



**College of Education and Human Development  
Division of Special Education and disAbility Research**

Fall 2013

EDSE 703 001: Creating a Collaborative Culture  
CRN: 81361, 3 - Credits

<b>Instructor:</b> Dr. Vicky Spencer	<b>Meeting Dates:</b> 8/26/2013 - 12/18/2013
<b>Phone:</b> 703-993-5598	<b>Meeting Day(s):</b> Independent Study
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<b>Office Hours:</b> By appointment	<b>Meeting Location:</b> Fairfax

***Note:** This syllabus may change according to class needs. Students will be advised of any changes immediately through George Mason e-mail and/or through Blackboard.*

**Course Description**

Provides leaders in school settings with an opportunity to gain the skills needed to facilitate collaborative environments supportive of all learners. Topics of study include the impact of diversity on educational settings, developing a vision effective communication teaming and coteaching techniques, family professional partnerships, implementing schoolwide change initiatives, alternative dispute resolution, and maintaining a positive school climate.

**Prerequisite(s):** None

**Co-requisite(s):** None

**Advising Contact Information**

Please make sure that you are being advised on a regular basis as to your status and progress through your program. Mason M.Ed. and Certificate students should contact the Special Education Advising Office at (703) 993-3145 for assistance. All other students should refer to their faculty advisor.

**Nature of Course Delivery**

Learning activities include the following:

1. Application activities
2. Video and other media supports
3. Research
4. Electronic supplements and activities via Blackboard

### **Learner Outcomes**

- Define collaboration, consultation, and teamwork and explain the essential characteristics of each.
- Demonstrate the ability to synthesize principal and concepts from public policy, legislation, research data and literature in the context of collaboration among and between families, professional and interagency partnerships.
- Identify variables that may facilitate or constrain participation in collaboration, consultation or teamwork settings.
- Identify and apply collaboration and communication concepts, principles, and skills among families, professionals at the individual, building, district, and agency level.
- Articulate and apply best practices in the development and implementation of collaborative instructional teams among and between professionals, families and agencies.
- Demonstrate communication skills of listening avoiding communication roadblocks, dealing with resistance, being appropriately assertive and resolving conflicts.
- Demonstrate the ability to identify and effectively apply a variety of problem solving, alternative dispute resolution and decision making techniques at the individual, group, building district and interagency levels.
- Identify and implement a variety of planning process models for integrating the family, school and community.

### **Required Textbooks**

Holcomb, E. L. ( 2009). *Asking the right questions: Tools for collaboration and school change* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.

### **Digital Library Option**

The Pearson textbook(s) for this course is available as part of the **George Mason University Division of Special Education and disAbility Research Digital Library**. The division and Pearson have partnered to bring you the Digital Library; a convenient, digital solution that can save you money on your course materials. The Digital Library offers you access to a complete digital library of **all Pearson textbooks** and MyEducationLabs used across the Division of Special Education and disAbility Research curriculum at a low 1-year or 3-year subscription price. Access codes are available in the school bookstore. Please visit <http://gmu.bncollege.com> and search the ISBN.

- 1 year subscription \$200 ISBN-13: 9781269541411
- 3 years subscription \$525 ISBN-13: 9781269541381
- Individual e-book(s) also available at the bookstore link above or at <http://www.pearsonhighered.com/>. Search by author, title, or ISBN.

### **Recommended Textbooks**

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

### **Required Resources**

Information will be posted on Blackboard.

### **Additional Readings**

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

### **Course Relationships to Program Goals and Professional Organizations**

This course is part of the George Mason University, Graduate School of Education (GSE), Special Education Program for Special Education Leadership Graduate Certificate. This program complies with the standards for teacher licensure established by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), the major special education professional organization. The CEC standards that will be addressed in this class include Standard 9: Professional and Ethical Practice and Standard 10: Collaboration.

### **GMU POLICIES AND RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS:**

- a. Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See <http://oai.gmu.edu/honor-code/>].
- b. Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing [See <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/>].
- c. Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their George Mason University email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students solely through their Mason email account.
- d. The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance [See <http://caps.gmu.edu/>].

- e. Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the George Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform their instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester [See <http://ods.gmu.edu/>].
- f. Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.
- g. The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing [See <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>].

## **PROFESSIONAL DISPOSITIONS**

Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times.

## **CORE VALUES COMMITMENT**

The College of Education & Human Development is committed to collaboration, ethical leadership, innovation, research-based practice, and social justice. Students are expected to adhere to these principles. [See <http://cehd.gmu.edu/values/>]

For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, Graduate School of Education, please visit our website [See <http://gse.gmu.edu/>]

## **Course Policies & Expectations**

### **Attendance.**

This is an independent study.

### **Late Work.**

The student is expected to complete all assignments with professional quality and in a timely manner. As an independent study, the instructor will decide on due dates and points will be deducted for work submitted late.

### **TaskStream Submission**

Every student registered for any Special Education course with a required performance-based assessment is required to submit this assessment, Collaboration Plan to TaskStream (regardless of whether a course is an elective, a onetime course or part of an undergraduate minor). Evaluation of the performance-based assessment by the course instructor will also be completed in TaskStream. Failure to submit the assessment to TaskStream will result in the course instructor reporting the course grade as Incomplete(IN). Unless the IN grade is changed upon completion of the required TaskStream submission, the IN will convert to an F nine weeks into the following semester.

If you have never used TaskStream before, you **MUST** use the login and password information that has been created for you. This information is distributed to students through GMU email, so it is very important that you set up your GMU email. For more TaskStream information, go to <http://cehd.gmu.edu/api/taskstream>

### Grading Scale

94 – 100% = A  
 90 – 93% = A-  
 86 – 89% = B+  
 80 – 85% = B  
 70 – 79% = C  
 <70 = F

### Evaluation

1) Collaboration Plan for Creating School Change (NCATE/Taskstream Assignment)	40%
2) Application Activities	20%
3) Exploration of Current Setting	20%
4) Presentation of Collaboration Plan	20%
Total	100%

### Assignments

#### NCATE/TaskStream Assignments.

#### 1) Collaboration Plan for Creating School Change (40%)

Students will develop a situation-specific Collaboration Plan to enhance the education of exceptional learners in their own educational environment. The plan will address each of the 5 primary questions established in the course readings (i.e. Where are we now?, Where do we want to go?, How will we get there?, How will we know we are there?, and How will we sustain focus and momentum?). This plan should identify the specific tools used (or to be used) to address each of the questions and include the information produced by each (e.g., results of the Exploratory of Current Setting assignment would be included). Students should explore relevant literature/documentation/data as they plan how to address the situation. They should supplement these reviews with actual experiences and interviews with key appropriate personnel (e.g., teachers, administrators, community agency representatives, parents, students and school staff) as needed to build an effective plan for change. Students must provide a supported rationale for

the processes they used to build the plan and for the changes they now propose. Once the initial 5 primary questions are addressed, the bonus questions should be tackled. Finally, a plan for managing conflicts should be included in order to plan for any disputes that may arise from the change initiative you proposed. Develop a written document synthesizing your ideas and presenting the Collaboration Plan. Include key points addressing the questions, mediation, justification for plan design, literature regarding the topic, and anticipated implications for practice and/or policy.

**Note: A rubric detailing how this NCATE assignment will be evaluated for the course will be posted in Bb. This project will be submitted to Taskstream and Bb, but it will not be graded until it is posted in Bb.**

### **Common Assignments.**

#### **2) Application Activities (four worth 5 points each - 20%)**

These are self-assessment and reflective activities to be completed outside of class that apply the readings and/or extend class discussions. These will be posted to BB.

#### **3) Exploratory of Current Setting (20%)**

Submit a brief paper describing your current context, your role within that context, and your goals for leadership in the future. Identify a specific area to target as in need of change via more effective collaboration. Use your Holcomb text to select and employ at least 3 tools to help you address the *Where are we now?* and *Where do we want to go?* questions. Summarize what you learned in the narrative and include any raw data/forms in the appendix. This information will contribute to your subsequent collaboration plan.

#### **4) Presentation of Collaboration Plan (20%)**

Develop a brief overview (bulleted narrative) of your plan that can be shared on BB for others to read and post prior to presentation date (see syllabus). When printed, this summary should not exceed 2 pages. For the presentation, develop a PowerPoint presentation (no more than 12 slides) and include any prompts needed to assist in a one hour in-class discussion of your plan.

### **Other Assignments.**

N/A

### **Schedule**

Date	Class Topics	Readings and Assignments Due
Module 1 8/26	Introduction to Text Discussion of Syllabus Overview of Collaboration	Holcomb Ch. 1
	Assessing the Situation: Where are we now? Identifying Different Collaboration Styles	Holcomb Ch. 2
	Finding the Vision: Where do we want to go? Strategies for Dealing with Different Collaboration Styles	Holcomb Ch. 3 <i>Application Activity 1</i>
Module 2	Taking Action: How will we get there?	Holcomb Ch. 4 <i>Exploratory of Current Setting</i>
	Assessing Progress: How will we know we are getting there?	Holcomb Ch. 5 <i>Application Activity 2</i>
Module 3	Sustaining Change: How will we sustain focus and momentum? Conflict and Resistance: Issues we can count on.	Holcomb Ch. 6 <i>Application Activity 3</i>
	Dispute Resolution Techniques for Special Education	Materials provided on Bb. <i>Application Activity 4</i>
Module 4	Powerful Questions to Shape Practice Instructional Collaboration Methods Specific to Special Education	Holcomb Ch. 7 <i>Post brief overview of collaboration plan on Bb.</i>
	The Importance of Different Perspectives	<i>Presentation Session</i>
12/11	The Role of Special Education Leaders in the Development of Collaborative Culture	Collaboration Plan Due to Taskstream and Blackboard by midnight.

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.