



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

Spring 2013
EDSE 703-6E7 Creating a Collaborative Culture

Instructor: Dr. Vicky Spencer	Meeting Dates: 01/09/13 - 03/13/2013
Phone: 703.993.5598	Meeting Day(s): Wednesdays
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Office Hours: by appointment	Meeting Location: Independence Hill, Building 100, Room 32

Course Description:

Provides leaders in school settings with an opportunity to gain the skills needed to facilitate collaborative environments supportive of all learners. Topics of study include the impact of diversity on educational settings, developing a vision, effective communication teaming and co-teaching techniques, family professional partnerships, implementing school-wide change initiatives, alternative dispute resolution and maintaining a positive school climate.

Prerequisite(s): There are no *required* prerequisites for this course, but it is strongly recommended that students completing the Certificate in Special Education Leadership complete courses in a specific order. Please contact your advisor for the recommended sequence of courses if you are completing the Certificate in Special Education Leadership.

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 students should contact the Special Education Advising Office at (703)993-3145 for assistance. All other students should refer to their faculty advisor.

Nature of Course Delivery

Learning activities include the following:

- Discussion of material read in preparation for course sessions.
- Student participation (e.g., discussion, demonstration, inquiry) in small group and cooperative learning activities, including analysis of critical issues and readings as applied to case-based scenarios.
- Student self-assessment of progress throughout the course.
- Access and analyze resources using a variety of approaches, including Blackboard, web-based resources, and professional peer-reviewed journal articles.
- Instructor-student dialogue and interactions during and outside of class sessions that bring relevance and heightened skills, knowledge, and insights to the students and Instructor, with a focus on strengthening lifelong learning skills in the professional and ethical practice of special education.

Learner Outcomes

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

- 1) Define collaboration, consultation, and teamwork and explain the essential characteristics of each.
- 2) Demonstrate the ability to synthesize principle concepts from public policy, legislation, research data and literature in the context of collaboration among and between families, professional and interagency partnerships.
- 3) Identify variables that may facilitate or constrain participation in collaboration, consultation or teamwork settings.
- 4) Identify and apply collaboration and communication concepts, principles, and skills among families, professionals at the individual, building, district, and agency level.
- 5) Articulate and apply best practices in the development and implementation of collaborative instructional teams among and between professionals, families and agencies.
- 6) Demonstrate communication skills of listening, avoiding communication roadblocks, dealing with resistance, being appropriately assertive and resolving conflicts.
- 7) Demonstrate the ability to identify and effectively apply a variety of problem solving, alternative dispute resolution and decision making techniques at the individual, group, building district and interagency levels.
- 8) Identify and implement a variety of planning process models for integrating the family, school and community.

Required Textbooks

Holcomb, E. L. (2009). *Asking the right questions: Tools for collaboration and school change* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.

American Psychological Association. (2009). *Publication manual* (6th ed., 2nd printing). Washington, DC: Author.

Supplemental Readings (Available in Blackboard):

Each week students are expected to access and complete any readings and/or activities provided in the applicable folder in the course content section of the course Blackboard site available at <http://courses.gmu.edu>

Other Required Resources

Blackboard

Check Blackboard regularly for additional course materials at <http://courses.gmu.edu>

Course's Relationship to Program Goals and Professional Organization

This course is part of the George Mason University, Graduate School of Education (GSE), Special Education Program. This program complies with the standards for special educators established by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), the major special education professional organization.

The CEC Standards are listed on the following web site:

<http://www.cec.sped.org/Content/NaviagationMenu/ProfessionalDevelopment/ProfessionalStandards/>.

Look in the second column on the left, and click on "Professional Standards." The CEC standards that will be addressed in this class are Standard 9: Professional and Ethical Practice and Standard 10: Collaboration.

GMU POLICIES AND RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS:

Student Expectations

- a. Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See <http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode/>].
- b. Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing [See <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/1301gen.html>].
- c. Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their George Mason University 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.
- d. The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance [See <http://caps.gmu.edu/>].
- e. Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the George Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform their instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester [See <http://ods.gmu.edu/>].
- f. Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.
- g. The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing [See <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>].

PROFESSIONAL DISPOSITIONS

Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times.

CORE VALUES COMMITMENT

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

For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, Graduate School of Education, please visit our website [See <http://gse.gmu.edu/>].

Course Policies & Expectations

Attendance.

For a satisfactory grade in the course, students are expected to attend all classes, arrive on time, demonstrate professional behavior in the classroom, and complete all assignments with professional quality and in a timely manner. When absence from class is unavoidable, students are responsible for getting all class information (e.g., handouts, announcements, notes, syllabus revisions, etc.) from another class member prior to the class meeting that follows the absence. Be aware that any points earned for participation in class activities during a time of absence will not be earned and cannot be reclaimed.

Late Work.

Two points will be deducted each day beyond the due date for work submitted late.

TaskStream Submission

For student evaluation, program evaluation, and accreditation purposes, all students are required to submit an NCATE assignment from selected Special Education courses to TaskStream. The NCATE assignment required for this course must be submitted electronically to Mason's NCATE management system, TaskStream: (<http://www.taskstream.com>).

Note: Every student registered for any EDSE course as of the Fall 2007 semester is required to submit signature assignments to TaskStream (regardless of whether a course is an elective, a onetime course or part of an undergraduate minor). TaskStream information is available at <http://gse.gmu.edu/programs/sped/>. Students who do not submit the required NCATE assignment to TaskStream will receive a grade of Incomplete (IN) in the course. The Incomplete (IN) will change to a grade of (F) if the required NCATE assignment has not been posted to TaskStream by the incomplete word due date listed in the current semester's Schedule of Classes.

Grading scale

94 – 100% = A

90 – 93% = A-

86 – 89% = B+

80 – 85% = B

70 – 79% = C

<70 = F

Assignments

Collaboration Plan for Creating School Change (NCATE Assignment)	25%
Participatory Activities	20%
Application Activities	20%
Exploration of Current Setting	20%
Presentation of Collaboration Plan	15%
Total	100%

NCATE/Taskstream Assignments.

1) Collaboration Plan for Creating School Change (25%)

Students will develop a situation-specific Collaboration Plan to enhance the education of exceptional learners in their own educational environment. The plan will address each of the 5 primary questions established in the course readings (i.e. Where are we now?, Where do we want to go?, How will we get there?, How will we know we are there?, and How will we sustain focus and momentum?). This plan should identify the specific tools used (or to be used) to address each of the questions and include the information produced by each (e.g., results of the Exploratory of Current Setting assignment would be included). Students should explore relevant literature/documentation/data as they plan how to address the situation. They should supplement these reviews with actual experiences and interviews with key appropriate personnel (e.g., teachers, administrators, community agency representatives, parents, students and school staff) as needed to build an effective plan for change. Students must provide a supported rationale for the processes they used to build the plan and for the changes they now propose. Once the initial 5 primary questions are addressed, the bonus questions should be tackled. Finally, a plan for managing conflicts should be included in order to plan for any disputes that may arise from the change initiative you proposed. Develop a written document synthesizing your ideas and presenting the Collaboration Plan. Include key points addressing the questions, mediation, justification for plan design, literature regarding the topic, and anticipated implications for practice and/or policy.

Note: A rubric detailing how this NCATE assignment will be evaluated for the course will be posted in Bb. This project will be submitted to Taskstream and Bb, but it will not be graded until it is posted in Bb.

Common Assignments.

2) Participatory Activities (20%)

Collaboration requires engagement. Students are expected to attend class and actively participate in all assignments, group activities, and class discussions. Active participation includes the asking of questions and the presentation of one's own understanding with regard to the readings and class sessions as well as interactive discussion and participation in activities with other class members. Active participation also includes listening and respectful consideration of the comments of others. This will require all students to complete the required readings, activities, and assignments for that specific class meeting in advance. Additional required materials and activities (e.g. supplemental readings, cases for review, external websites, discussion forums, etc.) will be available in Blackboard's Course Content section in a folder labeled by Week Number or will be provided in hardcopy.

Additionally, during each class meeting or online work there will be the opportunity to earn point(s) for successful completion of these activities (e.g. case analysis, reflection activities, small group activities, discussion of readings, etc.). If students are not in attendance or do not participate in online work, when these activities occur, assigned points cannot be earned. One cannot earn full points for active participation while texting, tweeting, surfing the internet, or engaging in other forms of multi-tasking behaviors.

3) Application Activities (four worth 5 points each - 20%)

These are self-assessment and reflective activities to be completed outside of class that apply the readings and/or extend class discussions. Some will be handed out in hardcopy while others will be posted to BB.

4) Exploratory of Current Setting (20%)

Submit a brief paper describing your current context, your role within that context, and your goals for leadership in the future. Identify a specific area to target as in need of change via more effective collaboration. Use your Holcomb text to select and employ at least 3 tools to help you address the *Where are we now?* and *Where do we want to go?* questions. Summarize what you learned in the narrative and include any raw data/forms in the appendix. This information will contribute to your subsequent collaboration plan.

5) Presentation of Collaboration Plan (15%)

Develop a brief overview (bulleted narrative) of your plan that can be shared on BB for others to read and post prior to presentation date (see syllabus). When printed, this summary should not exceed 2 pages. For the presentation, develop a PowerPoint presentation (no more than 12 slides) and include any prompts needed to assist in a one hour in-class discussion of your plan.

Appendix

- The use of electronic devices that produce sound or otherwise interfere with the learning of others (i.e., cell phones, pagers, etc.) is prohibited during class. Please turn these devices off or to vibrate before the start of class.
- The use of electronic devices that record class or photograph individuals or materials may not be used without instructor permission.
- Computers may be used to take notes during class, but they may not be used for internet exploration or other non-class activities during class time.
- Routine access (daily) to electronic mail and Blackboard for communication and assignments is crucial to participation in this class.
- For each in-class hour devoted to this course content, students are expected to spend at least 3 hours outside of class on course related assignments, which is a typical in-class to out-of-class ratio for graduate level coursework.
- Exemplary work should be considered for presentation or publication opportunities.

George Mason Patriot Web: <https://patriotweb.gmu.edu>. This is a self-service website for students, faculty, and staff of George Mason University. A wealth of useful links, information, and online forms are available on this website including program of studies details, application for graduation, request for transfer of credit, and internship application.

Cohort Information: Please visit Blackboard at http://gse.gmu.edu/programs/sped_cohort_program/cohort_specific_information/prince_william/pw_leadership for information specific to this cohort.

Schedule

Date	Class Topics	Readings and Assignments Due
Week 1 1/9	Introduction to Text Discussion of Syllabus Overview of Collaboration	Holcomb Ch. 1
Week 2 1/16	Assessing the Situation: Where are we now? Identifying Different Collaboration Styles	Holcomb Ch. 2
Week 3 1/23	Finding the Vision: Where do we want to go? Strategies for Dealing with Different Collaboration Styles	Holcomb Ch. 3 <i>Application Activity 1</i>
Week 4 3/30	Taking Action: How will we get there?	Holcomb Ch. 4 <i>Exploratory of Current Setting</i>
Week 5 2/6	Assessing Progress: How will we know we are getting there?	Holcomb Ch. 5 <i>Application Activity 2</i>
Week 6 2/13	Sustaining Change: How will we sustain focus and momentum? Conflict and Resistance: Issues we can count on.	Holcomb Ch. 6 <i>Application Activity 3</i>
Week 7 2/20	Dispute Resolution Techniques for Special Education	Materials provided on Bb. <i>Application Activity 4</i>
Week 8 2/27	Powerful Questions to Shape Practice Instructional Collaboration Methods Specific to Special Education	Holcomb Ch. 7 <i>Post brief overview of collaboration plan on Bb by Saturday, 3/2, midnight.</i>
Week 9 3/6	The Importance of Different Perspectives	<i>Presentation Sessions</i>
Week 10 13	The Role of Special Education Leaders in the Development of Collaborative Culture	Collaboration Plan Due to Taskstream and Blackboard by midnight.

Note: Syllabus is subject to change as needed. Common sense and instructor discretion will be the governing forces in dealing with any circumstances that may arise that are not explicitly addressed in this syllabus. Inclement weather cancellations will shift content to online delivery format and do not excuse students from completion of requirements.