College of Education and Human Development

Division of Special Education and disAbility Research

Summer 2023
EDSE 636: Supporting Communication and Literacy for Individuals with Autism
Section 001; CRN: 43249
Section: 002; CRN: 43250
3 – Credits

Instructor: Dr. Grace L Francis	**Meeting Dates**: 5/15/23 -7/5/23
Phone: 703.993.6064	**Meeting Day(s)**: Online
E-Mail: gfranci4@gmu.edu *email is the best way to reach me	**Meeting Time(s)**: NA
Office Hours: By appointment	**Meeting Location**: NA
Office Location: Zoom: https://gmu.zoom.us/j/96685705816 Password: 636	**Other Phone**: N/A

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
Surveys the characteristics of communication and literacy, as well as the design and implementation of communication systems for individuals with autism spectrum disorder across their lifespans. Explains methods for assessment, identification of priorities, and monitoring progress of communication and literacy instruction in order to improve behavior, academic skills, and social interactions in various environments.

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 Student Services at 1-844-306-1785, mason@support.edu.help for assistance.

Advising Tip

Did you know you can order an official transcript through Patriotweb? Logon to Patriotweb. Select Student Services. Select Student Records. Select Order Official Transcript.

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

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 Patriot Pass password. Because asynchronous courses do not have a "fixed" meeting day, our week will start on Tuesday at 12:01 a.m. ET and finish on Monday at 11:59 p.m. ET.

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: [Browser support](https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Getting_Started/Browser_Support#supported-browsers) (https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Getting_Started/Browser_Support#supported-browsers)

  To get a list of supported operation systems on different devices see: [Tested devices and operating systems](https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Getting_Started/Browser_Support#tested-devices-and-operating-systems) (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 will need a headset microphone for use with the Blackboard Collaborate web conferencing tool. Blackboard Collaborate Ultra will be used for optional office hours.
- 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/) (https://get.adobe.com/reader/)
  - [Windows Media Player](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/help/14209/get-windows-media-player) (https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/help/14209/get-windows-media-player)
  - [Apple Quick Time Player](www.apple.com/quicktime/download/) (www.apple.com/quicktime/download/)

- Technical Support 24/7
  - chat: https://support.edu.help
  - call: 1-844-306-1785
  - e-mail: Mason@support.edu.help

Expectations
- Course Week:
  Because asynchronous courses do not have a "fixed" meeting day, our week will start on Tuesday at 12:01 am ET and finish on Monday at 11:59 pm ET.
- 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 3 times per week.
- 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, candidates will be able to:

1. Identify characteristics of communication for individuals with autism spectrum disorder.
2. Describe and discuss methods for assessment, identification of priorities, and monitoring progress of individuals with autism spectrum disorder.
3. Discuss and evaluate the range of augmentative and alternative communication devices and systems/assistive technology/instructional technology available for individuals with autism spectrum disorder.
4. Design assessment and instructional strategies to improve individuals' social interactions with peers and others.
5. Design communication/AAC/AT assessment and instructional strategies to develop and implement individual educational planning and group instruction with individuals with autism spectrum disorder.
6. Identify behaviors associated with communication for individuals with autism spectrum disorder.
7. Describe methods of building communication systems to support language and literacy in individuals with autism spectrum disorder.
8. Describe evidence-based literacy practices for individuals with autism spectrum disorder.

9. Describe language development and emergent literacy skills for individuals with autism spectrum disorder.
10. Describe and plan quality pre-literacy and literacy instruction for individuals with autism spectrum disorder.

Course Relationship to Program Goals and Professional Organizations

This course is part of the George Mason University, School of Education (SOED), Special Education Program for the Autism Spectrum Disorders Graduate Certificate. This program complies with the skill competencies for professionals and paraprofessionals in Virginia supporting individuals with autism across the lifespan developed by the Virginia Autism Council. The competencies addressed in this class include General Autism Knowledge, Environmental Structure and Visual Supports, Instructional Programming, Communication, Social Skills and Independence and Aptitude.

Recommended Textbooks

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

Additional readings included on Blackboard.

See weekly Module folders.

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 636, the required PBA is Literary Unit with Low Tech AAC System. 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)

Assignment	Description	Points	Due
Final AAC System, Literacy Plan, and Communication	The purpose of this assignment is for you to apply your knowledge of low tech alternative or augmentative communication (AAC) systems, assessment, and literacy to provide meaningful school, home, and community access to an individual with ASD. More information about this assignment (including a grading rubric and resources) can be found on Blackboard. The rubric and resources should be thoroughly reviewed prior to beginning the assignment and well in advance of the due date.	145	July 7

College Wide Common Assessment (VIA submission required)
N/A

Other Assignments

Assignment	Description	Points	Due date (all assignments due by **11:55pm**)
Discussion Board: Introductions	Provide short personal introduction and an interesting fact	10	May 22
Pre-Course Quiz	Brief pre-quiz about ASD, communication, and literacy	Ungraded, **required**	May 22
Impact on Literacy Checklist for Students with ASD Assessment	Complete the "Impact on Literacy Checklist for Students with ASD" for the individual with ASD on whom you will focus on for the final project.	20	May 29
Final Assignment Brainstorming Document (Part 1)	The purpose of this assignment is to brainstorm ideas and receive early feedback for "Part 1: Description of a Focus Individual with ASD" of your final assignment.	10	May 29

WATI assessment forms	Complete the designated WATI assessment forms for the individual on whom you will focus for your final project.	20	June 5
Final Assignment Brainstorming Document (Part 2)	The purpose of this assignment is to brainstorm ideas and receive early feedback for "Part 2: Literacy Assessment" of your final assignment.	10	June 5
AAC Device Comparison	Select a minimum of one "high tech" and one "mid/low tech" device to explore and compare.	20	June 12
Final Assignment Brainstorming Document (Part 3)	The purpose of this assignment is to brainstorm ideas and receive early feedback for "Part 3: Communication Assessment" of your final assignment.	10	June 12
Discussion- Final Assignment Brainstorming and Feedback	This assignment is designed for you get early feedback on your literacy and communicaiton plan.	10	June 19
Final Assignment Brainstorming Document (Part 4)	The purpose of this assignment is to brainstorm ideas and receive early feedback for "Part 3: Multimodal AAC System" of your final assignment.	10	June 19
Discussion- AAC System Show and Share	This assignment is designed for you get early feedback on your AAC System.	10	June 26
Final Assignment Brainstorming Document (Part 5)	The purpose of this assignment is to brainstorm ideas and receive early feedback for "Part 5: Literacy	10	June 26

	Plan" of your final assignment.		
Final Assignment Brainstorming Document (Part 6)	The purpose of this assignment is to brainstorm ideas and receive early feedback for "Part 6: Communication Plan" of your final assignment.	10	July 3
AAC System Evaluation	The purpose of this assignment is for you to examine how an AAC user communicates across environments and evaluate aspects of their system that effectively and efficiently help them communicate, as well as aspects of her communication system that you might change or enhance.	30	July 3
Post-Course Quiz	Brief post-quiz about ASD, communication, and literacy	10	July 3
Discussion- Questions about Facilitated Communication	This assignment is designed for you to more deeply consider facilitated communication.	10	July 5
Final AAC System, Literacy Plan, and Communication	The purpose of this assignment is for you to apply your knowledge of low tech alternative or augmentative communication (AAC) systems, assessment, and literacy to provide meaningful school, home, and community access to an individual with ASD. More information about this assignment (including a grading rubric and	145	July 5

	resources) can be found on Blackboard. The rubric and resources should be thoroughly reviewed prior to beginning the assignment and well in advance of the due date.		

Total Points for Course:	**345**

Student Evaluations of Teaching:

The student evaluation of teaching, or SET, is an online course survey. You are strongly encouraged to complete this form for each course as this feedback helps instructors and administrators improve your class experiences. Towards the end of the course, you will receive email and Blackboard notifications when the evaluations open. Your anonymous and confidential feedback is only shared with instructors after final grades have been submitted.

Course Policies and Expectations

Attendance/Participation

All coursework will be online and in an Asynchronous format.

Late Work

Work is considered on time if it is submitted by 11:55pm on the date that it is due. *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 date that the assignment was received by the instructor **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.

Grading (traditional rounding principles apply)

93-100% = A

90-92% = A-

87-89% = B+
83-86% = B
80-82% = B-
70-79% = C
< 69% = F

*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 https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/polices-procedures/ .

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

Module	Topics Covered	Module Readings	Module Assignments
1	Language, Literacy, and Communication Development		Discussion Board: Introductions Pre-Course Quiz
2	Assessing Literacy		Impact on Literacy Checklist for Students with ASD Assessment Final Assignment Brainstorming Document (Part 1)
3	Augmentative and Alternative Communication Assessing Communication		WATI assessment forms Final Assignment Brainstorming Document (Part 2)
4	Communication Boards	**See Blackboard for all Required**	AAC Device Comparison

			Final Assignment Brainstorming Document (Part 3)
5	Literacy Skills and Evidence-Based Literacy Instruction	**and Recommended Readings, in addition to Supplemental Resources**	Discussion- Final Assignment Brainstorming and Feedback Final Assignment Brainstorming Document (Part 4)
6	Communication Skills and Evidence-Based Communication Instruction		Discussion- AAC System Show and Share Final Assignment Brainstorming Document (Part 5)
7	Evaluating Communication and Literacy Plans		Final Assignment Brainstorming Document (Part 6) AAC System Evaluation Post-Course Quiz
8	Current Issues in AAC		Discussion- Questions about Facilitated Communication Final AAC System, Literacy Plan, and Communication

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://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 either Tk20 or VIA should be directed to Assessment support (https://cehd.gmu.edu/aero/assessments/).

- Questions or concerns regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to https://its.gmu.edu/knowledge-base/blackboard-instructional-technology-support-for-students/.

Notice of mandatory reporting of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, and stalking:
> As a faculty member, I am designated as a "Non-Confidential Employee," and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, sexual harassment, 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 the 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 or support measures from Mason's Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing titleix@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 http://cehd.gmu.edu/.

Appendix
> **Assessment Rubric(s)**
>> **AAC System, Communication & Literacy Plan**

	Does Not Meet Expectations	**Meets Expectations**	**Exceeds Expectations**
Part 1: Description of a Focus Individual with ASD (15 Points) Skill Competency 1.1.1S: Explains the defining characteristics of autism (e.g., communication, patterns of stereotypical behavior, socialization and social skill development) and the impact on the individual.	Candidate identifies 4 or fewer internal and external characteristics of the focus individual.	Candidate identifies and robustly describes 5 or more internal and external characteristics of the focus individual.	Candidate identifies and robustly describes 6 or more internal and external characteristics of the focus individual and describes how those characteristics influence the individual.
Part 2: Communication and Literacy Assessment (40 points) Skill Competency 8.1.2S: Uses informal and formal tools to assess and analyze social and communication; functional and life skills related to caring for self, caring for home, participating in the community, and employment; academic skills (e.g., literacy, math, science, and social studies); cognitive skills and learning profiles (e.g., attention, processing, organization, problem solving). Skill Competency 3.1.2S: Identifies and uses appropriate informal assessment tools to evaluate the individual's strengths, needs, interests and learning style.	Candidate does not complete each component of the literacy and 5 communication assessments.	Candidate completes each component of the literacy assessment: 1. Characteristics of ASD 2. Settings 3. Personalize 4. AAC In addition to each component of the 5 communication assessments: 1. Communication Form and Function, 2. WATI Form-Section 1 3. WATI Form-Section 4 4. AAC User Snapshot 5. Relevance to Communication Plan	Candidate completes each component of the literacy assessment and 5 communication assessments, in addition to other other forms of assessments (e.g., observations, interviews).
Part 3: Multimodal AAC System (30 points) Skill Competency 4.1.3S: Determines the form of communication (e.g., verbal, gestures, visuals) and assesses the	Candidate does not use assessment data to develop a tailored AAC system for the focus individual. The AAC system includes fewer than 3	Candidate uses assessment data to develop a tailored AAC system for the focus individual. The AAC system includes a minimum of	Candidate uses required and supplemental assessment data to develop a tailored AAC system for the focus individual.

	Does Not Meet Expectations	**Meets Expectations**	**Exceeds Expectations**
need for augmentative communication options that are based on individual needs and strengths. Skill Competency 4.2.1S: Designs a meaningful communication program that crosses all life settings and is based on individual assessment.	meaningful forms of communication relevant across settings. Candidate does not include an image or video of each form of AAC. Candidate does not describe each form of AAC, including (a) the design of the AAC, (b) the purpose of the AAC, and (c) how each AAC reflects the individual's needs and preferences.	3 meaningful forms of communication relevant across settings. Candidate includes an image or video of each form of AAC. Candidate describes each form of AAC, including (a) the design of the AAC, (b) the purpose of the AAC, and (c) how each AAC reflects the individual's needs and preferences.	The AAC system includes 4 or more meaningful forms of communication relevant across settings. Candidate includes an image or video of each form of AAC. Candidate describes each form of AAC including (a) the design of the AAC, (b) the purpose of the AAC, and (c) how each AAC reflects the individual's needs and preferences.
Part 4: Literacy Plan (30 points) Skill Competency 3.2.1S: Identifies instructional and environmental goals that allow for high expectations and access to quality learning experiences. Skill Competency 3.3K: Understands and implements evidence-based strategies, promising practices, and supports to address an individual's goals. Skill Competency 3.3.12S: Provides access to needed adaptive equipment and assistive technology options allowing full participation in home, educational, work and community activities (e.g., communication devices, visual supports, voice to text, text to speech, low to high tech options).	Candidate describes fewer than 2 meaningful and functional literacy skills to focus on with the individual. Candidate describes fewer than 2 strategies to teach literacy skills to the focus individual. Candidate describes how literacy would be integrated into fewer than 2 settings for the case study individual. Candidate fails to describe how they would personalize literacy activities to increase motivation and engagement for	Candidate describes a minimum of 2 meaningful and functional literacy skills to focus on with the individual. Candidate describes a minimum of 2 strategies to teach literacy skills to the focus individual. Candidate describes how literacy would be integrated into a minimum of 2 settings for the case study individual. Candidate describes how they would personalize literacy activities to increase motivation and	Candidate describes 3 or more meaningful and functional literacy skills to focus on with the individual. Candidate describes 3 or more strategies to teach literacy skills to the focus individual. Candidate describes how literacy would be integrated into 3 or more settings for the case study individual. Candidate describes how they would personalize literacy activities to increase motivation and engagement for their case study individual in a high level of detail.

	Does Not Meet Expectations	**Meets Expectations**	**Exceeds Expectations**
	their case study individual. Candidate describes fewer than 3 ways the individual can use their AAC system across environments and activities to enhance their literacy. Candidate fails to describe how they will evaluate the plan to determine if it effectively supports the literacy of the focus individual.	engagement for their case study individual. Candidate describes 3 ways the individual can use their AAC system across environments and activities to enhance their literacy. Candidate describes how they will evaluate the plan to determine if it effectively supports the literacy of the focus individual.	Candidate describes 4 or more ways the individual can use their AAC system across environments and activities to enhance their literacy. Candidate describes how they will evaluate the plan to determine if it effectively supports the literacy of the focus individual in a high level of detail.
Part 5: Communication Plan (20 points) Skill Competency 3.2.1S: Identifies instructional and environmental goals that allow for high expectations and access to quality learning experiences. Skill Competency 3.3K: Understands and implements evidence-based strategies, promising practices, and supports to address an individual's goals. Skill Competency 3.3.12S: Provides access to needed adaptive equipment and assistive technology options allowing full participation in home, educational, work and community activities (e.g., communication devices, visual supports, voice to text, text to speech, low to high tech options).	Candidate does not describe how the focus individual can use their AAC system across home, school, and/or community environments. Candidate does not describe the steps they will take to teach the individual to use each AAC component across home, school, and community environments. Candidate describes how they will evaluate the plan to determine if it effectively supports the communication	Candidate describes how the focus individual can use their AAC system across home, school, and community environments. Candidate describes the steps they will take to teach the individual to use their AAC system across home, school, and community environments. Candidate describes how they will evaluate the plan to determine if it effectively supports the communication of the focus individual. Candidate describes 3-5 considerations for how the individual AAC	Candidate describes how the focus individual can use their AAC system across home, school, and community environments. Candidate describes the steps they will take to teach the individual to use their AAC system across environments, as well as detailed steps on how they will make accommodations to the individual's environments to facilitate communication. Candidate describes how they will evaluate the plan to determine if it effectively supports the communication of

	Does Not Meet Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
	of the focus individual. Candidate describes 3-5 considerations for how the individual AAC system may change as the individual ages.	system may change as the individual ages.	the focus individual, with the support of the focus individual. Candidate describes more than 5 considerations for how the individual AAC system may change as the individual ages.