University of North Texas
EDSP 3240—Family Communication & Professional Collaboration
for Exceptional Learners
Tuesday & Thursday 9:30 – 10:50

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Office Hours: Monday, 10:00-12:00 and 1:00-3:00; Tuesday, 2:00-5:00; Thursday, 1:00-3:00 and by appointment.

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"UNT's College of Education uses Tk20 Campus Tools™ as a comprehensive online data management system for all student activities in programs leading to certification for teachers or other school personnel. Students enrolled in certification programs are required to subscribe to Tk20 to complete course assignments and to facilitate evaluations for courses, field experiences, and student teaching or internship/practicum."

Students are required to submit some of the written assignments for this class to Turnitin, a web-based originality/plagiarism detection service. Before submitting your paper to Turnitin, please remove your title page and other personal information.

"Academic integrity emanates from a culture that embraces the core values of trust and honesty necessary for full learning to occur. As a student-centered public research university, the University of North Texas promotes the integrity of the learning process by establishing and enforcing academic standards. Academic dishonesty breaches the mutual trust necessary in an academic environment and undermines all scholarship." Academic dishonesty includes cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty and sabotage. You can find the policy and procedures at http://vpaa.unt.edu/academic-integrity.htm.

1.0 Course Description:

This course is designed to provide an analysis of collaboration and communication models and strategies used in working with families, caregivers and professionals concerned about students with exceptionalities. Focus on the changing definition of family, community resources, advocacy groups, political forces, legal mandates and other factors are addressed that may impact students and their families.

2.0 Course Questions: (See CEC objectives related to course on the last pages of the syllabus.)

1. How is family defined?
2. How might variations in belief, tradition, and values differ among families?
3. What laws regulate how schools interact with families?
4. What concerns do families of individuals with disabilities have?
5. In what ways might we collaborate with families and other professionals for effective service delivery?
6. What factors promote or inhibit effective communication with families and other professionals?
7. What professionals and community organizations might be included in planning for individuals with disabilities?
8. Why should educators be concerned with the constructs of ethics, professionalism and respect?
9. What roles to paraeducators play in delivering services and education to individuals with disabilities?
10. What are some effective techniques for working with paraeducators?

3.0 Readings

Required

Sileo, N.M. & Prater, M.A. (2012). *Working with families of children with special needs: Family and professional partnerships and roles*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Supplemental

Syches, T. T., Carter, N. J., Prater, M. A. (2012). *A teacher's guide to communicating with parents: Practical strategies for developing successful relationships.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Other readings as assigned

4.0 Course Expectations:

4.1 Statement Regarding Professionalism. It is expected that students will act in a professional manner in all matters related to this course. Professionalism is demonstrated when:

1. you attend all classes and practicum assignments on time and remain for the duration
2. all assignments are completed independently, unless otherwise stated on the syllabus
3. all assignments are the original work of the student and created for this class only
4. you participate in course activities and discussions
5. you adhere to CEC Code of Ethics
6. you are flexible to schedule changes
7. you respect the rights and opinions of peers, instructors and guest speakers

4.2 Statement Regarding Assignment Completion. All written assignments should be submitted using APA (6th edition) format. (See APA Guideline provided in Course Tools of Blackboard.) In all cases, written assignments should adhere to standard usage of English grammar and be free of typographical errors. Assignments should be submitted on the day they are due. Assignments turned in after the due date and time will be considered late. A deduction of 10% per day will apply for late assignments, and assignments will not be accepted after 3 days.

5.0 Course Requirements:

5.1 Attendance and professionalism. Each student is expected to attend class and practicum. Repeated absences from class and/or practicum will result in a lowering of your grade. All cell phones are expected to be turned off prior to entering the classroom. Students are expected to behave in a professional manner (as set forth above).
25 points

5.2 Interest in a Career Teaching Students with Disabilities Statement (IS) DUE 9/12
Each student will write a personal statement of professional interest in working with students with disabilities. The statement should be 3 to 5 pages in length, and will be graded according to the criteria below:

- Content/Purpose
  - Reason for choosing program
  - Commitment to teaching
  - Specific experiences used to discuss beliefs
  - Dispositions toward diversity, all children, collaboration, lifelong learning
  - Reflection on need to improve
- Expression/Voice
  - The statement is well focused with evidence of thought in composition, phrasing and structure. Audience is clear and is effectively addressed.
- Organization
  - The statement is logically organized, using an appropriate format and written structure, with effective transitions between ideas.
- Convention
  - The statement is completely free from spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors.

The interest statement will be submitted both to Blackboard's assignment function and Tk20.
25 points

5.3 Blackboard Discussions DUE 1 WEEK AFTER THE MODULE IS POSTED BY 10:00 PM
Students are responsible for completing online learning modules via Blackboard and participating in web-based group discussions. Each student will be responsible for working through the modules and responding as appropriate to discussions through the modules. These modules will replace face-to-face course content and participation is required.

There are five modules and discussions relevant to each module. The post will begin with a prompt by the instructor. Points will be earned by responding to the instructors post AND responding to your peers' posts. Only posts of substance will be considered for points. A response of "I agree", or "Good point" will not be considered for points unless it is followed with supporting information either from the readings, modules or personal experience. A minimum of 3 posts is expected (1 response to the instructors question and 2 responses to peers posts).
50 points total (10 for each module)

5.4 Listening to Families Interview (LF) DUE 10/3

Identify a family with a child who has an exceptionality and arrange an opportunity to listen to their family story. The purpose of listening to families is to gain a comprehensive understanding of (a) their family situation and (b) view of their perspectives of their strengths, preferences, and needs as a basis for providing personalized and relevant family support. Further details about this assignment will be provided in class. We will also discuss the format for synthesizing family-systems information from your conversation. In exchange for the family's time, students are expected to offer some service or help.

This assignment will be submitted both through Blackboard's assignment function and to Tk20

50 points

5.5 Mini Paper (MP) DUE 11/7

Each student will write a mini paper on the topic of their choice RELATED TO FAMILIES OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES. Guidelines for writing and submitting the paper are detailed below. Submit your paper to the assignment function of Blackboard.

a. Selecting your Topic--There are many topics that relate to parents, families, and/or communication in families with member who have disabilities. Please select one that matches your interests or one that you would like to know more about. Below are examples of topic you might choose.

*Grandparents Raising Grandchildren
*Siblings of Children with Disabilities
*Effective Communication Strategies
*Financial Needs & Concerns of Families
*Divorce among Families
*Transition Issues and Families
*Home School Communication
*Homework and Families
*Cultural Aspects of working with Families
*Homelessness Families

Based on your topic, select and read eight articles. At least six of the articles should be from educational journals. The remaining two articles may be from journals in related fields or from the web.

Suggested Journals--(This is not a complete listing but a starting point. The field of special education is rich with quality journals.)

Remedial and Special Education (RASE)
Teaching Exceptional Children
Journal of Learning Disabilities
Journal of Special Education
Exceptional Parent
Beyond Behavior
Intervention
Exceptional Children

b. Writing the Mini Paper--Write a five to six page paper as a summary and reaction to the articles. The position paper should be a summary of information gathered on the single topic. At the conclusion of the paper please include your reaction/discussion concerning the

topic. Reactions should include a summary of findings, a personal reaction to readings, and views on the future of this topic in the field of education. Some discussion may also be devoted to perceived lack of literature on the topic.

Following APA format your paper should begin with a cover page, followed by an abstract (summary of your paper), body (5-6 pages), and a reference list that includes the sources used in the paper. All work should be cited using APA format.

c. Submit your paper to the Turnitin Assignment function of Blackboard
50 points

5.6 SEDL Webinars (SW) DUE 10/29
Select and listen to or watch one of the nine webinars hosted by the Southwest Educational Developmental Laboratory (SEDL). SEDL's National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools hosted the *Achieving Excellence and Innovation in Family, School, and Community Engagement* webinar (http://www.sedl.org/connections/) series to provide stakeholders Representing national, regional, and local organizations to learn about family, school, and community, engagement research, best practices from the field, and new innovations that are making a difference in school improvement and student learning. Provide 2-3 page narrative summary of the webinar that addresses the following: (a) why you selected the webinar, (b) major issues addressed, (c) research findings cited about the topic, (d) what are the practical implications for teachers, students and families (How might you use in a classroom).
50 points

5.7 Practicum Journal (PJ) DUE 12/5
Practicum placements will be through Communities in Schools (CIS). A volunteer application and criminal background check will be completed in class. You will be assigned to a school in a local district where you will volunteer at least once a week throughout the semester. You will keep a journal, recording your observations each day you visit the school. An outline to follow and questions to answer will be provided on Blackboard. In addition to the journal, each student will keep a timesheet signed by the assigned school supervisor.
This assignment will be submitted both to the Blackboard assignment function and Tk20
Total 100 points (50 points for journal and 50 points for school based activities)

5.8 Paraeducators Project DUE 12/5
Each student will be required to explore the Paraprofessional Symbaloo and submit a six to eight sentence paragraph summary of each of the four categories in the Symbaloo. The Paraprofessional Symbaloo can be accessed at http://www.symbaloo.com/mix/paraprofessionalinsped, and is arranged in the following four categories:

Orange – resources related to the professionalization of paraprofessionals.
Pink – resources on training of paraprofessionals
Blue – resources related to working with paraprofessionals
Green – resources related to paraprofessionals and disability categories

60 points

5.9 Exams
There will be two exams in the course – a midterm and a final exam.
The mid-term will cover chapters and lectures 1-6
MIDTERM 10/17
The final exam will cover all topics with an emphasis on chapters/lectures 7-11
FINAL 12/12
Total 100 points (50 points each)

6.0 Grading Criteria and Conversion

Assignment	Point value
Professionalism	25 points
Interest Statement	25 points
Blackboard Discussions	50 points
Listening to Families	50 points
Mini Paper	50 points
Webinar	50 points
Practicum Journal	100 points
Paraeducators Project	50 points
Exams	100 points
Total points possible	500

93% - 100% = A
85% - 92% = B
77% - 84% = C
70% - 76% = D
69% and below = F

Please note that the grading scale for this course might be different from other courses you have or are taking.

Week	Course Schedule (Group Meetings 9/3, 9/5, 10/3, 11/14, 11/21 check location)	
1	8/27	8/29 Introductions / Syllabus / Special Ed. Review
2	9/3 Communities in Schools-Ms. Shannon McDonald & Wooten 319 Readings—Chapter 1: *History & Legal Foun*	9/5 Ms. Teri Kachur (Parent) MATT 115 Best Buddies (currently with Jewish Family Services (formerly with)
3	9/10 Historical Perspectives Readings--Chapter 2: *Historical and Current Perspectives of Family Involvement*	9/12 BLACKBOARD Module 1: Sibling Relationships Readings-- Chapter 3: *Family Members' Roles and Characteristics* INTEREST STATEMENT DUE (IS)
4	9/17 Family Roles Readings-- Chapter 3: Family Members' Roles and Characteristics	9/19 Essentials of Communication Readings-- Chapter 4: *Communicating and Collaborating*
5	9/24 Practicum Time	9/26 Diversity and Cultural Competence Readings--Chapter 5: Overview of Diversity Families and Professionals & Evidence Based Practices in Working with Families Readings--TBA
k 6	10/1 Practicum Time	10/3 Research Fundamentals-Ms. Jo Monahan Willis Library, Room 035 (lower level) LISTENING TO FAMILIES DUE (LF)
7	10/8 Practicum Time	10/10 BLACKBOARD Module 2: Diversity and Cultural Competence Readings--Chapter 6: *Cultural Competence* and TBA
8	10/15 Practicum/Midterm Review	10/17 BLACKBOARD MIDTERM EXAM (MT)
9	10/22 Practicum Time	10/24 BLACKBOARD Module 3: Facilitating Family Involvement through Volunteerism Readings-- Chapter 7: *Family Perspective* and TBA
10	10/29 Practicum Time SEDL WEBINARS DUE (SW)	10/31 Preparing for the IEP Meeting Readings--Chapter 8: *Families and the IEP*
11	11/5 Practicum Time	11/7 Practicum Time MINI PAPER DUE (MP)
12	11/12 Practicum Time	11/14 Ethics and Professionalism MATT 102 Readings Chapter 9: Ethical Considerations
13	11/19 BLACKBOARD Module 4: Ethics and Professionalism Readings Chapter 9: Ethical Considerations	11/21* Early Childhood Intervention MATT 102 Readings--Chapter 10: Birth through High School
14	11/26 Families in Transition Readings--Chapter 11: Postsecondary Students	11/28 THANKSGIVING
15	12/3 BLACKBOARD Module 5: Working with Paraeducators	12/5 Working with Paraeducators PARAEDUCATORS PROJECT DUE (PP) REFLECTIVE JOUNAL DUE (RJ)
16	12/10 FINALS WEEK—NO CLASS	12/12 FINAL- 8:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

Knowledge and Skills Statements:

Learner objectives for this course were derived from the six domains contained in the *CEC Common Core of Knowledge and Skills Essential for All Beginning Special Education Teachers.*
CC = Common Core Domain K = Knowledge S = Skill

CC1: To demonstrate knowledge of Philosophical, Legal, and Foundations of Special Education, students will:

2.1 Describe variations in beliefs, traditions, and values across cultures within society and the effect of the relationship among child, family, and schooling. (K2)

2.2 Identify rights and responsibilities of parents, students, teachers and other professionals, and schools as they relate to individual learning needs. (K5)

2.3 Articulate a personal philosophy of special education including its relationship to/with general education. (S1)

CC2: To demonstrate knowledge of the Characteristics of Learners, students will:

2.4 Describe the characteristics and effects of the cultural and environmental milieu of the child and the family including cultural and linguistic diversity, socioeconomic level, abuse and neglect, and substance abuse. (K5)

CC3: To demonstrate knowledge of Assessment, Diagnosis, and Evaluation of individuals with disabilities, students will:

2.5 Demonstrate methods to collaborate with families and other professionals involved in the assessment of individuals with exceptional learning needs. (S1)

2.6 Demonstrate ways to gather background information regarding academic, medical, and family history. (S3)

2.7 Identify ways to report assessment results to individuals with exceptional learning needs, parents, administrators, and other professionals using appropriate communication skills. (S6)

2.8 Use performance data and information from teachers, other professionals, individuals with exceptionalities, and parents to make or suggest appropriate modification in learning environment. (S7)

CC6: To demonstrate strategies for Managing Student Behavior and Social Interaction Skills, students will:

2.9 Identify applicable laws, rules, and regulations, and procedural safeguards regarding the planning and implementation of management of behaviors of individuals with exceptional learning needs. (K1)

2.10 Explain strategies for preparing individuals to live harmoniously and productively in a multiclass, multiethnic, multicultural, and multinational world. (K6)

CC7: To describe Communication and Collaborative Partnerships, students will:

2.11 Identify factors that promote effective communication and collaboration with individuals, parents, and school and community personnel in a culturally responsive program. (K1)

2.12 Describe typical concerns of parents of individuals with exceptional learning needs and appropriate strategies to help parents deal with these concerns. (K2)

2.13 Describe the development of individual student programs working in collaboration with team members. (K3)

2.14 Identify the roles of individuals with exceptionalities, parents, teachers, and other school and community personnel in planning an individualized program. (K4)

2.15 Describe ethical practices for confidential communication to others about individuals with exceptional learning needs. (K5)

2.16 Demonstrate the use of collaborative strategies in working with individuals with exceptional learning needs, parents, and school and community personnel in various learning environments. (S1)

2.17 Demonstrate strategies to communicate and consult with individuals, parents, teachers, and other school and community personnel. (S2)

2.18 Describe methods to foster respectful and beneficial relationships between families and professionals. (S3)

2.19 Identify ways to encourage and assist families to become active participants in the educational team. (S4)

2.20 Demonstrate how to plan and conduct collaborative conferences with families or primary caregivers. (S5)

2.21 Describe methods to collaborate with general education classroom teachers and other school and community personnel in integrating individuals with exceptional learning needs into various learning environments. (S6)

2.22 Demonstrate ways to communicate with general education teachers, administrators, and other school personnel about characteristics and needs of individuals with specific exceptional learning needs. (S7)

CC8: To describe professionalism and ethical practices, students will:

2.23 Identify personal cultural biases and differences that affect one's teaching. (K1)

2.24 Describe ways to engage in professional activities that may benefit individuals with exceptional learning needs, their families, and/or other colleagues. (S6)