



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

Spring 2018  
EDSE 744 629: Current Issues in Special Education  
CRN: 22082, 3 – Credits

<b>Instructor:</b> Dr. Mary Kealy	<b>Meeting Dates:</b> 03/15/18 – 05/17/18
<b>Phone:</b> 571-252-1022	<b>Meeting Day(s):</b> Thursday
<b>E-Mail:</b> mkealy@gmu.edu	<b>Meeting Time(s):</b> 4:45 pm – 9:15 pm
<b>Office Hours:</b> After class and by appointment	<b>Meeting Location:</b> Off Campus/Other Westfield High School, 4700 Stonecroft Blvd. Chantilly, VA, 20151, Room A111
<b>Office Location:</b> LCPS Administration Bldg 21000 Education CT. Ashburn, VA, Room 412	<b>Other Phone:</b> 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**

Helps students develop an understanding of the role of convergent research evidence in addressing current issues in special education practice and policy. Familiarizes students with current issues in special education and the group experimental, single subject, and qualitative research designs used to address these current issues. Students evaluate research studies in terms of their methodological strengths and weaknesses and their part in providing convergent bodies of evidence that can be used for defining practice and policy.

**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 the Special Education Advising Office at (703) 993-3670 for assistance. All other teacher candidates/students should refer to their faculty advisor.

## **Course Delivery Method**

Learning activities include the following:

1. Discussion of material read in preparation for course sessions.
2. 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.
3. Student self-assessment of progress throughout the course.
4. Access and analyze materials and resources using a variety of medium, including Blackboard, web-based resources, and professional peer-reviewed journal articles.
5. 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. Identify current issues in special education.
2. Explain the historical, educational, and philosophical roots of current issues.
3. Explain the multiple perspectives on the topic.
4. Propose implications for policy and practice.

## **Course Relationship to Program Goals and Professional Organizations**

This course is part of the George Mason University, College of Education and Human Development (CEHD), Graduate School of Education, Special Education Leadership Graduate Certificate and Education Leadership, M.Ed Concentration in Special Education Leadership. These programs comply with university and program standards.

## **Required Textbooks**

No required Textbooks

## **Recommended Textbook**

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

## **Required Resources**

Due to the nature of this course, the online publications listed below will be used to provide students with the most current issues, best practices and information in the field. Students are required to sign up for each of these publications prior to the start of the course. The instructor will provide access information for each publication and recommended websites on the Blackboard site under the Resources section. All will be used as a regular part of every class.

## **Special Ed Connection and e-CONNECTIONS**

### **SmartBrief on Special Education**

### **Education Week**

### **Special Educator (provided by instructor)**

### **CEC Policy Insider (provided by instructor)**

### **Additional Readings**

Selected articles from Crockett, J. B., Billingsley, B. S., & Boscardin, M. L. (2012). *Handbook of leadership and administration for special education*. New York, NY: Routledge.

**Required Access to Course Blackboard (Bb) Site:** Blackboard will be used to post important information and reading for this course. Plan to access the Bb site several times per week; announcements and resources are posted on the Bb site in between class sessions (e.g., in response to queries or information requested by students).

### **Course Performance Evaluation**

Students are expected to submit all assignments on time in the manner outlined by the instructor (e.g., Blackboard, Tk20, hard copy).

### **Tk20 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 Tk20 (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 Tk20.

For *EDSE 744*, the required PBA is Critical Issues Assignment. Failure to submit the assignment to Tk20 will result in reporting the course grade as Incomplete (IN). Teacher candidates/students have until five days prior to the University-stated grade change deadline to upload the required PBA in order to change the course grade. When the PBA is uploaded, the teacher candidate/student is required to notify the instructor so that the "IN" can be changed to a grade. If the required PBA is not uploaded five days prior to the University-stated grade change deadline and, therefore, the grade not changed, it will become an F. Please check to verify your ability to upload items to Tk20 before the PBA due date.

## Assignments

### Performance-based Assessment (Tk20 submission required)

- **Critical Issues Assignment (50% total):** Select one current issue in special education on which to conduct a literature review, develop a class presentation, and lead an in-class and on-line discussion. (MAJOR REQUIRED ASSIGNMENT—SEE RUBRIC)
  - Identify one primary article or chapter and a reference list of at least three other articles, books or chapters posted on Blackboard.
  - Write a ten-page paper (30%) summarizing the literature regarding the topic, identifying the audiences of interest, explaining reasons for controversy, summarizing the pros and cons of the issue, and suggesting implications for practice and policy.
  - Develop a 20 minute presentation (20%) with follow up discussion questions for class presentation.

### College Wide Common Assessment (TK20 submission required)

N/A

### Performance-based Common Assignments (No Tk20 submission required.)

#### Collaborative Group Work Assignment (30% total)

- **Current Issue Focus Paper (15%):**  
Search the **Special Ed Connection** or **CEC Policy Insider** for a current trend or issue and report on the topic selected in a 3-5 page paper.  
  
Focus of report, audio conference, or webinar on current issues should be on impact to students, schools and/or district and implications for practice.
- **Small Group Presentation (15%):**  
**Trends and Issues Group Presentations and Discussion (15%):**  
Groups will be assigned at the first class meeting. Each group will select a current trend or issue from the online publications recommended and develop a presentation for the class based on the topic, updated information and any supplemental information related to the topic gained from websites listed on the Blackboard site and other resources recommended for the course to provide a rich content for the class discussion. The use of technology, such as PowerPoint or Prezi, for the class presentation as an engaging tool for the group to facilitate class discussion, is expected for this assignment. Groups will produce a 1-page document to share with classmates on the highlights of their presentation with a focus on content and impact.

## Course Policies and Expectations

### Attendance/Participation

#### Class Participation (20%):

- Before each class, read the assigned readings posted on the Blackboard site.
- Read the online publications listed and be prepared to start each class with a discussion of a current issue and a reflection. The online publications will be used for weekly discussions on current issues.

In case an emergency prevents you from attending class, please call or email the instructor in advance. Students are expected to attend all class sessions on time for the entire session to receive full credit.

### Late Work

Please discuss individual situations prior to due dates with the instructor and circumstances will be considered.

### Grading Scale

**Grades:** A=94-100 A-=90-93 B+=86-89 B=80-85 C=79-70 F=<70

Participate professionally in class	20 points
Current Issue/Trend Focus Paper from Special Ed Connection, CEC Policy Insider or other approved publication	15 points
Current Issue/Trend Small Group Presentation and Discussion	15 points
10-page paper on critical issue	30 points
Class presentation of critical issue and discussion	20 points
<b>Total</b>	<b>100 points</b>

\*Note: The George Mason University Honor Code will be strictly enforced. 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 or with proper citations (see <https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/>).

### 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.

**George Mason University  
Tentative Class Schedule  
EDSE 644 Spring 2018**

The topic and reading schedule may be amended during the semester. When the tentative weekly schedule is revised, revisions will be posted on Blackboard.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Assignments (for next class)</b>
Session 1 March 15	Introduction, Discussion of Syllabus, Topic Discussion  Leadership Standards: Relationship to Policy & Practice  Overview: National Issues /Trends Impacting Students with Disabilities	Course handouts; begin weekly assignments and participation preparation  <b>Group Assignments/Collaborative Group Work</b>
Session 2 March 22	National Issues Perspective Policy and Legislative Issues ESSA & IDEA Provisions USDOE, OSEP, CEC, VDOE Positions & Priorities	Blackboard articles  <b>Chapter 1: Group Presentation</b>
March 29 ----- Session 3 April 5	SPRING BREAK—NO CLASS  ----- Effective Parent Advocacy & Communication Models  SEAC /ACSD Meetings	----- Blackboard articles <b>Chapters 2: Group Presentation</b>
Session 4 April 12	Positive School Discipline: Research & Practice  Disproportionality Discipline of Special Education Students	Blackboard articles and websites  <b>Chapter 3 &amp;4: Group Presentation</b>
Session 5 April 19	Multi-Tiered Systems of Support: Continuous School Improvement Process Big Ideas in Special Education Academic & Behavioral Frameworks: High Leverage Practices Response to Intervention Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports	Blackboard articles/Blackboard Resources:  <b>Chapter 5: Group Presentation</b>
Session 6 April 26	MTSS School Based Mental Health Services	Blackboard articles
Session 7 May 3	Personnel Shortages in Special Education  Teacher Quality Issues /Teacher Evaluation Personnel Development & Leadership	Blackboard articles  <b>Critical Issue Presentations</b> <b>Critical Issue Paper due</b>
Session 8 May 10	Career & Transition Services/Post Secondary Options  Leadership for Creating & Sustaining Inclusive Schools	<b>Critical Issue Presentations</b>
Session 9 May 17	Reflections / Looking Forward Wrap-Up	<b>Evaluation</b> <b>Leadership Lessons Learned</b>

## **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://ods.gmu.edu/>).
- Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

### **Campus Resources**

- Support for submission of assignments to Tk20 should be directed to [tk20help@gmu.edu](mailto:tk20help@gmu.edu) or <https://cehd.gmu.edu/aero/tk20>. Questions or concerns regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to <http://coursesupport.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 <https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/>.**

### **Appendix**

#### **Assessment Rubric**

#### **Critical Issues Assignment**

**RUBRIC FOR THE MAJOR REQUIRED ASSIGNMENT**  
**Critical Issues Assignment (50 points)**  
**Class presentation of critical issue, discussion, 10-page paper**

Evaluation Standards	Exceeds Expectations 9-10	Meets Expectations 7-8	Does Not Meet Expectations 0-6
Paper 30 points	Synthesis goes beyond the obvious. Suggestions are creative and realistic. Minimal writing errors. Fully adheres to APA.	Includes background information on the issue, explanation of the controversy, summary of pros/cons, and suggestions for policy/practice. Writes in an organized style using APA.	Fails to meet all elements of the stated expectations. Writing is mechanically unsound.
Presentation 20 points	Articulates novel implications for practitioners.	Presents a broad, interesting background. Summarizes and analyzes differing views. Presents in an organized style.	Presentation is disorganized or lacking key information.
Discussion	Encourages dialogue and novel thinking.	Proposes thought provoking questions or discussion points. Clearly communicates key ideas.	Minimal efforts to engage the audience are made.
Link to CEC Standard 9	Clear reflection of professional and ethical desire to embrace ongoing learning and evidence-based practices.	Efforts to engage in an active learning community. Offers reflective ideas showing a desire to learn.	Minimal efforts to engage in learning demonstrated.
Overall Critical Issues Project	The project exceeds expectations and generates insightful suggestions for how special needs might be better met.	The project meets expectations, clearly identifies a significant issue AND provides clear connections to a need for lifelong learning.	This project fails to clearly identify a significant issue OR fails to provide clear connections to a need for lifelong learning.