

**GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT  
PROGRAM – SPECIAL EDUCATION**

**Syllabus for EDSE 743/843: Leadership in Special Education Administration (3 credits)**

Semester and Year: Fall 2011

Course day/time: Wednesdays 4:30-7:10

**PROFESSOR:**

Dr. Irene Meier

Office phone: 571-423-4104

Office location: 3877 Fairfax Ridge Rd., Fairfax, Va.

Office hours: Before/after class and by appointment

E-mail: [imeier@gmu.edu](mailto:imeier@gmu.edu)

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Examines leadership issues and applies them to the administration of special education programs. Explores current challenges in the delivery of services for exceptional children through case studies and projects.

Prerequisites: There are no *required* prerequisites for this course; however, for those seeking administrative licensure, a *Corequisite: Application to the Education Leadership Program* exists.

**NATURE OF COURSE DELIVERY**

**Learning activities include the following:**

- Discussion of material read in preparation for course sessions.
- Student participation (e.g., discussion, demonstration, inquiry) in small group and cooperative learning activities, including analysis of critical issues and readings as applied to case-based scenarios.
- Lectures and large group discussion activities.
- Online activities and individual assignments.
- Access and analyze materials and resources using a variety of medium, including Blackboard, web-based resources, and professional peer-reviewed journal articles.

**LEARNER OUTCOMES**

This course is designed to enable students to:

1. Define leadership.
2. Describe the general behavioral and affective elements that define good leaders.
3. Identify specific forms/styles of leadership and explain how the behaviors relate to specific organizational goals.
4. Articulate their core beliefs about teaching, learning, and leadership, and relate these to their vision of effective school leadership.
5. Connect major leadership and organizational theories, and apply these to the understanding of real-world cases associated with leadership practice.
6. Analyze educational policy-making practices in the context of the general manner in which policies are made including:
  - a. types of policy decisions
  - b. various constituent groups affected by each type of decision
  - c. goals that are often sought in policy-making

- d. political and rhetorical tools used in policy-making
  - e. factors that contribute to uncertainty in policy-making
  - f. types of errors that affect policy making
  - g. tools for reducing uncertainty and error in policy making
7. Analyze current change initiatives in the context of historical education reform proposals/policies considering the following:
    - a. fidelity of the reform outcome with the intended purpose
    - b. internal consistency of logic in the arguments for or against the reform
    - c. the efficacy of the reform in meeting the stated goals of the policy-makers
    - d. unintended consequences of the reform
  8. Explain how special education laws and policies conform or fail to conform to expectations for genuine change using frameworks for analyzing organizational behavior and outcomes.
  9. Articulate the leadership role(s) they aspire to take at the conclusion of their program of study.
  10. Begin to articulate how they plan to develop their leadership capabilities in the near future.

## **PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS**

### **Course's Relationship to Program Goals and Professional Organization**

This course is part of the George Mason University, Graduate School of Education (GSE), Special Education Program. This program complies with the standards for special educators established by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), the major special education professional organization.

The CEC Standards are listed on the following web site: <https://mail.gmu.edu/en/mail.html?sid=IO3i+chrIMk&lang=en> On this page, to the right, there is a red book PDF document titled "What Every Special Educator Must Know." The CEC Standards are located in this document. The advanced content standards that will be addressed in this class are from the Special Education Administrator standards (page down to find these). Advanced Standards 1: Leadership and Policy and 5: Professional Development and Ethical Practice are areas of emphasis for this course. The initial content standards that are also relevant are noted as follows:

### **Special Education Content Standard 1: Foundations**

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 exceptional needs both in school and society. Special educators understand how these influence professional practice, including assessment, instructional planning, implementation, and program evaluation. Special educators understand how issues of human diversity can impact families, cultures, and schools, and how these complex human issues can interact with issues in the delivery of special education services. They understand the relationships of organizations of special education to the organizations and functions of schools, school systems, and other agencies. Special educators use this knowledge as a ground upon which to construct their own personal understandings and philosophies of special education.

## **Special Education Content Standard 9: Professional and Ethical Practice**

Special educators are guided by the profession's ethical and professional practice standards. Special educators practice in multiple roles and complex situations across wide age and developmental ranges. Their practice requires ongoing attention to legal matters along with serious professional and ethical considerations. Special educators engage in professional activities and participate in learning communities that benefit individuals with ELN, their families, colleagues, and their own professional growth. Special educators view themselves as lifelong learners and regularly reflect on and adjust their practice. Special educators are aware of how their own and others attitudes, behaviors, and ways of communicating can influence their practice. Special educators understand that culture and language can interact with exceptionalities, and are sensitive to the many aspects of diversity of individuals with ELN and their families. Special educators actively plan and engage in activities that foster their professional growth and keep them current with evidence-based best practices. Special educators know their own limits of practice and practice within them.

### **COURSE TEXTS AND MATERIALS**

#### **Required Texts:**

American Psychological Association. (2009). *Publication manual* (6<sup>th</sup> ed., 2<sup>nd</sup> printing). Washington, DC: Author.

Bolman, L., & Deal, T. (2008). *Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice, and leadership* (4th ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Fullan, M. (2008). *The six secrets of change: What the best leaders do to help their organizations survive and thrive*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Hehir, T. (2006). *New directions in special education: Eliminating ableism in policy and practice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Note: Some of these books represent overriding leadership principles which we will be applying to key concepts in special education.

#### **Supplemental Readings (Available in Blackboard):**

Each week students are expected to access and complete all readings and activities provided in the applicable folder in the course content section of the course Blackboard site available at <http://myMason.gmu.edu>

#### **Other Required Resources**

##### *Blackboard*

Check Blackboard regularly for additional course materials at <http://myMason.gmu.edu>

##### *TaskStream*

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 onetime course or part of an undergraduate minor). TaskStream information is available at <http://gse.gmu.edu/programs/sped/taskstream/>. 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 an F nine weeks into the following semester.

## STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

*George Mason University Email:* Every student is required to establish a GMU email account to access Blackboard (BB) and other important university correspondence that will be sent to GMU email accounts only. Once an email account has been established, it is possible to forward email sent to the GMU account to another email account. Students are responsible for any information shared electronically and should check e-mail regularly. Emails sent via BB do not forward to your regular account.

*George Mason Blackboard:* <http://myMason.gmu.edu>. From this link, you will find a variety of materials related to this course. The site will be updated as the course progresses. **Students are responsible** for any information shared via Blackboard and should check the site regularly

*George Mason Patriot Web:* <https://patriotweb.gmu.edu>. This is a self-service website for students, faculty, and staff of George Mason University. A wealth of useful links, information, and online forms are available on this website including program of studies details, application for graduation, request for transfer of credit, and internship application.

*Cohort Information:* Please visit Blackboard at <http://gmucommunity.blackboard.com> and begin by entering the User Name “cohort” followed by the Password “cohort” then click “login” to access a variety of materials including the Frequently Asked Questions Guide, Enrollment forms, Textbook information, and TaskStream support.

*Advising Contact Information:* Please make sure that you are being advised on a regular basis as to your status and progress through the special education program. You may wish to contact Jancy Templeton, GMU Special Education Advisor, at [jtemple1@gmu.edu](mailto:jtemple1@gmu.edu) or 703-993-2387. When contacting her, be prepared to provide your G number.

*APA Style:* 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 (6th ed.) or to access one of the internet sites that provides a summary of this information. All work produced outside of class must be typed unless otherwise noted.

*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 citation. 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 registrar. Remember that plagiarism is a very serious offense and can result in dismissal from the University. The instructor reserves the right to submit your work to **turnitin** or **safeassign**, plagiarism detection services, for an integrity assessment as needed.

*Graduate School of Education Dispositions Criteria:* Students are expected to exhibit

professional behavior and dispositions. See <http://gse.gmu.edu/facultystaffres/profdisp.htm> for a listing of these dispositions.

*George Mason University Honor Code:* Students must follow the guidelines of the University Honor Code. See <http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode/> for the full honor code. The honor code defines student and faculty conduct to promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community. The honor code deals specifically with cheating and attempted cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing.

Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

*Responsible Use of Computing:* Students must agree to abide by the university policy for the responsible use of computing. See <http://www.gmu.edu/facstaff/policy/newpolicy/1301gen.html>

*Students with Disabilities:* 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 semester. See <http://www2.gmu.edu/dpt/unilife/ods/> or call 703-993-2474 to access the ODS.

## **IMPORTANT NOTES:**

- For a satisfactory grade in the course, students are expected to attend all classes, arrive on time, demonstrate professional behavior in the classroom (see Professional Disposition Criteria), and complete all assignments with professional quality and in a timely manner.
- When absence from class is unavoidable, students are responsible for getting all class information (e.g., handouts, announcements, notes, syllabus revisions, etc.) from another class member prior to the class meeting that follows the absence. Be aware that any points earned for participation in class activities during a time of absence will not be earned and cannot be reclaimed.
- The use of electronic devices that produce sound or otherwise interfere with the learning of others (i.e., cell phones, pagers, etc.) is prohibited during class. Please turn these devices off or to vibrate before the start of class.
- The use of electronic devices that record class or photograph individuals or materials may not be used without instructor permission.
- Computers may be used to take notes during class, but they may not be used for internet exploration or other non-class activities during class time.
- Routine access (daily) to electronic mail and Blackboard for communication and assignments is crucial to participation in this class.
- For each in-class hour devoted to this course content, students are expected to spend at least 3 hours outside of class on course related assignments, which is a typical in-class to out-of- class ratio for graduate level coursework.
- Retain electronic copies of all course products for use during the portfolio phases of the M.Ed. or Ph.D. programs.
- Exemplary work should be considered for presentation or publication opportunities.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION CRITERIA**

Below are the basic weights of the various kinds of work required for the course, but students should always bear in mind that grading is primarily a judgment about your performance on a particular assignment. Grades are designed to indicate your success in completing assignments, not the level of effort you put into them.

Participation Activities (face-to-face and online)	75
Exploratory Project	100
Reframing Project (paper 100; presentation 25)	125
Final Exam	50
Total	350

**NOTE:** Points will be deducted for work submitted late (up to 10% per day). This includes any items that are not submitted upon request due to class absence or tardiness. This includes items initiated or modified during class as well as those listed in the syllabus.

### **(1) Participation**

Students are expected to attend class and actively participate in all assignments, group activities, and class discussions. Active participation includes the asking of questions and the presentation of one's own understanding with regard to the readings and class sessions as well as interactive discussion and participation in activities with other class members. Active participation also includes listening and respectful consideration of the comments of others. This will require all students to complete the required readings, activities, and assignments for that specific class meeting in advance. Additional required materials and activities (e.g. supplemental readings, cases for review, external websites, discussion forums, etc.) can be found in Blackboard's Course Content section in a folder labeled by Week Number.

Additionally, during each class meeting there will be the opportunity to earn point(s) for successful completion of graded in-class activities (e.g. case analysis, reflection activities, small group activities, discussion of readings, etc.). If students are not in attendance, thus not able to participate and contribute to class when these activities occur, assigned points cannot be earned. One cannot earn full points for active participation while texting, tweeting, surfing the internet, or engaging in other forms of multi-tasking behaviors.

### **(2) Exploratory Project**

Each adult learner brings varying levels of experience, especially in leadership roles, to a course such as this. In order to address your differing backgrounds, you will select activities from a menu of options so that you can tailor this portion of the course to address your own educational needs (refer back to your leadership statement) as you build an emerging philosophy of leadership in special education. You should refer to the separate handout for details regarding this assignment. As no two projects will be the same, submission can be either electronic or in hard copy as scheduled in the syllabus.

### **(3) Reframing Project**

Bolman and Deal say that the essence of reframing is examining the same situation from different perspectives to develop a more holistic picture. For this paper, and subsequent presentation, reconsider a change situation you've experienced in the last year or two in your

setting. In this paper, you are going to **analyze the case using multiple frames** to see what we can learn about the situation.

1. Briefly **describe case needing improvement or change**:
  - What was the performance or achievement gap being addressed by the change?
  - What was the specific the goal?
  - What strategy or action was used to promote improvement? (What was the objective of the improvement project?)
  - What was the rationale for using this strategy to promote improvement? (Why did anyone think implementing the action plan would bring about the specific improvement you sought?)
  - What happened, and what did you learn from implementation of this project?
2. Step back and consider the basis for your description – what primary frame(s) are you using when you describe and analyze the change? Discuss your conclusions explicitly in terms of the use of the frame(s). What does the use of this conceptual lens help you understand about the case?
3. Then, select **one or more other frames** to use to re-examine the case. What else can you learn by analyzing this case through the lens of this frame? Do you see different opportunities, challenges, or outcomes from an alternative perspective?

**HINT:** It is likely that you selected the structural or human resources frames instinctively to complete step 2. As a comparison, stretch yourself by selecting the political or symbolic frames for step 3 as these may provide you with the best opportunities to see different things in the same case.

In your paper, be sure to be very clear about which frames you are using, what you believe to be the primary features of the frame (be brief, but let me know that *you know* what's unique and valuable about the frame as a way of seeing), and what you learn about the case by using the frame.

This paper\* should be 8-10 pages in length and should be typewritten following APA standards (100 points). See the attached TaskStream Rubric for additional details about the structure of the paper, which will be submitted electronically. The presentation should be concise and stimulate discussion among your colleagues that reinforces everyone's understanding of the frames (25 points). More details regarding the format for the presentation will be provided in BB.

\*This assignment (the paper portion) has been designated as the required performance-based assessment for this course (EDSE 743 and/or EDLE PK-12 Administrative Licensure candidates). Students are expected to post their assignment to Task Stream electronically by the due date as noted on the course outline. Additional information on this process was provided in the Student Responsibilities section of this syllabus.

**NOTE:** This project is differentiated for masters' and doctoral students; samples will be posted on BB to highlight the differing approaches possible. For anyone who completed administrative licensure requirements here at GMU during the time when this assignment was in place for EDLE 620, please see the instructor for an adapted version of this assignment.

#### **(4) Final Exam**



A comprehensive exam applying key course content and materials will be administered. Students will be able to prepare their responses in advance and should be prepared to share responses for discussion during the final exam session.

**Grading Scale** (traditional rounding principles apply):

A	=	95 – 100 percent	A-	=	90 – 94 percent
B+	=	85 – 89 percent	B	=	80 – 84 percent
C	=	75 – 79 percent	F	=	74 percent or below

**Tentative Course Organization and Schedule**

Meeting	Topic	Assignments Due/Readings
Week 1 8/31/11	Introduction to Leadership in Special Education: What is it?	Overview of course materials and website (courses.gmu.edu)
Week 2 9/7/11	Building a Framework for Leadership: What's needed in special education and who should be leading the troops?	BB folder
Week 3 9/14/11	Reform and its Consequences: Planning and Delivering Leadership Initiatives	Fullan Book; BB folder
Week 4 9/21/11	Ways of seeing organizations and leadership: The Structural Frame	Bolman & Deal (B&D) Parts 1 & 2; BB folder
Week 5 9/28/11	The Human Side of Leadership in Special Education	B&D Part 3; BB folder
Week 6 10/5/11	The Politics of Leadership in Special Education	B&D Part 4; BB folder
Week 7 10/12/11	Seeing the Bigger Picture: The Symbolic Frame	B&D Part 5; BB folder
Week 8 10/19/11	Improving Practice: Reframing in Action	B&D Part 6; BB folder
Week 9** 10/26/11	Reframing for Change: Cases in Special Education Leadership	<b>Reframing Projects Due with Presentations</b> (BB discussion board)
Week 10 11/2/11	Facilitating Access to the Gen Ed. Curriculum	Hehir Book; BB folder
Week 11 11/9/11**	Structuring Policies for Practice in Special Education: Managing the Uncertainty	BB folder
Week 12 11/16/11	The Role of Ethics In Special Education: Intent vs. Implementation	BB folder
11/23/11	<i>Thanksgiving Holiday</i>	<i>No Class</i>
Week 13 11/30/11	Transforming Special Education: Goals for Today and Tomorrow	<b>Exploratory Projects Due</b> BB folder
Week 14 12/7/11	Sustaining Change: The leader's role in special education policy, programming, and practice	BB folder
Week 15 12/14/11	The Future is Now	<b>Final Exam</b> BB folder

Note: Syllabus is subject to change as needed. Common sense and instructor discretion will be the governing forces in dealing with any circumstances that may arise that are not



explicitly addressed in this syllabus. Inclement weather cancellations will shift content to online delivery format and does not excuse students from completion of requirements.

**\*\*Online Session**

**TASKSTREAM RUBRIC FOR REFRAMING PROJECT**

Levels:					
Criteria:	<b>1 falls below expectations</b>	<b>2 approaching expectations</b>	<b>3 meets expectations</b>	<b>4 exceeds expectations</b>	<b>Score</b>
<b>Thesis &amp; introduction</b> (10%)	There is no clear purpose of the paper; seemingly little attempt to create a thesis statement	Attempt to create a thesis statement and communicate the purpose in introduction	Evidence of thesis can be found in a clear introduction to the paper	Establishes thesis in introduction and maintains clear purpose via suitable voice and tone	
<b>Description of case</b> (15%)	Description of the case is largely missing or wholly inadequate.	Description of the case is incomplete or poorly constructed	The case is described thoroughly	The case is described thoroughly, with clear delineation of the critical events relating to the change project	
<b>Case analysis: initial frame</b> (20%)	Analysis is unrelated to the case, is largely missing or wholly inadequate.	Analysis is weak or incomplete, or superficially considers the application of theory to the analysis	The frame used to initially present the case is identified, discussed, and applied as a conceptual lens for understanding the case	The frame used to initially describe the case is accurately identified, characteristics of the frame clearly described, and the frame is used as a conceptual lens to gain an understanding of the case	
<b>Case re-analysis: reframing</b> (20%)	Re-analysis is unrelated to the case, is largely missing or wholly inadequate.	Re-analysis is weak or incomplete, or superficially considers the application of at least one additional frame	At least one additional frame is briefly described and used as a conceptual lens for re-analyzing the case	At least one additional frame is clearly and thoroughly described, and the frame is used as a conceptual lens to re-analyze the case and highlight additional insights to explain the case	
<b>Implications</b> (15%)	Conclusion and implications are largely missing or wholly inadequate.	Superficial conclusions are offered relating to the process and value of reframing, and the insights gained by using reframing in this case	General lessons are presented relating to the process and value of reframing for school leaders, and the insights gained by using reframing in this case	Specific lessons are presented relating to the process and value of reframing for school leaders, and the insights gained by using reframing in this case	
<b>Support</b> (10%)	Few to no solid supporting ideas or evidence	Some supporting ideas and/or evidence for analysis	Supporting theory or research lacks specificity and is loosely developed	Specific, developed ideas and/or evidence from theory or research to support analysis	
<b>Organization of paper</b> (5%)	Paper lacks logical progression of ideas	Paper includes brief skeleton (introduction, body, conclusion) but lacks transitions	Paper includes logical progression of ideas aided by clear transitions	Paper is powerfully organized and fully developed	
<b>Mechanics</b> (5%)	Frequent errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation	Errors in grammar and punctuation, but spelling has been proofread	Occasional grammatical errors and questionable word choice	Nearly error-free which reflects clear understanding and thorough proofreading	