EDCI 597 (Summer 2015)

George Mason University
College of Education & Human Development/Graduate School of Education
Secondary Education Program

EDCI 597 (Sections A01/A02), “Youths’ and Teachers’ Perspectives on Exceptional Teaching”
(3 credits)

Key Information
Instructor: Kristien Zenkov, PhD, Associate Professor
Office hours: By appointment, via phone, or via Skype or Google Hangout
Phone: 703.993.5413 (O); 216.470.2384 (M)/Email: kzenkov@gmu.edu
Office/Mail: 1603 Thompson Hall, 4400 University Drive, MSN 4B3, George Mason University,
College of Education and Human Development, Fairfax, VA 22030

Class Meetings
Tuesday/Thursday (May 19, 21, 26, 28; Jun 2, 4) 4:30 – 7:10 pm, Robinson A 341
Wednesday (May 20, 27; Jun 3), 8:00 am – 3:00 pm, School Sites TBD
Please note that our class will meet face-to-face on the Fairfax campus for six sessions and in area schools for three all-day sessions. Attendance at the school sessions is mandatory, given that each is equivalent to three campus class sessions. We are happy to clarify and lend assistance on assignments, but please contact us within a reasonable timeframe. We look forward to collaborating with each of you as you work toward your goals.

Course Description
EDCI 597, “Youths’ and Teachers’ Perspectives on Exceptional Teaching” is designed to support the development of reflective, professional, collaborative, and research-based secondary school practitioners across subject areas. In order to respond to the growing diversity of youth and their cultures and literacy capacities, this course calls on pre-service and in-service teachers to interact with young people and teachers in a range of school settings, exploring their points of view on teaching using a range of methods and visual and technology-oriented media, including the visually-oriented interview procedures developed by the “Through Students’ Eyes” project. Students will both learn about exploring youths’ and teachers’ perspectives on school as a research/instructional method and as means to understand and respond to these points of view via their teaching practices.

CEHD 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. This course supports these values by providing students with learning experiences that necessitate collaboration; providing students opportunities to reflect on their teaching and leadership roles in
classroom and school contexts; calling on students to develop and participate in innovative research-based practice; and requiring students to reflect on their pedagogies in light of social justice issues. These Core Values are aligned with course outcomes as described below. See http://cehd.gmu.edu/values/ for more information.

**Course Outcomes/Objectives**

This course is designed to support pre-service and in-service secondary school teachers as they:

- articulate their own perspectives on school and exceptional teaching in their subject areas and also explore young people’s and teachers’ points of view (INNOVATION, RESEARCH-BASED PRACTICE);
- produce illustrated reports of their findings, using images and writings to share their own points of view on school, the perspectives of the children and youth and teachers with whom they work, and the means through which they will bridge these three sets of perspectives (COLLABORATION, INNOVATION, RESEARCH-BASED PRACTICE, SOCIAL JUSTICE); and
- develop a portfolio of effective subject-specific teaching strategies for engaging children and youth (COLLABORATION, ETHICAL LEADERSHIP, INNOVATION, RESEARCH-BASED PRACTICE).

**Course Delivery**

The course will be delivered through a face-to-face approach. During class meetings there will be large group, small group, and individual activities, with a focus on one-to-one and small group interactions between students in this course and youth and teachers in area schools. In general, we will engage in three activities during our time together:

1. Small and large group discussions of assigned readings led by the instructors and course participants
2. One-to-one and small group interactions with children/youth and teachers in area schools
3. Presentations of subject-specific “best practices” discovered via interactions with and interviews of area children/youth and teachers

**GMU/CEHD Policies and Resources for Students**

- GMU email address is required for communication with the course instructor and must be active by the first week of class. Please inform the instructors of any accessibility problems the first day of class.
- Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode/].
- Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing [See http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/1301gen.html].
- 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.
- 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/].
- 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/].
- Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.
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 [See http://cehd.gmu.edu/assets/docs/forms/secondary_ed/sec_ed_handbook.pdf].

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/]

Emergency Notification
The university utilizes a communication system to reach all students, faculty, and staff with emergency information (e.g., in case of severe weather). You can be sure that you are registered with the Mason Alert system by visiting https://alert.gmu.edu. An emergency poster can also be found in each Mason classroom. Information about Mason emergency response plans can be found at http://cert.gmu.edu/.

Important Information for Licensure Completion
Fieldwork Registration Requirements
Each student must register online to request a field experience placement. You must register for field experience using the online registration site https://cehd.gmu.edu/endorse/ferf, even if you do not need GMU to arrange you placement. We track all field experience site information for accreditation and reporting purposes. Students are only allowed to arrange their own field experience placements if they are currently working as full-time contracted employees in their school division. The field experience website http://cehd.gmu.edu/teacher/internships-field-experience includes a Field Experience Documentation Form, which you can print and submit to me to verify your hours. For specific questions about fieldwork placement, please contact the CEHD Field Experience Placement Office, 1708 Thompson Hall, 703.993.9777, fieldexp@gmu.edu.

Note: For EDCI 597 students will NOT need to register via the online registration site.

Student Clinical Practice: Internship Requirements
Testing
Beginning with Spring 2015 internships, all official and passing test scores must be submitted and in the Mason system (i.e., Banner/PatriotWeb) by the internship application deadline. Allow a minimum of six weeks for official test scores to arrive at Mason. Testing too close to the application deadline means scores will not arrive in time and the internship application will not be accepted.

Required tests
- Praxis Core Academic Skills for Educators Tests (or qualifying substitute)
- VCLA
- Praxis II (Content Knowledge exam in your specific endorsement area)
For details, please check http://cehd.gmu.edu/teacher/test/

Endorsements
Please note that ALL endorsement coursework must be completed, with all transcripts submitted and approved by the CEHD Endorsement Office, prior to the internship application deadline. Since the internship application must be submitted in the semester prior to the actual internship, please make an appointment to meet with the Endorsement Specialist and plan the completion of your Endorsements accordingly.
CPR/AED/First Aid
Beginning with spring 2015 internships, verification that the Emergency First Aid, CPR, and Use of AED Certification or Training requirement must be submitted and in the Mason system (i.e. Banner/PatriotWeb) by the application deadline. Students must submit one of the "acceptable evidence" documents listed at http://cehd.gmu.edu/teacher/emergency-first-aid to CEHD Student and Academic Affairs. In order to have the requirement reflected as met in the Mason system, documents can be scanned/e-mailed to CEHDacad@gmu.edu or dropped-off in Thompson Hall, Suite 2300.

Background Checks/Fingerprints
All local school systems require students to complete a criminal background check through their human resources office (not through George Mason University) prior to beginning the internship. Detailed instructions on the process will be sent to the student from either the school system or Mason. Students are strongly advised to disclose any/all legal incidents that may appear on their records. The consequence of failing to do so, whether or not such incidents resulted in conviction, is termination of the internship.

Please Note
Your G-Number must be clearly noted (visible and legible) on the face of the document(s) that you submit.

Application
The internship application can be downloaded at http://cehd.gmu.edu/teacher/internships-field-experience

Deadlines
Spring internship application:
- Traditional: September 15
- On-the Job: November 1
Fall internship application:
- Traditional: February 15
- On-the Job: May 1

Instructor Introductions
The best teachers know themselves as readers, writers, speakers, listeners, presenters, and creators. We will ask you also to know yourselves as photographers, artists, designers, community constituents, and researchers. Teachers must be resilient individuals who are willing to take risks to let a broad range of literacies matter to themselves, their students, and the larger community. We will expect you to be your best, brightest, most thoughtful, and most creative selves in this course. We intend that this class will be one you remember, and that you’ll care passionately about the work we do here. We will have uncompromising standards for your behavior, participation, and openness, and we will work diligently to ensure that you meet these standards.

As the instructors for this course, we bring the perspectives of teachers, teacher educators, and scholars with considerable experience working with diverse adolescents and professionals. We approach all educational experiences with the goal of helping students to learn to be active, creative, “real world” members of a just society. We are also deeply committed to respecting teachers as professionals with considerable knowledge about how to prepare the next generation of educators. We believe it is important for us as educators to approach our teaching with a simultaneously critical and creative perspective: when we assess current teaching practices, we also begin to develop new ones. We offer an explicit critique of schooling: as classroom teachers with a combined twenty-five years of experience, as scholars, and as advocates for youth and public schools, playing critical roles are our rights and responsibilities. We hope you will take on this same role.
Course Readings

Note: Additional required readings may be assigned during the course of our class and provided electronically.

Course Materials
Students will need to have access to a digital camera (on a smartphone is fine), a laptop computer, and a flashdrive each day that we are in the schools. You will use these with youth to take pictures and to document their thinking as well as with teachers to keep track of the ideas they share in interviews.

Course Expectations and Projects
All written work must be typed, double-spaced, in 12 pt font, with 1-inch margins, and must be submitted electronically. All projects are due by midnight (Eastern time) on the day of the given course session; projects late due to unsatisfactory tardies or absences will be accepted at the instructors’ discretion. You will also be assessed on your writing proficiency (grammar, spelling, coherence, etc.) in addition to the requirements of each assignment. Incompletes will only be an option for students who have consistently attended and participated in class and have completed and turned in all required work except the final projects.

Class Attendance/Participation (20 points)
By virtue of agreeing to work together in this course we instantly form a new community. Our goal is to develop a comfortable classroom community where risk-taking is encouraged; we can only grow through such open-heartedness. This community will be rooted in mutual respect and shared responsibility; these foundations translate into consistent and punctual attendance and active participation in all class activities. Our class time will provide opportunities for (1) participation in activities, (2) presentations and demonstrations of effective teaching strategies, and (3) discussions and reflection on course readings, class activities, and assignments. You are expected to complete assignments for each class day, and contribute as both a listener and speaker in large and small group activities and discussions.

Attendance in this class is critical. Students are expected to be on time and well prepared to participate in class as active, thoughtful discussants. Absences and tardies will impact your grade. Two tardies or early
departures are equal to one absence, and attendance at the school sessions is mandatory, given that each is equal to three campus class sessions. Missing 30% or more of class sessions will result in automatic failure of the course. Please note that this policy makes no distinction between “excused” or “unexcused” absences or tardies. If you must be late to or miss a class, you must contact the instructor ahead of time.

Learning Activity #1: A Letter on Your Perspectives on Exceptional Teaching (5 points)
In a multimedia letter to someone who you believe needs to hear/read/see your answers, respond to each of the following questions, illustrating each with at least one example of a teaching practice:

1) What do you believe makes an exceptional teacher, regardless of subject area?
2) What do you believe makes an exceptional teacher in your subject area?
3) What is the evidence that an exceptional teacher is successful at her/his job, from a teacher’s perspective?
4) What is the evidence that an exceptional teacher is successful at her/his job, from students’ perspectives?
5) What is the evidence that an exceptional teacher is successful at her/his job, from the public’s perspective?

Take risks, be creative, and embrace the freedom that this project provides. We will begin this project in class on Tuesday, May 19th.

Due in class on Thursday, May 21st

Learning Activity #2: Youths’ Perspectives on Exceptional Teaching Parts I, II, III (25 points)
Using photovoice methods, explore three youths’ perspectives on the following questions, illustrating each of these with at least one example of a teaching practice:

1) What does each young person believe makes an exceptional teacher, regardless of subject area?
2) What does each young person believe makes an exceptional teacher in your subject area?
3) What does the young person believe is the evidence that an exceptional teacher is successful at her/his job?

You should first interview the young people with whom you are working to gather their initial answers to these questions. Then you will take these young people on “photo walks” to assist them in taking pictures—ideally metaphorical, representational, poetic images, rather than just literal ones—to illustrate their answers to these questions. Take risks, be creative, and embrace the freedom that this project provides. Also complete two additional tasks as we are visiting these three schools:

1) before you arrive at the school, find, read, and bring some evidence from the school or division of how this school/division views exemplary teaching;
2) after you complete each day’s school visit, identify one community member—outside of the school—whose perspective on exceptional teaching we should consider, engage with this individual, and document their point of view on teaching and the evidence of exceptional teaching to which they look.

Due in class on Thursday, May 21st, May 28th, and June 4th

Learning Activity #3: Teachers’ Perspectives on Exceptional Teaching Parts I, II, III (25 points)
Using interview and observation methods, explore the perspectives of teachers in your subject area on the following questions, illustrating each with at least one example of a teaching practice:

1) What does each teacher believe makes an exceptional teacher, regardless of subject area?
2) What does each teacher believe makes an exceptional teacher in your subject area?
3) What does each teacher believe is the evidence that an exceptional teacher is successful at her/his job?
4) What does the teacher believe is the evidence that an exceptional teacher is successful at her/his job, from students’ perspectives?
5) What does the teacher believe is the evidence that an exceptional teacher is successful at her/his job, from the public’s perspective?
Each of your interviews and observations should result in a 2-4 page summary of each teacher’s perspectives on these questions. Take risks, be creative, and embrace the freedom that this project provides. Additionally, before you arrive at the school, find, read, and bring some evidence from the school or division about how this school/division views exemplary teaching.

Due in class on Tuesday, May 26th, June 2nd, and Thursday, June 4th

Learning Activity #4: Presentation and Portfolio of Exceptional Teaching (15 points)
Draft a portfolio and a presentation that illustrate the collective answers you have encountered regarding the following question, illustrating each with at least one example of a teaching practice:

1) What do you now believe makes an exceptional teacher, regardless of subject area?
2) What do you now believe makes an exceptional teacher in your subject area?
3) What do you now believe is the evidence that an exceptional teacher is successful at her/his job?
4) What do you now believe is the evidence that an exceptional teacher is successful at her/his job, from students’ perspectives?
5) What do you now believe is the evidence that an exceptional teacher is successful at her/his job, from the public’s perspective?

Two slides (one image and one related response) due in class on Thursday, June 4th
Final portfolio due Monday, June 8th

Learning Activity #5: Letters to Students (5 points)
You will compose, individually or in groups, letters to each of the young people with whom you work over the course of our class, sharing with them what you learned from them and how it will affect you as a teacher.

Due in class on Thursday, May 21st, May 28th, and June 4th

Learning Activity #6: Flashdrive (5 points)
Submit a flashdrive with all of your projects for this class, plus all of the photographs and writings from the youth with whom you worked across the course. Organize these in folders according to the project, school sites, young person’s name, etc.

Due to Dr. Pellegrino’s or Dr. Zenkov’s office on Monday, June 8th
**Course Assessment: Assignment (Points)**

Class Attendance/Participation = 20 points  
Learning Activity #1/Your Perspective = 5 points  
Learning Activity #2/Youths’ Perspectives = 25 points  
Learning Activity #3/Teachers’ Perspectives = 25 points  
Learning Activity #4/Presentation and Portfolio = 15 points  
Learning Activity #5/Letters to Students = 5 points  
Learning Activity #6/Flashdrive = 5 points  
Total = 100 points  

**Grading Criteria and Mastery Grading**

All assignments will be evaluated holistically using a mastery grading system, the general rubric described below, and a specific rubric provided with each assignment. A student must demonstrate “mastery” of each requirement of an assignment; doing so will result in a “B” level score. Only if a student additionally exceeds the expectations for that requirement—through quality, quantity, or the creativity of her/his work—will she/he be assessed with an “A” level score. With a mastery grading system, students must choose to “go above and beyond” in order to earn “A” level scores.

- **“A” level score** = Student work is well-organized, exceptionally thorough and thoughtful, candid, and completed in a professional and timely manner. Student followed all format and component guidelines, as well as including additional relevant components. Student supports assertions with multiple concrete examples and/or explanations. Significance and/or implications of observations are fully specified and extended to other contexts. Student work is exceptionally creative, includes additional artifacts, and/or intentionally supports peers’ efforts.

- **“B” level score** = Student work is well organized, thorough, thoughtful, candid, and completed in a professional and timely manner. Student followed all format and component guidelines. Student supports assertions with concrete examples and/or explanations. Significance and/or implications of observations are fully specified.

- **“C” level score** = Student provides cursory responses to assignment requirements. Student followed all format and component guidelines. Development of ideas is somewhat vague, incomplete, or rudimentary. Compelling support for assertions is typically not provided.

- **“F” level score** = Student work is so brief that any reasonably accurate assessment is impossible.

**Grading Scale**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>95-100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70-79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Below 70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Resources and Selected Bibliography

Journals
English Journal
Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy
Language Arts
The Reading Teacher
Rethinking Schools
Middle Level Learning
Visual Studies

Web Resources
George Mason University Library: http://library.gmu.edu/
What Kids Can Do: www.whatkidsando.org
International Reading Association (IRA): www.reading.org
Literacy Research Association: https://www.literacyresearchassociation.org
Association of Literacy Educators and Researchers: www.aleronline.org
TED website: http://www.ted.com/talks
Tripod student feedback: http://tripoded.com/
Quaglia Institute for Student Aspirations: http://www.qisa.org/
Youth Speaks Brave new voices: http://youthspeaks.org/bravenewvoices/

Relevant Articles, Book Chapters, and Books
Site Visit General Structure

We will visit three schools during the course of our class—one elementary, one middle, and one high school. We will arrive at each site by 8:30 am and have until about 9 am to get ready for our work with youth and teachers. Between approximately 9 am and 12 pm we will work in whole group, small group, and one-on-one structures with students. The bulk of your time will be spent working with individual students on photovoice explorations of youths’ perspectives on exceptional teaching. At the end of this time young people will make a presentation of one slide and one accompanying writing to highlight their points of view on exceptional teaching. Between approximately 12 pm and 2 pm you will observe teachers in your subject area and interview these teachers to gather their perspectives on exceptional teaching. We will wrap up each day by 3 pm with a discussion of our collected insights. You will also need to interact with one community member of our choice to consider and document her/his perspective on exceptional teaching (see Learning Activity #2 above).

Bucknell Elementary
6925 University Drive
Alexandria, VA 22307
(703) 660-2900
Contact: Nisreen Daoud, ndaoud1@gmu.edu

Charles Carroll Middle School
6130 Lamont Drive
New Carrollton, MD
(301) 918-8640
Contact: Ellen Clark, eclark16@masonlive.gmu.edu

TC Williams High School or other site to be determined
3330 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22302
(703) 824-6800
Contact: Kirsten Von Topel, kirsten.von.topel@acps.k12.va.us
### Schedule of Readings, Assignments, and Topics/Activities

*Note: This schedule and its contents are subject to change, as we attempt to construct the most responsive, worthwhile learning experience possible.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Readings Due</th>
<th>Assignments Due</th>
<th>Topics/Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tues, May 19&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; 4:30 – 7:10 pm Campus</td>
<td>• Zenkov &amp; Harmon chapter</td>
<td>• None!</td>
<td>• Introductions&lt;br&gt;• In class reading&lt;br&gt;• Modeling photo elicitation method and in-school activities with youth/teachers&lt;br&gt;• Begin Learning Activity #1 in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weds, May 20&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; 8:30 am – 3:00 pm Bucknell Elementary</td>
<td>• Find, read and bring evidence from the school/division of how this school/division views exemplary teaching</td>
<td>• None!</td>
<td>• Work with youth&lt;br&gt;• Interview/Observe teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thurs, May 21&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; 4:30 – 7:10 pm Campus</td>
<td>• Wilson &amp; Corbett chapter&lt;br&gt;• Zenkov et al New Educator article</td>
<td>• Learning Activity #1&lt;br&gt;• Learning Activities #2, Part I&lt;br&gt;• Learning Activity #5: Letter #1</td>
<td>• Work session—bring data from Bucknell Elementary site visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tues, May 26&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; 4:30 – 7:10 pm Campus</td>
<td>• Fires/Middle (first half)&lt;br&gt;• Youthscape Introduction by Maira &amp; Soep</td>
<td>• Learning Activity #3, Part I</td>
<td>• Discussion of readings and initial findings about “exceptional” teaching</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weds, May 27&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; 8:30 am – 3:00 pm Carroll Middle School</td>
<td>• Find, read and bring evidence from the school/division of how this school/division views exemplary teaching</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>• Work with youth&lt;br&gt;• Interview/Observe teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thurs, May 28&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; 4:30 – 7:10 pm Campus</td>
<td>• Fires/Middle (second half)&lt;br&gt;• Culturally Relevant Pedagogy by G. Ladson Billings</td>
<td>• Learning Activities #2, Part II&lt;br&gt;• Learning Activity #5: Letter #2</td>
<td>• Work session—bring data from Middle School site visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tues, Jun 2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; 4:30 – 7:10 pm Campus</td>
<td>• Fires/High School (first half)&lt;br&gt;• Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy by Django Paris</td>
<td>• Learning Activity #3, Part II</td>
<td>• Discussion of readings and initial findings about “exceptional” teaching</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weds, Jun 3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; 8:30 am – 3:00 pm TC Williams (or site TBD)</td>
<td>• Find, read and bring evidence from the school/division of how this school/division views exemplary teaching</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>• Work with youth&lt;br&gt;• Interview/Observe teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thurs, Jun 4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; 4:30 – 7:10 pm Campus</td>
<td>• Fires/High School (second half)</td>
<td>• Learning Activities #2/#3, Part III&lt;br&gt;• Learning Activity #5: Letter #3</td>
<td>• Learning Activity #4: Presentations&lt;br&gt;• Learning Activity #4 and Learning Activity #6 due Monday, June 8&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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