

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
Graduate School of Education
Special Education

EDSE 665: Collaboration with Families of Children with Special Needs

SYLLABUS

Instructor: Jane Quenneville, Ed. D.
Office Hours: By Appointment

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Course Time: 4:30-9:00 pm
Credits: 3 credits

Day: Wednesday
Dates: 6/2/2010-7/28/2010

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is offered as a part of the special education and early childhood education programs and is open to enrolled graduate students. It is a required course for students seeking licensure in Early Childhood Special Education and Autism Graduate certificate.

This course focuses on strategies for developing culturally-appropriate family-professional partnerships to benefit children with special needs. Theories and research that support family-centered practices are explored. The course also provides a focus on family and professional rights and responsibilities in the special education process. This course takes a family-centered perspective and emphasizes the role of collaborative planning with families and caregivers in preparing developmentally supportive environments. Students are expected to become familiar with the cultural context of the families with whom they are working and to consider ways in which their own socio-cultural context influences their work with families of children with disabilities. To increase understanding of family perspectives, the impact of exceptionality on the family is studied in the framework of family systems theory, functions, and the life cycle of the family. The course requires students to examine their values and beliefs about working with families, to challenge their assumptions, and to critically analyze their professional roles in working with families.

STUDENT OUTCOMES

Upon completion of this course, students will be able 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.

RELATIONSHIP OF COURSE TO PROGRAM GOALS AND PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

This course is a required course in GMU's Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) master's degree and licensure program and part of the 15-credit Autism Graduate Certificate. The ECSE program is an approved program of the Commonwealth of Virginia and accredited by the NCATE national teacher education accreditation system. Thus, the course content has been developed with reference to the licensure and accreditation standards for teachers of young children with disabilities identified by the Commonwealth of Virginia, the Council for Exceptional Children, and the National Association for the Education of Young Children. These standards include:

1. The ability to demonstrate an understanding of the role of the family in supporting learning.
2. The ability to understand children in the context of family, culture, and community.
3. The ability to establish positive and collaborative relationships with families as partners in teaching and learning.
4. The ability to provide family-centered intervention.

In addition, the course has been developed to be congruent with the mission of the College of Education and Human Development as a unit. Specifically, the course addresses the College's commitment to families and communities, to research-based practices, and to social justice.

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT STATEMENT OF EXPECTATIONS:

The College of Education and Human Development expects that all students abide by the following:

Students are expected to exhibit professional behavior and dispositions. See 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 for the full honor code.

Students must agree to abide by the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing. See <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 are encouraged to register with the GMU Disability Resource Center (DRC) and inform the instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester. See www.gmu.edu/student/drc or call 703-993-2474 to access the DRC.

For student evaluation, program evaluation, and accreditation purposes, students will be required to submit a signature assignment from each of their Special Education courses to Taskstream, an electronic portfolio system. A Taskstream assignment has not been assigned for this course, however; for future courses at George Mason University, students completing Midpoint and Final Portfolio courses will use Taskstream to create a full portfolio of their work based on assignments completed throughout their program. For this reason, students will need to retain electronic copies of all course products to document their progress through the GSE Special Education program.

Advising contact information:

Please make sure that you are being advised on a regular basis as to your status and progress through your program. You may wish to contact Jancy Templeton, GMU Special Education Advisor, at jtemple1@gmu.edu or 703-993-2387. Please be prepared with your G number when you contact her.

NATURE OF COURSE DELIVERY

This is an interactive course that requires active participation of students. In-class and out-of-class readings play a critical part in preparing students for discussion. Small and large group activities will enable students to practice what they have been learning. In-class and at-home activities will be structured to encourage individuals to reflect on their own families and on the families with whom they touch each and everyday through their work.

REQUIRED TEXT:

Turnbull, A.P., Turnbull, H.R., Erwin, E., & Soodak, L. (2006). *Families, professionals, and exceptionality: Positive outcomes through partnerships and trust* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill/Prentice Hall.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. Attend all class sessions and participate actively in small and large group activities. Attendance and participation will account for 10% of your grade.
2. Complete written assignments using APA format 6th edition.
3. It is expected that assignments be turned in on the due date. Late assignments will be penalized one point per day.
4. Rubrics have been created for the Annotated bibliography, Cultural Competency Assessments, Toolkit for Parents, and In-class presentation activities. Students are expected to follow the activity expectations listed on the rubrics.

Course Grading

1.	Participation and preparation for class	10 points
2.	Annotated bibliography	20 points
3.	Family Story Project	30 points
4.	Collaboration Opportunity	30 points
5.	Presentation	10 points

Grading:

94-100 = A	90-93 = A-	
87-89 = B+	83-86 = B	
80-82 = B-	70-80 = C	Below 70 = F

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES

1. PARTICIPATION

10 POINTS

Participation is graded according to the following criteria:

- a) Attending all classes on time, unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor;
- b) Completing all assignments on time;
- c) Participating in large group discussion and activities on a regular basis, assuming a balance of leadership and participant roles;
- d) Participating in small group discussions and activities on a regular basis, assuming a balance of leadership and participant roles;
- e) Working as a collaborative group member, supporting the participation of classmates and recognizing the unique contribution of each.

2. ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

20 POINTS

You will choose an area of interest related to family collaboration and special education for students with disabilities. Areas of interests include but are not limited to: behavior management strategies, precision teaching, school-wide positive behavior support, social skills instruction, family collaboration practices, functional behavior assessments, applied behavior analysis, or teaching students with Autism or other developmental delays.

Once you identify your area of interest, you will find 5 peer-reviewed journal articles and complete an annotated bibliography. Classmates with similar areas of interests are encouraged to work together on this assignment.

Assignment must be correct APA format and no more than 5 pages in length including a title page and reference list. A sample template will be provided for you. See the Annotated Bibliography rubric to review expectations for this assignment and points assigned.

3. COLLABORATION OPPORTUNITY (Partner work)

30 POINTS

This assignment asks you to look critically at current practices and opportunities for partnerships with families in your setting. In class, we will choose partners for this project. In your paper, 1) describe the physical and social setting of the school/program, 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 this particular classroom/setting and analyze it as well. 2) analyze the practices of the program from the perspective of the readings; 3) analyze these practices from the perspective of the families in this setting based upon your understanding of the individual and cultural perspectives of the families. Then, 4) provide a proposal for how current practices in this program can be improved to promote family-centered practices. You will have opportunities to work with your partner in class, then prior to the due date. In the paper you submit jointly, you must provide specific references to the readings used in class from Turnbull, your novel and the Course Packet and any other resources you used in your analysis.

4. FAMILY STORY PROJECT: *This is the NCATE 7 Family and Culture Performance-Based Assessment that shows evidence of meeting CEC Standard 3*

30 POINTS

By the third class, you are to identify a family whose socio-cultural context is different from your own, whose lens is likely to be different from your 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 where you have met them? What do you need to understand about their culture in order to understand them? What is their perspective about their child or children? Find at least two opportunities to interact with them in a way other than you would otherwise typically interact with them – e.g., informally away from school if possible.

Memo # 1. Initial Contact. Write a (2-3 page) memo about your initial contact with the family. It should include: 1) a rationale for why you chose this family; 2) an explanation of the ways you think their culture is different from yours; 3) what you have observed about how society views the disability of their child and the culture of their family culture (from Step 2); and 4) make an honest attempt to identify and describe any assumptions you have about this family.

As you move into the next phase of the project, think about how to interact respectfully as you cross cultures. In other words, challenge yourself to hear the voices/values of others on their own terms. This will be difficult and, may be, uncomfortable. How can you get to know another person and his or her culture on his or her own terms? Ask, ask, ask. If there is something that you are seeing or hearing that seems strange, wrong, or weird to you, ask what it means to the person you are engaging with. 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 you must meet with the family and interview the parents or guardians. Try to learn as much as

you can through *meaningful* exchanges. Challenge yourself to understand the family's view of disability, and how they makes sense of the world – how the person's reality of the world is different from yours.

Consider the amount of time you have and the ease with which you'll be able to engage the person of another culture. First, arrange to spend time with the person (remember, you're not an anthropologist trying to "interview the Other"...you're trying to engage respectfully with the person on his or her own terms). Do this in a relaxed framework. In other words, try not to be terribly formal. Write a memo of 5-7 pages describing your describing experience and examining your previous assumptions given new information and experience.

Memo # 3. Child Observation at a family event. By the end of November, conduct an observation of the child in a family event. It can be a routine event or a special event. You must spend at least an hour with the family. Write a 5-7 page memo describing what you saw and the key events. Engage the family in an informal conversation to find out about the meanings of their actions, describing and making meaning of your learning experience with this person. You should include: 1) what you learned about the family in this second interaction 2)what you learned about yourself through coming to know this person, and 2) what this experience might mean for you as a special educator.

5. FAMILY STORY PRESENTATION

10 POINTS

In-Class Presentation: each student will present what you have learned about your family story. Each student presentation will be a total of 20 minutes – from the perspective of the family engage your audience in a story telling adventure. *Be creative. Consider how you would like your story to be told.*

CLASS SESSION TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS DUE

Date	Class Topics	Class Activities/ Assignments Due
<p>June 2</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of the class • Review of Syllabus • Beginning with our stories • Understanding our multiple identities and how they affect your work with families 	
<p>June 9</p> <p style="text-align: center;">2</p>	<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 opportunity assignment • Design questions for parent panel 	<p>Read: Turnbull, Chapters 1 & 2</p>
<p>June 16</p> <p style="text-align: center;">3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developmental Cycle of Parenting • Guest Speakers: Parent Panel, "The truth and nothing but the whole truth" 	<p>Read: Turnbull, Chapters 3 & 4</p>
<p>June 23</p> <p style="text-align: center;">4</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration • Historical Reform • IDEA and Parents • Procedural Safeguards 	<p>Read: Turnbull, Chapters 5 & 6</p> <p>Annotated Bibliography Due</p>

June 30 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In class time to work on collaboration opportunity assignment • 	Read Turnbull: Chapters 7 & 8
July 7 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective communication and collaboration with families • Effective Parent-teacher meetings (before, during, and after) • Creating a collaborative culture 	Read: Turnbull, Chapter 9
July 14 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building inclusive environments for students with disabilities • Determining LRE for students with disabilities • What drives LRE from a parent's point of view? 	Assigned Articles on BB Collaboration Opportunity Assignment Due
July 21 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pulling it all together 	
July 28 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Story Project Presentations 	Family Story Project Due

Note: Syllabus is subject to change as needed.