



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

Fall 2023

EDSE 381 001: Exploratory Field Experience in Special Education

CRN: 73869, 3 – Credits

Instructor: Dr. Kristen O'Brien	Meeting Dates: 8/21/23 – 12/13/23
Phone: 703-993-3917	Meeting Day(s): Wednesdays
E-Mail: kmerril2@gmu.edu	Meeting Time(s): 1:30 pm – 3:20 pm
Office Hours: Wednesdays 3:20-4:20 or by appointment	Meeting Location: Finley 119
Office Location: Finley 208-B	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):

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. Initiates critical reflection focused on examining special education theory and research in application. 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 for assistance. All other students should refer to their assigned program advisor or the Mason Care Network (703-993-2470).

Advising Tip

Students pursuing teacher licensure can declare a teaching concentration once they've earned 45 credits and if they have a 2.5 or higher GPA. For the teacher licensure tracks, students must maintain at least a 2.50 GPA and earn a C or better in their program core and concentration coursework.

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
7. Field-based activities

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] and the 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 other Mason applications (e.g., OneDrive or other Office 365 services, Zoom, library website) as needed, including during in-class activities. Thus, students should have regular, reliable access to an electronic device to access course materials and activities.

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/SLL (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/SLL.

For EDSE 381: No requirement to upload a Performance-based Assessment (PBA) to VIA/SLL.

Assignments and/or Examinations

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

N/A

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

N/A

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 teach. Field experiences may occur in off-campus settings, such as schools (CAEP, 2016). Below are REQUIRED PROCEDURES FOR ALL STUDENTS ENROLLED IN THIS COURSE.

1. Complete the online EDSE Field Experience form. This online form will be sent to your GMU email from EDSEfld@gmu.edu on the first day of the semester. Click on the link and complete the form as soon as possible. ALL students should complete the form, regardless of whether you need assistance in locating a field experience placement or not. This information is required by the state. Please direct any questions about the form to Dr. Kristen O'Brien at EDSEfld@gmu.edu.

If you are a full-time contracted school system employee and will complete the field experience at your worksite with administrator and instructor approval, you will be asked to specify the school at which you will be completing the field experience.

If you request a field experience placement to be arranged, you will receive information via your GMU email account about your assigned internship placement from the Clinical Practice Specialist in the College's TEACHERtrack Office. Check your GMU email regularly for important information regarding your field experience. Follow all instructions for the necessary Human Resource (HR) paperwork required to access the assigned field experience placement. Note that you may NOT arrange your own field experience placement.

2. View the EDSE Field Experience Introduction presentation. On the first week of classes and prior to representing George Mason in off-campus settings, your instructor will show a video presentation or provide a link to the presentation, which includes important information about the registration process for EDSE field experiences and tips for a successful field experience. After the presentation, sign the document provided by your instructor to indicate that you have watched the presentation and are aware of the EDSE field experience professionalism expectations.

3. Complete the GMU Experiential Learning Agreement packet (ELP). Mason requires all students completing off-campus field experiences in schools or other agencies to complete this packet. Once you have received your field experience placement, complete and submit this packet to the provided link.

4. Document your field experience hours. Your instructor will provide you with access to field experience documentation forms to use in documenting the hours and activities completed in your field experience placement. Your instructor will provide more directions on how to use and submit the documentation form.

5. Complete the field experience end-of-semester survey. Towards the end of the semester, you will receive an email from EDSEfld@gmu.edu with a link to an online survey. This brief survey asks you to report about important features of your field experience placement.

6. 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.

Other Assignments

1. Observation Portfolio (105 points total – see points listed below for each portfolio component): Throughout the semester, students will be working on components of a culminating portfolio to reflect their learning during their field experience in EDSE 381. Students will go through all steps of the EDSE field experience placement process and complete all requirements to access an assigned K-12 special education field experience placement. Note that students may NOT arrange their own field experience placement. It is the student's responsibility to complete all EDSE field experience placement process steps as soon as possible and in a timely manner. Students will engage in at least 20 hours in their assigned field experience placement, which will be spread across the semester. Students will work with their assigned mentor teacher to arrange scheduled visits that align with their mentor teacher's schedule. The Observation Portfolio will consist of the following components:

- A. **Introduction Email (5 points):** Students will use professional writing skills to write an introduction letter to a prospective school introducing themselves for a field experience placement.
- B. **Log of Hours (10 points):** Students will complete a Log of Hours for their field experience visits to document the date, time, and activities of each visit. It is highly recommended that students fill out the log of hours after each visit to maintain an accurate and complete Log of Hours. During their field experience visits, students will work with their mentor teacher to determine other special education settings and school professionals within the school that can be observed as part of their field experience; a list of possible observation options will be provided on Blackboard. Since the opportunities at each placement school may vary, students must complete at least one observation in a special education setting other than their mentor teacher's classroom as part of their Log of Hours. Additionally, the assigned mentor teacher must sign the Log of Hours at the end of the field experience to verify the hours completed. The Log of Hours must total to at least 20 hours at the assigned field experience placement. Given the importance of the field experience component to this course, students are unable to pass EDSE 381 without completing the minimum of 20 hours at the assigned field experience placement. Thus, if the Log of Hours does not provide evidence of at least 20 field experience hours successfully completed at the field experience placement site assigned by Mason, as verified by the mentor teacher's signature and/or feedback/ratings, the final grade earned in the course will be an F, regardless of the grades on the other assignments in the course.
- C. **Reflection Journals (5 reflections @ 10 points each; 50 points total):** Students will complete five targeted reflection journals, using the reflective process taught in EDSE 381. A reflection journal template will be provided on Blackboard and discussed in class. Note that during one of these reflection journals, students will be required to complete at

least one observation in a special education setting within the school other than their mentor teacher's classroom. A list of possible settings will be provided.

- D. **Interview Project (30 points):** During the field experience, students will conduct one interview with their assigned mentor teacher. Students will complete an interview worksheet and will present their findings with an assigned peer group in a designated class session.
- E. **Professional Dispositions (10 points):** EDSE 381 is a designated course for an evaluation of students' dispositions and professional behaviors within the BSEd in Special Education program. At least once in the semester (and completed more frequently if needed), the EDSE 381 instructor will complete the Professional Dispositions in Class (PDC) tool and the student's assigned Mentor Teacher will be complete the Professional Dispositions in the Field (PDF) tool. At the end of the semester, students will complete their own self-ratings of their professional dispositions in class and professional dispositions in the field.

Detailed information about each component of the Observation Portfolio, including grading rubrics, will be posted on Blackboard and discussed in class.

2. Explicit Instruction Quiz (20 points): Students will complete a quiz on their knowledge of explicit instruction, specifically focusing on content learned in Chapters 1-4 of the Archer and Hughes textbook. More information on the quiz will be posted on Blackboard and discussed in class.

3. Final Reflection Paper (30 points): In this assignment, 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 Paper will include reflection 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 Final Reflection Paper will be provided on Blackboard and will be discussed in class.

4. VCLA Practice Exam (10 points): Students will complete a Longsdale Publishing VCLA Practice Exam (including one reading practice exam and one writing practice exam). Website and log-in instructions will be provided on Blackboard and discussed in class. Students may complete this practice exam at any point during the semester, as long as it is completed by the last class session (see due date in Class Schedule below).

5. 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.

A rubric for Professionalism points will be posted on Blackboard and discussed in class. Professionalism points will be tracked using the Attendance (Qwickly) tool in Blackboard.

Assignment Summary

Assignment	Points
Observation Portfolio:	
• Introduction Email	5 points
• Log of Hours	10 points
• Reflection Journals (5 @ 10 points/reflection)	50 points
• Interview Project	30 points
• Professional Dispositions	10 points
Explicit Instruction Quiz	20 points
Final Reflection Paper	30 points
VCLA Practice Exam	10 points
Professionalism	28 points
Total Points:	193 points

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. More information about the SET can be found on The Institute of Effectiveness and Planning website at <https://oiep.gmu.edu/set/>

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.)

Students earn points for attendance and participation each class (see Professionalism in the Assignments section above); these points can only be earned if the student is in attendance and completes the in-class activities. Please notify me in advance by email or phone if you will not

be able to attend class. When absence from class is unavoidable, it is the student's responsibility to make arrangements to obtain notes, handouts, and/or lecture details from another class member prior to the class meeting that follows the absence.

Please note that we will use the internet and electronic devices as part of in-class activities. However, you will only be permitted to work on material related to class when using the internet and electronic devices as part of in-class activities. Engaging in activities not related to the course (e.g., email, chat, gaming, etc.) show a lack of professionalism and may affect your participation grade.

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.

Other Requirements

Campus Closure or Emergency Class Cancellation/Adjustment Policy: If the campus closes or if a class meeting needs to be canceled or adjusted due to weather or other concern, students should check Blackboard and monitor Mason email for updates on how to continue learning and for information about any changes to events or assignments.

Grading

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. See Policies and Procedures (<https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/policies-procedures/>). Professional dispositions are an essential function of a special educator’s job, indicating that these dispositions are critical to develop and assess in special education licensure programs. In the College of Education and Human Development, dispositions are formally and separately evaluated in VIA/SLL at least three points in each student’s program – a self-evaluation at the start of their program, a self-evaluation at the mid-point of their program, and a university supervisor’s evaluation during internship. In special education graduate licensure programs, the initial self-evaluation is completed in designated courses (EDSE 241, EDSE 361, EDSE 311), the mid-point self-evaluation is completed in designated courses (EDSE 445, EDSE 465, and EDSE 419), and the internship evaluation is completed by instructors in EDSE 482, EDSE 483, and EDSE 484. In addition to these three designated evaluation times, students, instructors, and/or mentor teachers may complete program disposition assessments as part of other courses. Instructors and mentor teachers may complete observer-rated disposition assessments other times throughout the program, as needed. When dispositions are assessed, it is important that for areas where a positive disposition is rated as “not proficient,” the student takes steps to grow as an educator.

Class Schedule

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

Week	Topics	Readings Due (by start of class)	Assignments Due (by 1:30 PM EST of due date)
Week 1 Aug. 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course overview & syllabus review • Field experience preparation • Introduction to special education as a profession / special educator identity 	None	
Week 2 Aug. 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSEd program: concentration overview • LRE & Continuum of services • Standards for Special Educators: Professional and Ethical Behavior 	Week 2 Readings on Blackboard	Field Experience Requirements – complete ASAP
Week 3 Sept. 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection • Collaboration 	Week 3 Readings on Blackboard	Introduction Email

Week 4 Sept. 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicit Instruction 	Archer & Hughes Ch. 1 & 2	*Set up first visit to your field experience site by this week, if you haven't yet done so
Week 5 Sept. 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicit Instruction • SOLs & Lesson Planning • Field experience debrief/check-in 	Archer & Hughes Ch. 3 Week 5 Readings on Blackboard	
Week 6 Sept. 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicit Instruction • Guest speakers: Teaching students who access the General Curriculum 	Archer & Hughes Ch. 4	Observation Portfolio: Reflection Journal #1
Week 7 Oct. 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicit instruction • Guest speakers: Teaching students who access the Adapted Curriculum • Midterm Feedback • Field experience debrief/check-in 	Week 7 Readings on Blackboard	Observation Portfolio: Reflection Journal #2
Week 8 Oct. 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guest speakers: Teaching students who are Blind or Visually Impaired • Explicit Instruction Application Activity 	Week 8 Readings on Blackboard	Observation Portfolio: Reflection Journal #3
Week 9 Oct. 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guest speakers: Working in Special Education – Other School Settings (e.g., private schools, transition, post-secondary) • Explicit instruction: Quiz 	Week 9 Readings on Blackboard	Explicit Instruction Quiz
Week 10 Oct. 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guest speakers: Working in Special Education – Policy and Leadership • Lesson Planning 	Week 10 Readings on Blackboard	Observation Portfolio: Reflection Journal #4
Week 11 Nov. 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guest speakers: Working with Students & Adults in Post-Secondary and Community Settings 	Week 11 Readings on Blackboard	Observation Portfolio: Reflection Journal #5
Week 12 Nov. 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview Project: Part 2 (completed in class) 	Week 12 Readings on Blackboard	Observation Portfolio: Interview Project (Part 1 submitted to

			Blackboard before class begins at 1:30 pm, and Part 2 completed in class)
Week 13 Nov. 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisor visit: Declaring concentrations • Revisiting special education teacher identity • Revisiting professional/ethical behavior 	Week 13 Readings on Blackboard	Professional Dispositions
Nov. 22	No class – Mason Thanksgiving Recess		
Week 14 Nov. 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional writing: Resumes • Course Wrap-Up • Course evaluations 	None	Observation Portfolio: Log of Hours VCLA Practice Exam Final Reflection Paper: due Friday 12/1 at 11:59 pm

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 viahelp@gmu.edu or <https://cehd.gmu.edu/aero/assessments>.
- 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/).
- [Learning Services \(learningservices@gmu.edu\)](mailto:learningservices@gmu.edu) - Provides a variety of experience-based learning opportunities through which students explore a wide range of academic concerns. Services include support to students with learning differences, individual study strategy coaching, individualized programs of study, and referrals to tutoring resources. Presentations on a variety of academic topics such as time management, reading, and note taking are available to the university community. The programs are open to all George Mason University students free of charge.

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 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)

N/A (no Performance-based Assessment or College Wide Assessment). Note that all grading rubrics will be posted on Blackboard and discussed in class.