



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

Fall 2019

EDSE 534: Communication and Severe Disabilities

Section: DL1 CRN: 72567

Section: 6U1 CRN: 82682

3 – Credits

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|--|--|
| Instructor: Dr. Melissa Ainsworth | Meeting Dates: 08/26/2019 – 12/5/2019 |
| Phone: 703-993-5469 | Meeting Day(s): N/A |
| E-Mail: mainswor@gmu.edu | Meeting Time(s): Asynchronous |
| Office Hours: By Appointment | Meeting Location: On-line |
| Office Location: 206A Finley Fairfax Campus | Other Phone: |

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

Prerequisite(s): None

Co-requisite(s): None

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.

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 teacher candidates/students should contact the Special Education Advising Office at (703) 993-3670 for assistance. All other teacher candidates/students should refer to their faculty advisor.

Advising Tip

Are you completing a teacher licensure or non-licensure certificate program in addition to a Master's degree? Students can submit a Graduate Secondary Certificate Application (<http://registrar.gmu.edu/wp-content/uploads/GSCA.pdf>) to their advisor when they are ready to

add a certificate. Talk to your advisor if you have any questions about the program/s you are completing.

Course Delivery Method

Learning activities include the following:

1. Learning module lectures, discussion, activities and participation
2. Software and hardware demonstrations
3. Video and other media supports
4. Group and independent laboratory exploration activities
5. Research and presentation activities
6. Electronic supplements and activities via Blackboard

This course will be delivered online (76% or more) using an asynchronous format via the Blackboard Learning Management system (LMS) housed in the MyMason portal. You will log in to the Blackboard (Bb) course site using your Mason email name (everything before @masonlive.gmu.edu) and email password. The course site will be available on August 26, 2019.

Under no circumstances, may candidates/students participate in online class sessions (either by phone or Internet) while operating motor vehicles. Further, as expected in a face-to-face class meeting, such online participation requires undivided attention to course content and communication.

Technical Requirements

To participate in this course, students will need to satisfy the following technical requirements:

- High-speed Internet access with standard up-to-date browsers. To get a list of Blackboard's supported browsers see:
https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Getting_Started/Browser_Support#supported-browsers

To get a list of supported operation systems on different devices see:

https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Getting_Started/Browser_Support#tested-devices-and-operating-systems

- Students must maintain consistent and reliable access to their GMU email and Blackboard, as these are the official methods of communication for this course.
- Students may be asked to create logins and passwords on supplemental websites and/or to download trial software to their computer or tablet as part of course requirements.
- The following software plug-ins for PCs and Macs, respectively, are available for free download:
 - Adobe Acrobat Reader: <https://get.adobe.com/reader/>
 - Windows Media Player:
<https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/help/14209/get-windows-media-player>

- Apple Quick Time Player: www.apple.com/quicktime/download/

Expectations

- Course Week:
Because asynchronous courses do not have a “fixed” meeting day, our week will **start on Monday** and **finish on the following Tuesday**.
Our course week will begin on the day that our synchronous meetings take place as indicated on the Schedule of Classes.
- Log-in Frequency:
Students must actively check the course Blackboard site and their GMU email for communications from the instructor, class discussions, and/or access to course materials at least 2 times per week. In addition, students must log-in for all scheduled online synchronous meetings.
- Participation:
Students are expected to actively engage in all course activities throughout the semester, which includes viewing all course materials, completing course activities and assignments, and participating in course discussions and group interactions.
- Technical Competence:
Students are expected to demonstrate competence in the use of all course technology. Students who are struggling with technical components of the course are expected to seek assistance from the instructor and/or College or University technical services.
- Technical Issues:
Students should anticipate some technical difficulties during the semester and should, therefore, budget their time accordingly. Late work will not be accepted based on individual technical issues.
- Workload:
Please be aware that this course is **not** self-paced. Students are expected to meet *specific deadlines* and *due dates* listed in the **Class Schedule** section of this syllabus. It is the student’s responsibility to keep track of the weekly course schedule of topics, readings, activities and assignments due.
- Instructor Support:
Students may schedule a one-on-one meeting to discuss course requirements, content or other course-related issues. Those unable to come to a Mason campus can meet with the instructor via telephone or web conference. Students should email the instructor to schedule a one-on-one session, including their preferred meeting method and suggested dates/times.
- Netiquette:
The course environment is a collaborative space. Experience shows that even an innocent remark typed in the online environment can be misconstrued. Students must always re-read their responses carefully before posting them, so as others do not consider them as personal offenses. *Be positive in your approach with others and diplomatic in selecting your words*. Remember that you are not competing with classmates, but sharing

information and learning from others. All faculty are similarly expected to be respectful in all communications.

- Accommodations:

Online learners who require effective accommodations to insure accessibility must be registered with George Mason University Disability Services.

Learner Outcomes

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

1. Identify characteristics of non-symbolic and symbolic communication
2. Describe and discuss methods for assessment, identification of priorities, and monitoring progress of individuals with communication impairments.
3. Discuss and evaluate the range of augmentative and alternative communication devices and systems/assistive technology available for individuals with severe disabilities.
4. Implement assessment strategies to improve students' social interaction with peers and others.
5. 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.
6. Understand and identify behaviors associated with communication.
7. Describe language development and emergent literacy skills for students who use augmentative and alternative communication devices and systems/assistive technology.
8. 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.
9. 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.

Professional Standards

This course is part of The Virginia Consortium for Teacher Preparation in Special Education Adapted Curriculum, a grant from the Virginia Department of Education that includes George Mason University, Virginia Commonwealth University, Radford University, Norfolk State University, Old Dominion University, and James Madison University. Through the completion of the Adapted Curriculum 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, as well as those established by the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support consortium (InTASC). The standards addressed in this class include CEC Standard 5: Instructional Planning and Strategies (InTASC 7,8).

Required Textbooks

Beukelman, D. R. & Mirenda, P. (2013). *Augmentative and alternative communication: Supporting children and adults with complex communication needs* (4th ed.). Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

Recommended Textbooks

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

Additional Readings

Additional readings will be assigned according to topic and will be made available by the instructor on Blackboard.

Course Performance Evaluation

Students are expected to submit all assignments on time in the manner outlined by the instructor (e.g., Blackboard, Tk20, hard copy).

Tk20 Performance-Based Assessment Submission Requirement

It is critical for the special education program to collect data on how our students are meeting accreditation standards. Every teacher candidate/student registered for an EDSE course with a required Performance-based Assessment (PBA) is required to upload the PBA to Tk20 (regardless of whether a course is an elective, a one-time course or part of an undergraduate minor). A PBA is a specific assignment, presentation, or project that best demonstrates one or more CEC, InTASC or other standard connected to the course. A PBA is evaluated in two ways. The first is for a grade, based on the instructor's grading rubric. The second is for program accreditation purposes. Your instructor will provide directions as to how to upload the PBA to Tk20.

For EDSE 534, the required PBA is (NO ASSESSMENT REQUIRED FOR THIS COURSE). Please check to verify your ability to upload items to Tk20 before the PBA due date.

Assignments and/or Examinations

Performance-based Assessment (Tk20 submission required)

None

College Wide Common Assessment (TK20 submission required)

None

Performance-based Common Assignments (No Tk20 submission required)

None

Course Assignments

1. Weekly Learning Modules (14 Modules @ 30 points each)

All modules will open on the specified Monday at 9:00am and all work must be submitted by the following Tuesday by 11:59 pm. Within any learning module, students will be presented with a series of activities. Some activities such as viewing a video or reading a chapter in the textbook are categorized as "Read/View". Other activities such as taking a quiz are categorized as "Complete". All activities identified as "Complete" must be

submitted on-time and be of satisfactory quality to receive full credit. Please note that while “Read/View” activities are not “graded”, access to them is being tracked through Blackboard and the content is assessed through additional course assignments.

Please plan accordingly. Best practices will have you open the module on Monday to review the content and check the assignments. Then, pace and participate accordingly for the rest of the week. All modules will be worth 30 points and the tasks will be listed on the first screen of each module.

2. Core Communication Board Development, Use, & Reflection (170 points)

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

- a. **Communication Board Creation:** You will create a core communication board as a task in Module 3. You may update or tweak the board if you wish for this assignment.
- b. **Board Use:** Using the board you have designed, you will participate in a personal activity of your choice such as dinner with your family, game night with friends, etc. The activity must occur with other people. You will use your board for at least one hour. Remember, although you are expected to use your Core Communication Board, you can and should be using multimodal communication during the activity. However, you may not SPEAK, WRITE, TYPE, or TEXT during this activity).
- c. **Reflection:** Upon completion of the activity, you will write a 3-4 page reflection that addresses the following questions:
 1. How is your board set up? Why did you arrange it in the way that you did? Did you change your board from the module assignment? Why or why not?
 2. What was your experience like? How did you interact with those around you? How was it similar and different to the way you typically interact with them?
 3. Describe any communication breakdowns.
 4. If this was your mode of communication, how would you change it?
 5. How does this experience inform your practice?
 6. **Submission:** Submit your Core Communication Board and reflection on Blackboard.

******Note: You are the “student” referenced in this assignment. YOU are to use the board you create. You are NOT creating a board for a school-aged student to use.*****

3. Case Study System Development (170 points)

You will be assigned a case study of an individual who has complex communication needs. You will develop a communication system combining low and high tech that will address the communication needs of the student across environments and across the day. This includes transitions (e.g., on the bus, in the hall), daily routines (e.g., lunch), and academic instruction.

- a. **Design the system:** Design a system that addresses your assigned student's unique communication needs. You'll need to consider such factors as the individual's physical access needs, environmental considerations, age appropriateness, ease of use, and the ability to be clearly understood by others. You will consider what you've learned in class and your readings to determine symbol selection, physical design, and materials. *****Look ahead to your final major assignment, the System Development and Application Project. You should plan to use this system for that project as well.*****
- b. **Create the System:** You will create the actual physical materials that you would use in your system. Be sure to include a fully designed system that addresses communication during transitions (e.g., on the bus, in the hall), daily routines (e.g., lunch), and academic instruction.
- c. **Present the System:** You will create a video presentation that you will share with your professor on Blackboard. The presentation should address the following topics to obtain full credit on this assignment.
 1. Description of your student
 2. An overview of all the components of your system
 3. A *thorough* rationale for your choices (i.e., symbol selection, physical access to and interactivity with the system, etc., referencing your text and other class readings)
 4. Demonstration of the materials you will use for transitions and academics

4. System Development and Application Project (240 points)

Based upon your work in the Case study system design, students will further develop their case study system and develop application for the system. Below is a project overview followed by detailed descriptions of each aspect of the project.

Project Overview:

- a. Paper: 6– 8 pages
- b. Fully developed communication system for use during academic lessons (can be tweaked or used from case study system development)
- c. Fully developed communication system for use during transitions (can be tweaked or used from case study system development)
- d. Video highlights of one aspect of the system
- e. "What I learned" form

Project Details:

A. Paper:

Students will write a paper to demonstrate their ability to apply the concepts of designing and teaching a communication system. Students will utilize the communication system they designed in the *Case Study AAC System Development Assignment* to ensure successful implementation of the communication system. The paper should follow the outline below using the headers as they appear. Papers must include at minimum three (3) citations from the textbook and at minimum two (2) citations from the articles read for class for a total of five (5) citations minimum. Students may cite additional sources.

Students should use the following headings in writing the paper:

Introduction: (1 to 2 pages) *In this section you introduce your case study student and briefly describe the AAC system, both low and high tech, that you have selected and designed for them. You will need to cite your textbook and or the articles read in class. This section should also include a rationale for the design of the communication system and be grounded in best practices as presented in the textbook and articles read in class.*

Instructional Plan: (2-3 pages) *Design and describe how you will teach the student to use the communication system.*

- **Assessment:** *Describe how you will assess your case study student's current usage of the communication system and how that information will inform your instruction.*
- **Instruction:** *Select one message from your system and outline how you provide instruction in communicative intent for that message.*

System Development: *In this section you will briefly describe and provide*

rationale for two pieces of your system: what part of the system your student would use during academic/ learning class time and the part of the system that would be used during transitions such as in the hallway, cafeteria, gym and on the bus.

Reflection: (2 pages) *Students will reflect on the system they have designed. Consider the following: Does your system allow for greetings, questions, drawing attention, commenting, rejecting/protesting, requesting, and storytelling? Describe rationale for omitting any of the areas of communication above.*

B. & C. Communication Systems

You will also fully develop and upload each of these systems as appendices to the paper. These may be the same or revised versions of the system pieces developed in the Case Study Assignment.

- **Academic Class time:** *Fully design and upload the part of the system your student will use across academic settings.*

- **Transition time:** *Fully design and upload the part of the system your student will use during transitions (hallway, cafeteria, gym, bus).*

D. Presentation:

Students will select one aspect of their system development and application project to highlight in a 2 – 3 minute presentation. Students will film themselves conducting their presentation and upload to blackboard.

E. What I learned Form.

Students will login and view a minimum of 5 number of classmates presentations ensuring that each of the case study students is covered. Students will complete a “What I learned” form as they view their classmate’s presentations and will upload it in on BlackBoard.

Course Policies and Expectations

Attendance/Participation

Students are expected to actively engage in all course activities throughout the semester, which include viewing of all course materials, completing course activities and assignments, and participating in course discussions and group interactions. Grading for work completed in Learning Modules is specifically outlined in Weekly Learning Modules within the Other Assignments section of the syllabus. Please note that while only certain learning elements are assessed through “grades”, the instructor can still assess student involvement and engagement using other measures. Blackboard enables the instructor to view such data as login dates, duration of time spent online, access to specific content elements, and more. The instructor will use this data along with course grades to ensure that students are actively engaged in the course. Students struggling to complete work on time or who appear to not be engaging fully with course content will be asked to conference with the instructor.

Late Work

All activities and assignments should be submitted through Blackboard by 11:59pm on the dates indicated.

Weekly Learning Modules

In fairness to students who make the effort to submit assignments on time, there will be progressive cost reduction per day for late work within each learning module. Work that is submitted one day late will receive a 20% cost reduction, work that is submitted two days late will receive a 30% cost reduction, and work that is submitted 3 days late will receive a 50% cost reduction. After three days past due, students will receive a 0 for any missing work within that learning module.

One-time Extension: The instructor recognizes that unexpected challenges may arise during the semester and, therefore, will allow students to request a one-time extension that they can apply to one Weekly Learning Module (Modules 1-13 only). Students must request the extension by emailing the instructor (mkinas@gmu.edu) prior to the original due date; requests made after 11:59pm on the specified due date will not be honored. Students do not need to receive confirmation from the instructor to assume they have received the extension; it will be automatic as long as it is the first request. The deadline for extended work will be Saturday at 10:00am instead of the specified Tuesday at 11:59pm for the specific learning module. All extensions will be tracked in the Blackboard gradebook.

Course Assignments (Communication Board, Case Study System Development plan, System development and Application Project)

In fairness to students who make the effort to submit assignments on time, there will be a 10% cost reduction per day for late papers for up to 5 days. (For example, a 200-point assignment will lose 20 points per day) After 5 days, students will earn a 0 for the missed assignment. All assignments should reflect graduate-level spelling, syntax, and grammar. If you experience difficulties with the writing process you will need to document your work with your university Writing Center during this course to improve your skills. At the instructor's discretion, students may be given the opportunity to resubmit an assignment. Resubmitted assignments are not eligible for full credit.

Grading Scale

Graduate

| | | |
|-------------|-------------|------------|
| 93-100% = A | 87-89% = B+ | 70-79% = C |
| 90-92% = A- | 80-86% = B | < 70% = F |

*Note: The George Mason University Honor Code will be strictly enforced. Students are responsible for reading and understanding the Code. "To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the university community, have set forth this honor code: Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work." Work submitted must be your own or with proper citations (see <https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/>).

Professional Dispositions

Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times. In the College of Education and Human Development, dispositions are formally and separately

evaluated in at least two points in each student's program – a self-evaluation at the start of their program, and a university supervisor's evaluation during internship. In special education licensure programs, the self-evaluation is an online survey distributed via email upon program entry, and the internship evaluation is completed by instructors in EDSE 783, EDSE 784, and EDSE 785. When dispositions are assessed, it is important that for areas where a positive disposition is 'occasionally evident' or 'rarely evident,' the student takes steps to grow as an educator. See <https://cehd.gmu.edu/epo/candidate-dispositions>.

Class Schedule

*Note: Faculty reserves the right to alter the schedule as necessary, with notification to students.

| Module Week | Module Available* | Module Topic | Module Due** | Additional Assignments Due** |
|---------------|-------------------|--|--------------|--|
| 1 | 8/26 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course Overview • Introduction to Augmentative and Alternative Communication • AAC assumptions | 9/3 | |
| 2 | 9/2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ways of Communication- | 9/10 | |
| 3 | 9/9 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core and Fringe | 9/17 | |
| 4 | 9/16 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative Access | 9/24 | |
| 5 | 9/23 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment | 10/1 | |
| 6 | 9/30 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergent AAC Strategies • System development • | 10/8 | |
| 7 | 10/7 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced AAC Strategies • (Case Study Preference) | 10/15 | (10/15) Core Communication Board Assignment Due |
| 8 | 10/14 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language Learning and Development | 10/22 | |
| 9 | 10/21 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boardmaker Online | 10/29 | |
| 10 | 10/28 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AAC and Literacy Part 1 | 11/5 | |
| 11 | 11/4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AAC and Literacy Part 2 • AAC in the Educational Setting | 11/12 | (11/12) Case Study Assignment |
| 12 | 11/11 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AAC Device Exploration | 11/19 | |
| 13 | 11/18 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trends in AAC • | 11/26 | |
| 14 | 11/25 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AAC Research | 12/3 | |
| Presentations | 12/2 | Student Presentation on System Development and Application Project | 12/6 | (12/1) System Development and Application project due. |

Core Values Commitment

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

GMU Policies and Resources for Students

Policies

- Students must adhere to the guidelines of the Mason Honor Code (see <https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/>).
- Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing (see <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/>).
- Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their Mason 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.
- Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with George Mason University Disability Services. Approved accommodations will begin at the time the written letter from Disability Services is received by the instructor (see <http://ods.gmu.edu/>).
- Students must silence all sound emitting devices during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

Campus Resources

- Support for submission of assignments to Tk20 should be directed to tk20help@gmu.edu or <https://cehd.gmu.edu/aero/tk20>. Questions or concerns regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to <http://coursessupport.gmu.edu/>.
- For information on student support resources on campus, see <https://ctfe.gmu.edu/teaching/student-support-resources-on-campus>

For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, please visit our website <https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/>.

Appendix

Assessment Rubric(s)

Core Communication Board Rubric

| AREA | Meets Standards | Approaches Standards | Does Not Meet Standards |
|------|-----------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| | | | |

| | | | |
|------------|---|--|---|
| BOARD | <p>70 Points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You include a photo/screenshot of your actual board Vocabulary and layout include best practices for core and fringe vocabulary as discussed in class | <p>40 Points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You include a photo/screenshot of your actual board Vocabulary and layout include some best practices for core and fringe vocabulary as discussed in class | <p>0 Points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You do not include a photo/screenshot of your actual board Vocabulary and layout do not make sense/do not reflect best practices discussed in class |
| REFLECTION | <p>100 Points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Situation in which the core communication board was utilized is explained clearly All reflection questions are answered thoroughly | <p>75 Points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Situation in which the core communication board was utilized is explained Some reflection questions are answered vaguely or superficially | <p>0 Points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Situation in which the core communication board was utilized is not explained Reflection questions answers are missing or mostly answered vaguely or superficially |
| DEDUCTIONS | <p>Paper is late (17-point reduction per day)</p> <p>Significant Spelling/Grammar issues</p> | | |

Core Communication Board Reflection Questions

- How is your board set up? Why did you arrange it in the way that you did? Did you change your board from the module assignment? Why or why not?
- What was your experience like? How did you interact with those around you? How was it similar and different to the way you typically interact with them?
- Describe any communication breakdowns.

4. If this was your mode of communication, how would you change it?
5. How does this experience inform your practice?

Case Study System Development Rubric

See Blackboard

System Development and Application Project Rubric

See Blackboard