



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

Spring 2016

EDSE 534 626: Communication and Severe Disabilities

CRN: 18460, 3 - Credits

Instructor: Dr. Irene Meier	Meeting Dates: 01/11/16 - 03/14/16
Phone: 571-423-4104 or 4102	Meeting Day(s): Monday
E-Mail: imeier@gmu.edu	Meeting Time(s): 4:30-9:00
Office Hours: Before and after class and by appointment	Meeting Location: Fairfax Ridge, Room 3400 North Tower

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

Introduces professionals to augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) for individuals with severe speech and language impairments. Addresses the knowledge and skills needed to assess the potential AAC user, make team decisions, develop and implement instruction, and evaluate the effects of instruction, aimed at motivating, building, and expanding communication, choice-making, and social interaction.

Hours of Lecture or Seminar per week: 3

Hours of Lab or Studio per week: 0

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) 993-3670 for assistance. All other students should refer to their faculty advisor.

Nature of Course Delivery

Learning activities include the following:

1. Class lecture and discussion
2. Application activities
3. Small group activities and assignments
4. Video and other media supports
5. Research and presentation activities
6. Electronic supplements and activities via Blackboard

Learner Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify characteristics of non-symbolic and symbolic communication
- Describe and discuss methods for assessment, identification of priorities, and monitoring progress of individuals with communication impairments.
- Discuss and evaluate the range of augmentative and alternative communication devices and systems/assistive technology available for individuals with severe disabilities.
- Implement assessment strategies to improve students' social interaction with peers and others.
- Implement communication/AAC/AT assessment strategies to develop and implement individual educational planning and group instruction with students with disabilities in an adapted curriculum across the K-12 grade levels.
- Understand and identify behaviors associated with communication.
- Describe language development and emergent literacy skills for students who use augmentative and alternative communication devices and systems/assistive technology
- Identify and implement strategies and activities that foster an appreciation of a variety of literature and independent reading for students who use augmentative and alternative communication devices and systems/assistive technology
- Demonstrate knowledge of best practices and strategies in reading instruction for students with severe disabilities for students who use augmentative and alternative communication devices and systems/assistive technology

Required Textbooks

Beukelman, D. R., & Mirenda, P. (2013). *Augmentative and alternative communication: Supporting children and adults with complex communication needs*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Company.

Bondy, A., & Frost, L. (2011). *A picture's worth: PECS and other visual communication strategies in autism*. Bethesda, MD.: Woodbine House

Digital Library

Effective summer 2015, the Division of Special Education and disAbility Research will discontinue the use of the Pearson Digital Library. No further registrations will be accepted. Students who hold current subscriptions will continue to have access to the library for the remainder of their subscription time. However, no further updates will be made to the digital library. During this time, should a textbook be revised or a new book is adopted for a class where the text is included in the digital library, Pearson will have options available to you and will provide you with an individual e-text or, if there is no e-text, a printed copy. Students, who have purchased a 3-year subscription directly through Pearson Education, will also have an option to obtain a prorated refund. However, 3-year subscription access cards purchased via the GMU bookstore will need to speak with a George Mason Bookstore Representative. Please be aware that the issuance of a refund, in this case, is at the discretion of the George Mason bookstore. Concerns or questions may be directed to Molly Haines at Molly.Haines@pearson.com.

Recommended Textbooks

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Browder, D. M., & Spooner, F. (2011). *Teaching students with moderate and severe disabilities*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Downing, J. E., Hanreddy, A., & Peckham-Hardin, K. D. (2015). *Teaching communication skills to students with severe disabilities*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Required Resources

Required resources will be posted on Blackboard.

Additional Readings

Additional required readings will be posted on Blackboard as assigned.

Course Relationships 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 area of Special Education – Adapted Curriculum K-12. 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 standard that will be addressed in this class is Standard 5: Instructional Planning and Strategies. (Updated Fall 2014 to align with the revised CEC Standards)

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/the-mason-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 George Mason University Disability Services and inform their instructor, in writing, as soon as possible. Approved accommodations will begin at the time the written letter from Disability Services is received by the instructor. <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.

Students are expected to attend **all** classes, remain engaged for the duration of each session, and demonstrate professional behavior. When absence from class is unavoidable, students are responsible for getting all class information (e.g. handouts, announcements, lecture notes) from another class member prior to the class meeting that follows the absence. Most handouts will be on Blackboard and all power point slides will be on Blackboard for each class session. In all classes, students will participate in class activities which will contribute to the attendance /participation portion of the final grade. Points missed due to absences during class activities **CANNOT be made up**. Participation points can only be earned if the student is in attendance. The instructor will consider participation of students on a case-by-case basis.

Late Work.

Ten percent of the available points for the assignment will be deducted each day for late submissions during the first week after the due date. *After one week* from the due date, assignments will not be accepted. Thus an assignment that is three days late is able to obtain only 70% of the points for the assignment regardless of the quality of the work. After one week, the assignment will no longer be accepted and a score of zero will be entered into the grade book for that assignment. The point deduction will be made after the grading is complete. The date that the assignment was received by the instructor **in hand or via email or Blackboard** will be considered the date submitted. Submitting an assignment late does not alter the due dates of the other assignments and prevents timely feedback to students regarding their work that may be of value in later assignments. Strive to keep up with the assignment schedule so that you will be able to have appropriate formative evaluation and feedback from your instructor across the semester.

Course Requirements

Each student is expected to:

1. Read assigned materials for the course before coming to class.
2. Present/discuss assigned chapters/articles in class.
3. Participate in classroom activities that reflect critical reading of materials.
4. Complete class assignments and activities.
5. Attend each class session, arrive on time, and stay for the duration of the class time.
6. During class time, computers and peripherals are to be used only for work related to the class. Students found using the computer (whether personal laptop or lab computer) for purposes other than the assigned in class activity will be asked to turn off their equipment and will not receive participation points for that class session.
7. In-depth reading, study, and work on course requirements require outside class time. Students are expected to allot approximately three hours for class study and preparation

for *each* credit hour weekly (a three credit hour course would require nine hours of work weekly in a 45-hour, semester course).

COURSE ASSESSMENTS

Class Participation (5 points/session = 40)

Attendance during all sessions is very important because many of the activities in class are planned in such a way that they cannot necessarily be recreated outside of the class session. Information, activities, and role plays will be presented in class that are not a part of the text and can only be experienced in the class sessions. Furthermore, as part of this course you are expected to be an active and respectful participant, which includes actively engaging in class discussions and activities. Completion of in-class activities includes both active participation in the activity and submission of a permanent product (i.e., form, summary statement, reflection, etc.). Students who miss a class will not have the opportunity to make up missed in-class assignments. Successful completion of in-class activities will be tracked in the blackboard gradebook. As a courtesy, please email me in advance to let me know if you will not be in class.

Blackboard Discussion Question/ Response (35 Points)

Each week, a different question or series of questions will be posted on Blackboard. You are required to respond to these prompts directly (by Friday 10pm) and respond to at least two of your classmates each week (by Sunday 10pm). Your responses must reflect analytic thought and demonstrate relevance by incorporating topics discussed (or to be discussed) in the course. All responses should be at least 1 paragraph. Students will receive 5 points for each week's required postings (7 weeks total).

Topic Board Development, Rationale, and Reflection (30 points)

Using the strategies and procedures reviewed in class, students will create a topic board for their own use in a specific situation. Students will actually use the topic board for conversation for a minimum of one hour (in an identified setting) and will then write a reflection on his or her experiences and impressions.

Case Study and Low Tech AAC system development (30 points)

Students will be given a case individual for whom they are expected to develop a low tech communication system. A rationale for why such a system was created is expected. You will be presenting your low tech systems and explaining their relevance in class.

Literacy Unit Plan/Presentation (40 points) Students will choose and design a unit on a specific topic of their choice. The unit must be centered around a piece of literature, whether a published children's book or personally authored story. Students will adapt the story for students with significant disabilities using communication/literacy tools and strategies discussed in class. Furthermore, students will develop at least 3 additional supplemental resources related to the story that also incorporate communication theory and strategies discussed in class. These resources could include songboards, worksheets, games, crafts, etc. Students will also design a communication board for use during the unit. Students will present their rationale for the unit development and physically show the 5 curriculum materials during a class presentation. Students will submit a 1-2 page rationale describing the topic and target population for the unit

plan, description of the 5 developed resources, and discussion of the communication/literacy theory, tools and strategies considered in the unit plan development.

GRADING SCALE

Tk20 Performance-Based Assessment Submission Requirement

Every student registered for any Special Education course with a required performance-based assessment is required to submit the *(NO ASSESSMENT REQUIRED FOR THIS COURSE)* to Tk20 through Blackboard (regardless of whether the student is taking the course as an elective, a onetime course or as part of an undergraduate minor). Evaluation of the performance-based assessment by the course instructor will also be completed in Tk20 through Blackboard. Failure to submit the assessment to Tk20 (through Blackboard) will result in the course instructor reporting the course grade as Incomplete (IN). Unless the IN grade is changed upon completion of the required Tk20 submission, the IN will convert to an F nine weeks into the following semester.

Grading Scale

- 93-100% = A
- 90-92% = A-
- 83-89% = B
- 80-82% = B-
- 70-79% = C
- <69% = F

Assignment	Due Date	Point Value
Attendance/Participation in Class (8 @ 5 points each)	Throughout course	40
BB Discussion Forum (7 @ 5 points each)	Weekly	35
Topic Board Assignment		30
Case Study/Low tech AAC System		30
Unit plan/presentation		40
Total Points		175

Assignments

Performance-based Assessment (TK20 submission required).
NONE REQUIRED

Performance-based Common Assignments (No TK20 submission required).
NONE Required

Other Assignments.

Schedule

Due dates below are subject to change based on needs of the class

Session	Date	Topic/Lecture	Readings Readings should be completed by class date listed.	Assignments Due
1	1/11/16	Overview of course syllabus, expectations and assignments Introduction to teaching communication skills		
2	1/18/16	NO Class		
3	1/25/16	Introduction to Augmentative and Alternative Communication BoardMaker Training Developing a Topic Board	Beukelman & Mirenda (Chapters 1,2,3,4) Bondy & Frost (1, 2, 3) BB Readings	BB Discussion
4	2/1/16	Assessment and Decision Making	Beukelman & Mirenda (Chapters 5, 6, 7) BB Readings	BB Discussion Topic Board Rationale
5	2/8/16	Communication and Behavior PECS Visual Strategies	Bondy & Frost (4, 5, 6, 8) BB Readings	BB Discussion Topic Board Reflection
6	2/15/16	NO Class		
7	2/22/16	AAC Interventions	Beukelman & Mirenda (Chapters 8, 9, 10) BB Readings	BB Discussion Case Study Presentations
8	2/29/16	Linguistic and social competence Literacy Interventions Facilitating Access to General Curriculum	Beukelman & Mirenda (Chapter 11, 12, 13)	BB Discussion
9	3/7/16	Literacy Unit Plan Presentations		BB Discussion Literacy Plan
10	3/14/16	ATS Lab Visit		BB Discussion