

**George Mason University**  
**College of Education and Human Development**  
**Early Childhood Education for Diverse Learners**

ECED 624.002 Building Strengths-Based Reciprocal Partnerships with  
Families of Young Children  
3 Credits, Fall 2023, Bichronous  
8/21/2023-10/8/2023; Tuesdays/ 5:30-8:10 pm  
Thompson Hall, Room L019, Fairfax Campus

**Faculty**

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**Prerequisites/Corequisites**

ECED 404 or ECED 504

**University Catalog Course Description**

Focuses on building culturally appropriate reciprocal partnerships with families of children birth-age eight, from diverse racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, linguistic, ability, family structure backgrounds. Develops knowledge, skills and abilities for building strengths-based relationships across home, school, and community contexts.

**Course Delivery Method**

This course utilizes a distributed learning format requiring active participation of all students. Students are expected to complete all class readings prior to each session so as to engage in active dialogue, productive learning, and critical reflection. Activities will include instructor presentation, small-group discussions, student presentations, videos, and whole class sharing to support course content. In addition, a Blackboard online component of coursework is required.

**Learner Outcomes or Objectives**

This course is designed to enable students to do the following:

1. Describe rigorous peer-reviewed research focused on building reciprocal partnerships with families of young children (Birth through age 8).
2. Develop two-way strengths-based communication with families from diverse ethnic, racial, socioeconomic, linguistic, ability, gender, family structure backgrounds
3. Partner with families from diverse backgrounds in formal, informal, Individualized Education Program (IEP), and Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) conferences
4. Advocate with/ for families with young children
5. Analyze and critically reflect on positionality vis-a-vis personal values, beliefs, experiences, implicit biases, and professional roles and identities that contribute to building authentic partnerships with families from diverse backgrounds

6. Discuss the roles of empathy and perspective-taking in building strengths-based reciprocal relationships with families
7. Engage in authentic joint decision-making with families from diverse backgrounds
8. Engage with from families from diverse backgrounds and integrate families' knowledge and skills into the classroom community
9. Collaborate on community-wide efforts and connect families with supportive community resources
10. Create a welcoming environment for all families to navigate with ease
11. Identify levels of reciprocity in family engagement
12. Discuss the role of trauma and trauma-informed care in building partnerships with families
13. Describe and apply theories and techniques of human development, family science, and family engagement for equity, including a focus on antiracism.
14. Implement components of IDEA that support family voices in the special education process.
15. Exhibit standards of professionalism, ethical standards, and personal integrity with children, families, and professionals in the field and in interactions with classmates, the instructor, and others.
16. Use writing as an instructional and assessment tool to generate, gather, plan, organize, and to communicate for a variety of purposes; integrate correct written conventions (i.e., grammar, usage, mechanics, and spelling); and format using current APA style.

### Required Texts

American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). Author.

Koralek, D., Nemeth, K., & Ramsey, K. (2019). *Families & Educators Together*. NAEYC: Washington, DC.

### Course Performance Evaluation

Students are expected to submit all assignments on time in the manner outlined by the instructor.

Assignments	Due Dates	Points
Attendance & Participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance &amp; Participation</li> </ul>	Ongoing	<b>25</b>
Case Study Analyses & Critical Reflections (4)	8/29 9/5 9/12 9/19	<b>20</b>
Research to Practice Paper on Family Engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select area of family engagement</li> <li>• Annotated Bibliography</li> <li>• Peer Review of Paper</li> <li>• Final Paper</li> </ul>	9/5 9/12 9/19, 9/26 10/8	<b>30</b> 0 <sup>1</sup> 10 5 15

Assignments	Due Dates	Points
Interactive Family Webpage & Presentation	10/3	25
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>100</b>

<sup>1</sup> “Select area of family engagement” is assigned 0 points; however, if the student does not follow the procedure to have the instructor approve the area of family engagement the student plans to research for their final paper, it could result in a lower annotated bibliography and final paper grade.

- **Assignments and/or Examinations**

**Case Study Analyses & Critical Reflections** (4 cases x 5 points each = **20 points**)

Students will read each assigned case, answer the associated questions, and write a 200-word critical reflection regarding how they resonated with the case in terms of their current teaching experiences (or past experiences if not currently in the classroom) and how the case will inform their teaching. As students read the case, answer the case questions and write their reflections they should keep the following in mind:

- Description of each family member as you know it
- Any other people who played a key role in the case (e.g. principal, assistant teacher, other grade level teachers, bus driver, etc.)
- Particular area of concern regarding the student and its connection to family engagement.
- Strategies employed by the family, teacher, and other key individuals thus far

**Interactive Family Webpage & Presentation** (Webpage: 20 points + Presentation: 5 points = **25 points**)

Students will create an interactive webpage using wix.com that will utilize strengths-based communication methods. Students will use and cite textbook readings, in-class discussions, and at least five professional/peer-reviewed readings to support the information presented within their webpage. The webpage will include each of the following:

- Creative introduction of self;
- Overview of teaching philosophy (inclusive of partnering with families);
- Overview of the behavior management philosophy;
- Overview of the daily schedule;
- Interactive question of the week/ section that will allow families to interact/provide feedback/ask questions/answer questions, etc; and
- Community and school resources

Students will also create a flyer that reflects what is in the interactive webpage to meet the needs of families whose preferences for communication are paper-based rather than web-based.

Students will cite current research from the course textbooks, class discussions and handouts, and/or other relevant professional/peer-reviewed sources to support the information they provide. They will use in-text citations, include a reference list per APA style guidelines, and use correct written conventions. Each student will present their webpage to the class, and provide classmates with a copies of their flier.

### **Research to Practice Paper on Family Engagement (30 points)**

Students will examine in greater depth one the six areas of family engagement (FE) listed here (Know about, Value, and Embrace Diversity of Families, Joint Decision Making, Two-way Communication, Building Reciprocal Relationships, Learning from Families/ Integrating Knowledge and Skills of Families, Support Home and Community Learning). This examination will include gathering, synthesizing and applying the research evidence related to the particular area of FE at the classroom, program/school, and community levels. The paper will include the following: (a) relevant and recent research on the selected area of family engagement; (b) how this area of family engagement contributes to building reciprocal strengths-based partnerships with families (consider levels of reciprocity discussed in the course); (c) discussion of the facilitators and barriers to implementing this area of FE; and, (d) practical strategies for applying this research as a teacher and implications of these applications for children, families, and teachers.

This six- to eight-page maximum paper requires clear writing, critical thinking, and incorporation of peer-reviewed journal articles and other sources in the FE and ECE research literature. APA format required.

#### **Paper Process Points:**

- Selection of FE area: 0 points
- Annotated Bibliography/ Lit Matrix: 10 points
- Draft of Final Paper to Peer: 2.5 points
- Feedback on Draft to Peer: 2.5 points
- Final Research to Practice Paper: 15 points
  
- **Other Requirements**

### **Attendance and Participation (25 points)**

Because active participation and engagement are imperative for optimal learning, preparation for and participation in in-class and online activities will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Students attend class, arrive on time, and stay for the entire class period.
- Students use laptops and personal devices for instructional purposes only.
- Students complete readings and prepare for class activities prior to class as evidenced by their ability to discuss and write about the concepts presented and examined in the texts as well as participate fully in related activities.
- Students are actively involved in in-class and online learning experiences as evidenced by (a) participating in all activities, (b) engaging in small- and large-group discussions, (c) completing written work related to the activities, and (d) supporting the participation and learning of classmates.
- Students show evidence of critical reflective thinking through in-class and online discussions, activities, and written reflections.

- Students display professional dispositions at all times while interacting with the instructor and other students.
- Students complete participation activities across the semester that complement the scheduled course topic. Instructors will periodically collect artifacts from the activities. Students in attendance and who actively engage in the learning experience will receive credit for their efforts. Graded participation activities are not announced and are implemented at the discretion of the instructor.
- Students submit an attendance and participation self-evaluation.

### **Written Assignments**

All formal written assignments will be evaluated for content and presentation. The American Psychological Association, Seventh Edition (APA) style will be followed for all written work. All written work unless otherwise noted must be completed on a word processor and should be proofread carefully. (Use spell check!) If students are not confident of their own ability to catch errors, they should have another person proofread their work. When in doubt, they should check the APA manual. Students may consult the Writing Center for additional writing support.

Students will do the following:

1. Present ideas in a clear, concise, and organized manner. (Avoid wordiness and redundancy.)
2. Develop points coherently, definitively, and thoroughly.
3. Refer to appropriate authorities, studies, and examples to document where appropriate. (Avoid meaningless generalizations, unwarranted assumptions, and unsupported opinions.)
4. Use correct capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and grammar.
5. Type the paper with double spacing, indented paragraphs, 1-inch margins all around, and 12-point Times New Roman font.

- **Grading**

A = 95-100   A- = 90-94   B+ = 87-89   B = 80-86   C = 70-79   F = < 70

Incomplete (IN): This grade may be given to students who are passing a course but who may be unable to complete scheduled coursework for a cause beyond reasonable control.

All CEHD students are held to the university grading policies as described in the Academic Policies section of the current catalog, which can be accessed at <http://catalog.gmu.edu>. Those students seeking Virginia initial teaching licensure must earn a C or better in all undergraduate licensure coursework.

### **Professional Dispositions**

Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times. See <https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/policies-procedures/>.

## Class Schedule

Topics	Readings	Assignments DUE (Bb= Blackboard)
<b>Unit 1: Introduction to the Course (8/22/23)</b>		
<p>Introduction to the Course</p> <p>Introductions to the Instructors</p> <p>Introduction to our Learning Community</p>	<p>Course Syllabus</p> <p>NAEYC (2021)- <u>Developmentally Appropriate Practice (4<sup>th</sup> edition)</u>, <i>Engaging in Reciprocal Partnerships with Families and Fostering Community Connections</i></p> <p>U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (2018). <i>Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework</i></p>	
<b>Unit 2: What are reciprocal family partnerships and why are they important? (8/29/23)</b>		
<p>Family Partnership vs. Family Engagement vs. Parent Involvement</p> <p>Principles of Family Engagement</p> <p>Impacts of Family Engagement on Children, Families, Teachers</p>	<p>Koralek et al. (2019)- Ch. 1</p> <p>Watch: <a href="https://www.naesp.org/resource/shifting-from-parental-involvement-to-parental-engagement/">https://www.naesp.org/resource/shifting-from-parental-involvement-to-parental-engagement/</a></p> <p>Steen (2022)- <i>Five Rs for Promoting Positive Family Engagement</i></p> <p>Dunst &amp; Dempsey (2007)- <i>Family-professional partnerships and parenting competence, confidence, and enjoyment</i></p>	<p><b>Due to Bb and in Class (8/29): Unit 2 Case Study</b></p>
<b>Unit 3: Anti-racist Strengths-based Family Partnerships (9/5/23)</b>		

Topics	Readings	Assignments DUE (Bb= Blackboard)
<p>Reciprocal Partnerships &amp; Levels of Reciprocity Sources of Support &amp; Requirements for Family Engagement</p>	<p>Koralek et al. (2019)- Ch. 2 Ishimaru et al (2016)- <i>Reinforcing Deficit, Journeying Toward Equity: Cultural Brokering in Family Engagement Initiatives</i> Piper et al. (2021)- <i>The Importance of Anti-Racism in Trauma-Informed Family Engagement</i> Yull et al. (2020)- <i>Reversing the dehumanization of families of color in schools: Community-based research in a race-conscious parent engagement program</i></p>	<p><b>Due to Bb and in Class (9/5): Unit 3 Case Study</b></p> <p><b>Due to Bb (9/5): Area of FE for Research to Practice Paper Selection</b></p>
<p><b>Unit 4: Creating Welcoming School and Classroom Environments (9/12/23)</b></p>		
<p>Getting Started: First Steps to Engaging Families Building Partnerships: Patience and Empathy Building Reciprocity: Families as Decision Makers</p>	<p>Koralek et al. (2019)- Ch. 3 Peck et al. (2015)- <i>Understanding Preschool Teachers' Perspectives on Empathy: A Qualitative Inquiry</i> Ogg et al. (2021)- <i>Parents' and teachers' ratings of family engagement: Congruence and predictions of outcomes</i> Posey-Maddox (2017)- <i>"Race in Place" Black Parents, Family-School Relations, and Multispatial Microaggressions in a Predominantly White Suburb</i></p>	<p><b>Due to Bb and in Class (9/12): Unit 4 Case Study</b></p> <p><b>Due to Bb (9/12): Research to Practice Annotated Bibliography</b></p>
<p><b>Unit 5: Communicating in Partnership with Families (9/19/23)</b></p>		
<p>Reciprocal Communication Informal &amp; Formal Conferences IEP &amp; IFSP Meetings</p>	<p>Koralek et al. (2019)- Ch. 4 Sreckovic et al. (2021)- <i>Building Strong Family and Professional Partnerships from the Start: Highlights from the ASD Literature</i> TBA Article TBA Article</p>	<p><b>Due to Bb and in Class (9/19): Unit 5 Case Study</b></p> <p><b>Due in Class (9/19): Research to Practice Paper DRAFT due to Peer</b></p>
<p><b>Unit 6: Collaborating with Families across Home, Community, and School Contexts (9/26/23)</b></p>		

Topics		Readings	Assignments DUE (Bb= Blackboard)
	Collaborate with Community Groups Families and Teachers as Advocates	Koralek et al. (2019)- Ch. 5 Koralek et al. (2019)- Ch. 6 McWayne et al. (2021)- <i>'we feel connected...and like we belong': A Parent-led, staff-supported model of family engagement in early childhood</i> Leticq et al. (2023)- <i>Fairfax County Family Partnership Framework</i>	<b>Due in Class (9/26): Research to Practice Paper Peer Review</b>
<b>Unit 7: Course Wrap-up (10/3/23)</b>			
	Putting Family Engagement into Action in Our Current Classrooms	Review classmate's webpages on Bb	<b>Due in Class (10/3): Student Presentations</b>  <b>Due to Bb (10/3): Interactive Webpage</b>  <b>Due to Bb (10/8): Research to Practice Final Paper</b>

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

**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 <https://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 follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be silenced during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

#### *Campus Resources*

- Support for submission of assignments to VIA should be directed to [viahelp@gmu.edu](mailto:viahelp@gmu.edu) or <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/>.
- For information on student support resources on campus, see <https://ctfe.gmu.edu/teaching/student-support-resources-on-campus>.

**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 [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](mailto:titleix@gmu.edu).

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