face conference. I will also be available after class every week.

### **Course Texts:**

- Copeland, S.R. & Keefe, E.B (2007). *Effective Literacy Instruction for Students with Moderate or Severe Disabilities*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing
- Downing, J.E. (2005). *Teaching Literacy to Students with Significant Disabilities*. Corwin Press.
- Kliever, C. (2008). *Seeing All Kids as Readers*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing
- (Recommended) Cunningham, P.M., Hall, D.P. & Sigmon, C. M. (1999). *The Teacher's Guide to the Four Blocks*. Greensboro, NC: Carson-Dellosa Publishing Company, Inc.

### **Course Description:**

This course provides an understanding of the development of emergent and early literacy in developmentally-typical learners and learners with complex language and learning needs, and the inter-relationship of language and literacy development. Emphasis will be on identifying effective research-based strategies for promoting and enhancing emergent literacy and early reading and writing skills for children and youth with language and intellectual disabilities and English language learners with disabilities. Field experience required: Course participants must identify an appropriate target student and engage in observation and assessment activities with that student and family during the first half of the course. Final product includes the development of a literacy development plan for the student.

### **Nature of Course Delivery**

This will be a reading-intensive course. All students will need basic literature/research search skills as well as high-speed internet access. Learning activities in this class will include the following:

1. Discussion and participation during interactive class sessions and in Blackboard
2. Software and hardware presentations
3. Group and independent class activities
4. Class presentations

5. Written papers using the American Psychological Association format (6<sup>th</sup> edition)  
<http://www.apa.org/publications/>

### **Student Outcomes**

This course is designed to enable students to:

- Describe language development and emergent literacy skills
- Describe the nature, function, and rules of language.
- Describe disorders and deviations in language and related areas.
- Demonstrate an understanding of components of literacy acquisition, including sound/symbol relationships, explicit phonics instruction, syllables, phonemes, and morphemes.
- Demonstrate an understanding of how syntax and semantics interact in the construction of meaning in literacy and its relationship to reading comprehension.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the relationship of on-going assessment and the planning of reading instruction.
  - Identify and implement a variety of early reading comprehension strategies
  - Identify and implement strategies and activities that foster an appreciation of a variety of literature and independent reading;
  - Demonstrate knowledge of best practices and strategies in reading instruction for students with severe disabilities

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

This course is part of The Virginia Consortium for Teacher Preparation in Severe Disabilities, a grant from the Virginia Department of Education that includes George Mason University, Virginia Commonwealth University, the University of Virginia, Radford University, and Norfolk State University. Through the completion of the SD Consortium program, students are eligible for teacher licensure in the Commonwealth of Virginia in the special education area of Severe Disabilities/Special Education – Adapted Curriculum K-12. This program complies with the standards for teacher licensure established by the Virginia Department of Education. Furthermore, the SD Consortium strives to uphold the Special Education Content Standards established by the Council for Exceptional Children, the major special education professional organization.

The Virginia Licensure Regulations for School Personnel are listed on the following website:

<http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Compliance/TeacherED/nulicvr.pdf>

The CEC Standards are listed on the following web site:

[http://www.cec.sped.org/ps/perf\\_based\\_std/standards.html#standards](http://www.cec.sped.org/ps/perf_based_std/standards.html#standards)

### **CEC Standard 6: Language**

Special educators understand typical and atypical language development and the ways in which exceptional conditions can interact with an individual's experience with and use of language. Special educators use individualized strategies to enhance language development

and teach communication skills to individuals with exceptional learning needs (ELN). Special educators are familiar with augmentative, alternative, and assistive technologies to support and enhance communication of individuals with exceptional needs. Special educators match their communication methods to an individual's language proficiency and cultural and linguistic differences. Special educators provide effective language models, and they use communication strategies and resources to facilitate understanding of subject matter for individuals with ELN whose primary language is not English. Beginning special educators demonstrate their mastery of language for and with individuals with ELN through the mastery of the CEC Common Core Knowledge and Skills, as well as through the appropriate CEC Specialty Area(s) Knowledge and Skills for which the preparation program is preparing candidates.

Course specific competencies and standards are listed on the following website:  
<http://kihd.gmu.edu/sdc/competencies.html>

### **Course Requirements:**

This course is designed to provide you with the skills needed to deliver instruction effectively to students with severe disabilities in a variety of settings. Class sessions will involve the use of lectures, discussions, demonstrations, hands-on practice and case studies. You will be expected to participate actively in class by asking and answering questions, making comments, and completing in-class activities, for which you will receive participation points. Come to class having completed the reading and assignments, and ready to participate. The assignments for this course are designed to give you a chance to demonstrate practical application of the course content. I encourage questions, comments and active discussions.

The assignments have been developed to provide you with a variety of ways to demonstrate your understanding of the course material. They will provide you with an opportunity to:

- Demonstrate effective teaching strategies for working with students with severe disabilities
- Practice organizational strategies for addressing student needs within a variety of settings
- Teach students with severe disabilities using techniques learned in class, recording data and evaluating the program
- Adapt or modify the curriculum or activities from an inclusive setting to meet the needs of a learner with severe disabilities
- Apply the concepts learned throughout the course to critically analyze and respond to case studies

### **Course Policies**

#### **Honor Code**

Each university has its own honor code and it is important for you to review the honor code at your university. However, all students taking this course, regardless of the university they are enrolled in, are expected to follow this honor code and also to pledge all assignments and their exam to indicate that they have followed the honor code. A pledge means that you have not

cheated or plagiarized, nor have you given or received assistance that violated the description of how assignments are to be completed for this course. The shortened version may be used: “Pledged” followed by the date and your full name (typed “signatures” will be OK for assignments/tests submitted electronically).

A complete copy of each university’s Honor System document is available through

GMU: <http://mason.gmu.edu/~montecin/plagiarism.htm>

VCU: [www.students.vcu.edu/rg/policies/rg7honor.html](http://www.students.vcu.edu/rg/policies/rg7honor.html).

UVA: <http://www.virginia.edu/honor/>

Radford: [http://www.radford.edu/~dos-web/handbook02-03/Honor\\_Code.pdf](http://www.radford.edu/~dos-web/handbook02-03/Honor_Code.pdf)

NSU: [http://www.nsu.edu/student\\_judicial/policy.html](http://www.nsu.edu/student_judicial/policy.html)

### **Attendance**

Since many of the classes involve activities, videotapes, discussion, etc., regular attendance is vital to gain maximum benefit. This class is designed to be interactive and rigorous. This is so your learning is optimized. Your attendance in class is important and *required*. If you are absent, your class activity grade for that date will be 0. **In class Activities may NOT be made up.** Please contact the instructor if you know ahead of time that you will not be in class on a particular day due to illness or an emergency.

### **Accommodations for Disability**

At all the participating universities, accommodations can be made with the instructor if a student has a disability. If this is relevant to you, please contact me on the first night of class (can be through email) and indicate both what the disability is and how your university has made accommodations for you in the past. I will discuss (via email) this further with you until we reach consensus. University specific information regarding eligibility, services and accommodations can be found at:

GMU: <http://www.gmu.edu/student/drc/>

VCU: <http://www.students.vcu.edu/dss/index.html>

UVA: <http://www.virginia.edu/vpsa/services.html>

Radford: <http://www.radford.edu/~dro/>

NSU: <http://www.nsu.edu/disabilityservices/index.html>

### **Inclement Weather**

If classes are cancelled at George Mason University, a message will be posted on the class Blackboard site and all class members will receive an email. Because such cancellations are often at the last minute, it may be difficult to get this message prior to leaving for class. If in doubt, dial the University phone number (703-993-1000) or visit the university website ([www.gmu.edu](http://www.gmu.edu)). Do not email us; I will email you regarding weather as soon as it is announced. Please note, the cancellation of classes due to inclement weather is determined by the decision of the instructing university only. If the instructing university is open and operational then you are expected to attend class.

### **Cell Phones and Weapons**

All cell phones and beepers should be deactivated while in the classroom. Also, University rules at all participating universities prohibit the possession any firearm, other weapon, or explosive. Please consult the student handbook and your university for specific information concerning this policy at your university.

### **Course Materials**

This course gives you access to PowerPoint files, class lecture notes, handouts, and copyrighted articles. For the articles (available both on Blackboard and on a class CD), copyright laws must be followed: print only one copy per student. The PowerPoint presentations, notes, and handouts are provided on Blackboard for your convenience and to facilitate your mastery of concepts presented in this course; PowerPoints will be available on Blackboard by noon of the class day or sooner. If you plan to print copies of PowerPoint slides, this must be done before class begins (before 4 pm or 7:20 pm) and using a 3 or more slides per page handout format (do not print full slide pages). All of these materials should be regarded as authored materials, which if used or referred to must be fully credited through reference to the author, the class, and date. If used beyond citation, permission of the instructor/author is required.

### **Technology Proficiencies**

All students participating in this course are expected to be proficient in several technology skills. Students are expected to be proficient in using the Internet and have reliable and consistent Internet access. Students are also expected to have an active email account and to check email regularly. This course requires students to use Blackboard, which is our online course management system located at <http://gmucommunity.blackboard.com/>.

NON GMU Students: Your login for Blackboard Community is: *x\_first name.last name* For example John Smith's username would be: *x\_john.smith* Your password is: *bbcommunity*

Students are expected to login to this system frequently and be proficient in using its features. Students are expected to be proficient in using the computer, which includes downloading and saving files, typing, and word processing skills. Students participating in this course are expected to use Microsoft Word for all written assignments. Furthermore, students are expected to use Microsoft PowerPoint and Adobe Acrobat Reader for class documents located on the Blackboard website. Although Microsoft PowerPoint is part of the Microsoft Office Suite, students who do not have PowerPoint can download a free viewer that will allow at <http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?FamilyId=D1649C22-B51F-4910-93FC-4CF2832D3342&displaylang=en> Adobe Acrobat Reader is a free software program used to read PDF files and can be downloaded at <http://www.adobe.com/support/downloads/product.jsp?product=10&platform=Windows>

Students using Microsoft Office 2007 are expected to save and submit assignments in the Microsoft Office 2003 format, as all universities have not yet made the transition to Office 2007.

### **Course Facilitators**

Each class will have a facilitator or assistant who will assist with the class. Learn who that person is as they will be taking role and keeping track of class participation and reporting it to me weekly. However, if you think you must miss a class, please email me ahead if at all possible. Because of the potential of confusion caused by people speaking at the same time in this multi-site course, it will be important to raise hands before asking questions or making comments. Along with the facilitators, I will try hard to enforce this rule and to be alert to questions from the distance sites. Facilitators will also FAX in-class written tasks following class or early the next day to me. When in class assignment forms or handouts are sent the day of the class, facilitators will need to download and copy them for class members.

### **Blackboard Assistance**

This course requires that you be a regular email user and be able to use various features of Blackboard (sign on, download materials, hand in completed assignments electronically in the drop box). You may direct your questions about Blackboard to the facilitator at the class site as well as to email Marci Kinas Jerome (mkinas@gmu.edu). She will be the best resource. We are all learning this system together and some of us will be faster than others. Expect some snafus along the way, but please help each other out as you can. You will want to download all the required materials early in the semester or as soon as they are posted. Please note that some handouts/readings may be given to you in class that are not posted on blackboard. Also check Blackboard for announcements. Sometimes I will place handouts for class on Blackboard and will alert you by email or in the previous class; in these cases please download and bring them to class.

### **Remote Site Viewing**

All Consortium courses are recorded and archived on a video-streaming server. Students and faculty are welcome to view previous classes at <http://torrent.gmu.edu> and click on the link for [Communication] in the Public Folders link. Classes are listed by date and time. Since the Consortium includes some remote site students, all consortium classes are broadcast live via the Internet at the same website. It is the policy of the consortium that students attending classes at university sites are expected to be present at those university sites during class time. However, in instances where students would otherwise miss class (in accordance to the attendance policy) students may participate in the class via the live web stream. However, students who participate in the web-stream instead of at their university site are still subject to the response cost as outlined in the attendance policy for this course. Directions for viewing the video-stream can be found in the course Blackboard site.

### **TaskStream Submission**

TaskStream ([www.taskstream.com](http://www.taskstream.com)) is an electronic portfolio and assessment management tool that the SD Consortium is utilizing in part to meet accreditation requirements for the National Council of Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) as well as for student portfolio evaluation purposes. EVERY student taking this course at EVERY university IS REQUIRED to upload and submit the signature assignment for this course to TaskStream for evaluation by the end of the semester. Directions for creating an account in TaskStream and submitting assignments are available on Blackboard in the *TaskStream* folder within the *Syllabus* section.

The signature assignment(s) for this class is: *Case Study and Unit Plan*

## Assignments

A description of each assignment appears below. A detailed explanation and rubric will be posted in the assignments tab in Blackboard for each assignment. Late work will be penalized by an automatic decrease of 5% per day late.

### **In-Class Activities (100)**

During each class session, we will have an in-class activity or writing assignment for which you will be awarded points contributing to your final grade. There will be a total of 9 activities but only 8 will be counted toward your grade. Each activity is worth 12.5 points and the lowest score will be dropped for a total of 8 graded in-class activities. If you are not present in class when the in-class activity is completed, your grade for that day's activity will be 0. In-class activities cannot be made up.

**On-line learning modules (100 points)** - There will be a total of five on-line learning modules related to course topics. These will be reading-intensive assignments with a writing/discussion component. Each will be worth up to 20 points each. Submissions will show strong evidence of comprehension and application of key concepts contained in each set of readings, as well as integration with other skills and concepts gained across the course. Directions will be posted in Blackboard each week.

**Summary & Application PowerPoints (100 points)** - You will complete 5 brief PowerPoint presentations relating readings to application. As you complete your PowerPoints you may want to focus on your target student from the literacy case study.

1. **PPT presentations:** For indicated class sessions, the week's assignment is to apply the content of our class meeting and readings to the student you have selected.
  - a. **You will complete a total of 5 PowerPoint presentations** on assigned readings. Each will be worth up to 20 points each. PPTs will show strong evidence of comprehension and application of key concepts contained in each set of readings to your target student population or to your specific target student.
  - b. Follow the PowerPoint template found in the PowerPoint folder under the Assignments tab on Blackboard.
  - c. PowerPoints are due before class on their assigned date. They should be uploaded to Blackboard using the upload assignment link inside the PowerPoint folder under the Assignments tab.
  - d. PowerPoints may be shared in class.
  
2. **Literacy Case Study 100 points** - This is a signature assignment for our program: Using actual observations of a target student, readings from class, class lectures, and your weekly reflections and PPTs, describe your target student and their literacy history and develop a literacy plan. Write up this case study in an 8-10 page paper (minimum) using APA formatting and referencing. On the last night of class, you will present Part II The literacy plan in a final PPT presentation. **This assignment must be uploaded to Blackboard and to Taskstream.**

The case study should specifically address each major component from lectures and readings. These include:

#### Part One: Literacy History

- a. Literacy experience and FAPE- barriers to literacy for your student and the impact of literacy/lack of access to literacy and literacy instruction on your student's life and educational history (5 pts.)
- b. Literacy and communication - the relationship between literacy and communication and how this has impacted your student's life. (5 pts.)
- c. A summary of your student's literacy skills using the literacy assessment framework. (5 pts.)

#### Part Two: Literacy Plan

- a. Identify a range of literacy activities you will put in place in your classroom and for your student for the next school year. (25 pts.) Use the three components described by Browder:
  - i. Access/engagement with a range of literature (include titles of the some of the texts you will introduce/use)
  - ii. Functional reading/writing within chronologically age appropriate functional activities
  - iii. Instruction in reading and writing skills - potential vocabulary to be taught, and how you will address phonological awareness and phonics, comprehension and fluency, and writing
- b. Create a literacy goal for your student and include specific instructional strategies you intend to use during literacy instruction. (20 pts.)
- c. Evaluating progress- How will you evaluate the progress of your student? Be sure to link your evaluation to the IEP and VAAP. (10 pts.)
- d. AT- What assistive technologies will you incorporate into your literacy instruction for your student? (10 pts.)

### **Grading criteria**

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

- All assignments are due in class on the stated due dates. (Due dates will be announced the first day of class). There will be a penalty of an automatic 5% deduction for each day late for assignments submitted after the due date ; However, I will work with you if there are extenuating circumstances – You must contact me in advance of the due date to **contract** for an extension.



- Please come to class having read the assigned chapters and be prepared to discuss your thoughts on the reading.
- **Note:** If at any point during the semester, you encounter problems, or unexpected circumstances arise, please let me know how I can help you meet the requirements of this class. Any incomplete grades need to be completed within six weeks following the end of the course or final grades will be reduced a grade for each additional month delay.
- All written products must be edited before submission. **No submission with significant problems with writing quality and/or errors in writing mechanics will be eligible to receive the grade of A..**
- Grades will be posted to Blackboard.

### Tentative Class Schedule

Date	Topic	Assignment due by class time on this date	Readings  These should be completed prior to class.
5/19	Course overview Why literacy?	none	none
5/26	Four Blocks overview – guided reading; self-selected reading	<u>On line module 1</u> due by 5/26 @ 4:00 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Copeland &amp; Keefe</i> chapter 1 , 6 &amp; 7</li> <li>• Downing ch 1</li> <li>• <u>Recommended</u> <i>Cunningham, Hall &amp; Sigmon</i> Overview, Guided Reading</li> </ul>
6/2	Sight words and Phonics – working with words	<u>1<sup>st</sup> PowerPoint</u> due by 6/2 4:00 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Copeland &amp; Keefe</i> chapter 4</li> <li>• Downing chapter 4</li> <li>• <u>Recommended</u> <i>Cunningham, Hall &amp; Sigmon</i> Working with Words</li> </ul>
6/9	Writing	<u>On-line module 2</u> and <u>2<sup>nd</sup> PowerPoint</u>  Both due by 6/9@ 4:00 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Article</i>: The art of Teaching Writing</li> <li>• <i>Copeland &amp; Keefe</i> chapter 8</li> <li>• <u>Recommended</u> <i>Cunningham, Hall &amp; Sigmon</i> Writing</li> </ul>
6/16	Communication & literacy	<u>On-line module 3</u> and <u>3<sup>rd</sup> PowerPoint</u>  Both due by 6/16 @ 4:00 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Copeland &amp; Keefe</i> chapter 3</li> <li>• <i>Downing</i> chapter 2</li> </ul>
6/23	Inclusion & literacy	<u>On-line Module 4</u> and <u>4<sup>th</sup> PowerPoint</u>  Both due by 6/23 @ 4:00 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Kliewer</i> chapters 2 &amp; 6</li> <li>• <i>Downing</i> chapter 4</li> </ul>
6/30	AT & literacy Guest speaker	<u>On-line Module 5</u>  Due by 6/30 @ 4:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Copeland &amp; Keefe</i> chapter 9</li> </ul>

		p.m.	
7/7	Literacy across the day/ organizing your literacy instruction		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Downing</i> chapter 3 &amp; 5</li> <li>• <i>Copeland &amp; Keefe</i> chapter 10</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
7/14	Case study presentations	<u>5<sup>th</sup> PowerPoint</u> and <u>Case studies</u>  Both due Due by 7/14 @ 4:00 p.m.	

\*\* Additional Readings may be assigned as part of the on-line modules