



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

Fall 2020

EDSE 381 001: Exploratory Field Experience in Special Education

CRN: 80854, 3 – Credits

<b>Instructor:</b> Dr. Kristen O'Brien	<b>Meeting Dates:</b> 8/24/20 – 12/16/20
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❖ **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):**

EDSE 201 with a minimum grade of "C" or EDSE 201 "XS".

**Co-requisite(s):**

None

**Course Description**

Introduces students to the role of the special educator in academic and non-academic environments with students across disability areas. Facilitates observation and understanding of the professional work of special educators in K-12 schools, specifically in instruction, behavior management, and data collection. Provides exposure to special education at the transition and community-based levels as well as at the policy and leadership levels. Initiates critical reflection focused on examining special education theory and research in application through practice in school and community-based settings. Includes a 2-hour weekly seminar and a total of 20 field experience hours.

**Course Overview**

EDSE 381 explores the role of the special educator across settings and disability areas. Through observations and interactions with special education professionals, students will be exposed to teaching in special education across multiple disability populations. Observations will focus on

students' exposure to evidence-based instruction, classroom and behavior management, and assessment and data collection. Opportunities to gain understanding and knowledge of special education services beyond K-12 schools will be imbedded. Students will acquire foundational skills in critical reflection that will be used in observations of special educators in their core roles and responsibilities. Throughout the course, students will participate in 20 total field observation hours and a 2-hour weekly seminar.

### **Advising Contact Information**

Please make sure that you are being advised on a regular basis as to your status and progress in your program. Students in Special Education and Assistive Technology programs can contact the Special Education Advising Office at 703-993-3670 or [speced@gmu.edu](mailto:speced@gmu.edu) for assistance. All other students should refer to their assigned program advisor or the Mason Care Network (703-993-2470).

### **Advising Tip**

Have you met with an advisor in Special Education? All students should make an appointment to meet with an advisor to outline a plan for completing coursework and non-course requirements such as testing. To make an appointment by phone or in person, go to <http://gse.gmu.edu/special-education/advising/>.

### **Course Delivery Method**

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:

1. Observe special educators' roles and responsibilities in K-12 classroom settings across disability populations.
2. Gain knowledge and understanding about special educators' roles in transition services and post-secondary education.
3. Gain knowledge and understanding about special educators' roles at the policy and leadership levels.
4. Learn and understand the guidelines for ethical practice of special educators in classroom settings.
5. Effectively establish contact, complete observation hours, and interact with field experience site staff and students.
6. Demonstrate professionalism within all school-based and outside-of-class observations and interactions.
7. Identify the key elements of reflection and demonstrate effective reflection on classroom-based observations and other experiences involving special educators.

8. Understand the key parts of a special education lesson, and use a scaffolded lesson plan template to construct a “mock” lesson.

### **Professional Standards**

Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC). Upon completion of this course, students will have met the following professional standards: CEC Standard 1: Learner Development and Individual Learning Differences (InTASC 1,2); CEC Standard 5: Instructional Planning and Strategies (InTASC 7); CEC Standard 6: Professional Learning and Ethical Practice (InTASC 9).

### **Required Texts**

Archer, A. L., & Hughes, C. A. (2010). *Explicit instruction: Effective and efficient teaching*. Guilford Press.

### **Recommended Texts**

American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). <https://doi.org/10.1037/0000165-000>

### **Required Resources**

Access to Blackboard and videoconferencing as needed (e.g., Zoom, Blackboard Collaborate Ultra)

### **Additional Readings**

Additional readings will be posted on Blackboard.

### **Course Performance Evaluation**

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

### **VIA 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 VIA (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 VIA.

For EDSE 381, the required PBA is Professionalism and Reflective Ability. Please check to verify your ability to upload items to VIA before the PBA due date.

## Assignments and/or Examinations

### Performance-based Assessment (VIA submission required)

**1. Exploratory Field Experience Portfolio (50 points; no required upload to VIA):** Throughout the semester, students will be working on components of a culminating portfolio to reflect their learning in EDSE 381. The portfolio will consist of the following components:

- A. Professional Writing: This part of the portfolio includes key documents that students will need within their special education program and after graduation. The Professional Writing section of the Portfolio will include (a) an introduction letter to a prospective school introducing themselves for clinical experiences or internship placements and (b) a professional resume.
- B. Final Reflection: In this part of the portfolio, students will have an opportunity to reflect on the major concepts covered in this course. Students will synthesize content learned in this course and reflect on their current beliefs around special education. The Final Reflection section of the Portfolio will include a paper on (a) the roles and responsibilities of special educators, (b) professional and ethical behaviors expected of special educators, and (c) a current teaching philosophy for special education.

Detailed directions and a rubric for the Exploratory Field Experience Portfolio will be provided on Blackboard and will be discussed in class.

### College Wide Common Assessment (VIA submission required)

N/A

### Performance-based Common Assignments (No VIA submission required)

**2. Field Experience Journal (8 weeks @ 5 points each + 1 interview presentation @ 10 points; 50 points):** Students will engage in 20 observation hours in the field of special education. Due to COVID-19, during the Fall 2020 semester, students will not be placed directly in K-12 schools for these observations. Instead, observations will consist of virtual or other non-school based activities (e.g., videos, interviews, videoconferencing). There will be 8 designated weeks of field experiences, and each weekly field experience activity will be posted on Blackboard. Students will access and complete each activity. As part of the field experience journal, for each weekly field experience activity, students will (a) log the hours spent on the field experience activities and (b) write a brief summary of critical insights gained. A template will be provided. At designated points during the semester, there will be field experience journal check-ins, where the journal entries will be reviewed by the instructor. During one

designated week, the weekly field experience activity will be to interview an assigned special education teacher or professional working at a special education organization; the student will give a brief presentation to the class to share insights gained during the interview. Detailed directions and a rubric for the Field Experience Journal will be provided on Blackboard and will be discussed in class.

**3. Mock Lesson Plan (20 points):** Students will develop one written lesson plan, using explicit instruction, in a content area of their choice for students who access the general curriculum, adapted curriculum, or students with visual impairments, at the elementary or secondary level. A lesson plan template will be provided for this assignment that will help prepare for students for their actual lesson plans for instruction throughout the rest of their clinical experiences. The lesson plan will be theoretical and will not be directly implemented with K-12 students. Detailed directions and a rubric for the Mock Lesson Plan will be provided on Blackboard and will be discussed in class.

### **Field Experience Requirement**

A field experience is a part of this course. A field experience includes a variety of early and ongoing field-based opportunities in which candidates may observe, assist, and/or tutor. Field experiences may occur in off-campus settings, such as schools (CAEP, 2016).

Students must be able to perform the essential functions of the practicum site assigned with or without an accommodation. Contact Disability Services (ods@gmu.edu) for questions related to accommodations.

\*Please note that due to barriers with accessing field experience placements in Fall 2020 as a result of COVID-19, there will be changes to the field experience process in this course. Students will be notified well in advance with changes and provided with alternative options. Check your Mason email regularly for important information regarding your field experience.

### **Other Assignments**

#### **Participation & Professionalism (2 points/class session; 28 points total):**

Attendance, punctuality, and active participation during each class session and assigned activity are expected. For each class session, students will earn up to 2 points for the following expectations:

A) Attendance: Students are expected to attend all classes, arrive on time, and remain in class for the duration of each session. Refer to the Attendance Policy below for detailed expectations.

B) Participation & Professional Behavior: Throughout all classes, students are expected to demonstrate professional and ethical behavior in the classroom, and complete all assignments (including those completed in

class, out of class, or on Blackboard) with professional quality, integrity, and in a timely manner. Students are expected to read all assigned readings prior to class and to be prepared for class with required assignments and materials. Students are expected to frequently and actively participate in discussions and activities during class sessions, and are also expected to demonstrate respectful listening skills when others are talking in class.

**Assignment Summary**

Course grades are calculated by summing the points earned on assignments and dividing by the total possible points. Grades are designed to indicate your success in completing assignments, not the level of effort you put into them.

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Points Possible</b>
Exploratory Field Experience Portfolio <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional Writing: Introductory Letter (5 points)</li> <li>• Professional Writing: Resume (10 points)</li> <li>• Final Reflection (35 points)</li> </ul>	50 points
Field Experience Journal	50 points
Mock Lesson Plan	20 points
Participation & Professionalism (2 points/class)	28 points
<b>Total Points</b>	148 points

**Course Policies and Expectations**

**Attendance/Participation**

Class attendance and professional participation at all sessions are 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. Students are expected to (a) attend all classes during the course, (b) arrive on time, (c) remain in class for the duration of each session, (d) actively participate and demonstrate professional behavior in the classroom, and (e) complete all assignments with professional quality and on time. All assigned readings should be completed prior to class. (Note: assigned readings may be added or removed as the semester progresses.)

**Late Work**

To successfully complete this course, students need to adhere to all due dates for readings and assignments. All assignments should be submitted on or before the assigned due date. To be considered on time, assignments must be submitted by the start of class on the due date, unless otherwise noted by the instructor. On all assignments, full credit is available for those submitted on time. For every 24-hour period that an assignment is late, a 5% point deduction will occur. After one week from the due date (or until the last class session per the syllabus, whichever

comes first), assignments will not be accepted. Please contact the instructor in advance if there is a problem with submitting your work on time.

### **Grading Scale**

A	95-100%
A-	90-94%
B+	87-89%
B	83-86%
B-	80-82%
C+	77-79%
C	73-76%
C-	70-72%
D	60-69%
F	<60%

**\*Note:** The George Mason University Honor Code will be strictly enforced. See [Academic Integrity Site](https://oai.gmu.edu/) (<https://oai.gmu.edu/>) and [Honor Code and System](https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/) (<https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/>). 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 new, original work for this course or with proper citations.

### **Professional Dispositions**

Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times. See [Policies and Procedures](https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/policies-procedures/) (<https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/policies-procedures/>). 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 for graduate students and within initial courses (EDSE 241, EDSE 361, and EDSE 311) for undergraduate students. 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.

Although our course is designated as meeting face-to-face, there is flexibility built in. Some weeks, we may meet online synchronously (i.e., at our usual class time) or asynchronously (i.e., you have activities to complete in lieu of a class meeting, which you can complete on your own

schedule). I will give you advance notice for any class meetings that will be held online. If at any point you need to access class sessions virtually, please let me know.

<b>Week</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Readings Due</b>	<b>Assignments Due (by 1:30 PM EST of due date)</b>
Week 1 Aug. 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Course overview &amp; syllabus review</li> <li>• Special educator identity</li> <li>• Introduction to special education as a profession</li> </ul>	None	
Week 2 Sept. 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LRE &amp; Continuum of services</li> <li>• Reflection</li> </ul>	Week 2 Readings on Blackboard	
Week 3 Sept. 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professionalism:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Professional and Ethical Behavior</li> <li>○ Professional writing</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Explicit Instruction: Introduction</li> </ul>	Archer & Hughes Ch. 1 Week 3 Readings on Blackboard	Field Experience interview sign-up  Field Experience Journal #1
Week 4 Sept. 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboration</li> <li>• Teaching students who access the General Curriculum</li> <li>• Explicit Instruction: Lesson planning</li> </ul>	Archer & Hughes Ch. 2 Week 4 Readings on Blackboard	Portfolio: Introduction letter  Field Experience Journal #2  Field Experience Journal Check-In (Journals 1 & 2)
Week 5 Sept. 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching students who access the General Curriculum</li> <li>• Explicit Instruction: Vocabulary and Lesson critique</li> </ul>	Archer & Hughes Ch. 3 Week 5 Readings on Blackboard	Field Experience Journal #3
Week 6 Sept. 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching students who access the Adapted Curriculum</li> <li>• Explicit Instruction: Lesson Writing from Observation</li> </ul>	Week 6 Readings on Blackboard	Field Experience Journal #4



Week 7 Oct. 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teaching students who are Blind or Visually Impaired</li> <li>Midterm Feedback</li> </ul>	Week 7 Readings on Blackboard	Field Experience Journal #5 (teacher interview)  Field Experience Journal Check-In (Journals 3, 4, & 5)
Week 8 Oct. 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Special education services in other school settings</li> <li>Interview presentations</li> </ul>	Week 8 Readings on Blackboard	Field Experience Journal #6
Week 9 Oct. 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working in Special Education: Students with Transition services</li> </ul>	Week 9 Readings on Blackboard	Field Experience Journal #7  Mock Lesson Plan
Week 10 Oct. 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working in Special Education: Students at the Post-secondary Level</li> </ul>	Week 10 Readings on Blackboard	Field Experience Journal #8  Field Experience Journal Check-In (Journals 6, 7, & 8)
Week 11 Nov. 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working in Special Education: Policy and Leadership</li> </ul>	Week 11 Readings on Blackboard	
Week 12 Nov. 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with Students &amp; Adults at the Community-Based Level</li> <li>Revisiting special education teacher identity</li> </ul>	Week 12 Readings on Blackboard	
Week 13 Nov. 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revisiting continuum of services</li> <li>Revisiting reflection</li> <li>Professional writing: resume writing</li> </ul>	Week 13 Readings on Blackboard	Portfolio: Final Reflection Paper
Nov. 25	No class – Mason Thanksgiving Recess		
Week 14 Dec. 2	Online Class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Course Wrap-Up</li> <li>Course evaluations</li> </ul>	None	Portfolio: Resume

## 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: See [Core Values](http://cehd.gmu.edu/values/) (<http://cehd.gmu.edu/values/>).

## GMU Policies and Resources for Students

### Policies

- Students must adhere to the guidelines of the Mason Honor Code. See [Honor Code and System](https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/) (<https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/>).
- Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing. See [Responsible Use of Computing](http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/) (<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 [Disability Services](https://ds.gmu.edu/) (<https://ds.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 VIA should be directed to [VIA Help support@watermarkinsights.com](mailto:VIA_Help_support@watermarkinsights.com). Questions or concerns regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to [Blackboard Instructional Technology Support for Students](https://its.gmu.edu/knowledge-base/blackboard-instructional-technology-support-for-students/) (<https://its.gmu.edu/knowledge-base/blackboard-instructional-technology-support-for-students/>).

### Notice of mandatory reporting of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking:

- As a faculty member, I am designated as a “Responsible Employee,” and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason’s Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1202. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason’s confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) at 703-380-1434 or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 703-993-2380. You may also seek assistance from Mason’s Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing the [Title IX Coordinator](mailto:titleix@gmu.edu) ([titleix@gmu.edu](mailto:titleix@gmu.edu)).
- For information on student support resources on campus, see [Student Support](#)

**Resources on Campus** (<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 [College of Education and Human Development](http://cehd.gmu.edu/) (<http://cehd.gmu.edu/>).

## Appendix

### Assessment Rubric(s)

#### Exploratory Field Experience Portfolio: Grading Rubric

Assignment Requirement	Points
<b>Professional Writing – Introduction Letter</b> <b>5 points</b>	
Writes a professional introduction letter to assigned schools. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Letter includes (a) an appropriate salutation, (b) a brief personal introduction, (c) a statement of the intent of the letter, (d) a request for next steps, and (e) an appropriate signature with contact information.</li> <li>• Letter follows all guidelines for professional writing and etiquette.</li> </ul>	/ 5
<b>Professional Writing – Resume</b> <b>10 points</b>	
Writes a professional resume with accurate and relevant information, including the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact information</li> <li>• An objective</li> <li>• Work experience</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Education-related skills</li> <li>• Other sections are <i>optional</i> (e.g., honors and awards, volunteer activities, certifications)</li> <li>• Resume prioritizes/highlights the most important information first</li> </ul>	/ 7
Resume format and content are clear and use accurate spelling and grammar throughout.	/ 3
<b>Final Reflection Paper</b> <b>35 points</b>	
<b>Special Educators’ Roles and Responsibilities:</b>	
Describes the roles and responsibilities of a special education teacher. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Descriptions include the importance for each role and responsibility for effectively serving students with disabilities. (In other words, why are these needed?)</li> </ul>	/ 10

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Descriptions are supported by/connected to examples from course content, readings, and discussions.</li> </ul>	
Describes if and how roles and responsibilities may look different across the continuum of special education settings	/ 5
<b>Professional and Ethical Behavior:</b>	
Describes at least 3 professional and ethical behaviors required of special educators. Each behavioral description includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An explanation of how the behavior links to the CEC and/or VDOE professionalism standards</li> <li>• An explanation of why that behavior is important.</li> </ul>	/ 6
Describes how you can demonstrate professional and ethical behavior during clinical experiences and internships in the special education program. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gives specific examples of how you can demonstrate these behaviors</li> <li>• Explains why these behaviors are important to learn as a teacher candidate in preparation for a teaching career</li> </ul>	/ 4
<b>Teaching Philosophy:</b>	
Writes a personal special education teaching philosophy, which addresses the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How you envision your role as a special education teacher</li> <li>• How you believe students with disabilities learn best</li> <li>• The types of instruction you envision providing</li> <li>• Your goals for your teaching and/or your students</li> <li>• Any other aspects pertinent to your philosophy and beliefs</li> </ul>	/ 8
<b>Writing Mechanics:</b>	
Accurate spelling, grammar, and APA style throughout paper	/ 2
<b>TOTAL POINTS</b>	<b>/ 50</b>