

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAM – SPECIAL EDUCATION
Syllabus for EDSE 703 Section 6E3: Creating A Collaborative Culture (3 credits)
Semester and Year: Spring 2010
Course day/time: Thursdays 4:30-8:30
Course location: Loudoun Admin Building

Professor:

Dr. Pamela Baker

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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.

Prerequisites: 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.

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

This course is designed to enable students 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.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

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: <https://mail.gmu.edu/en/mail.html?sid=IO3i+chrIMk&lang=en> On this page, to the right, there is a red book PDF document titled "What Every Special Educator Must Know." The CEC Standards are located in this document. The advanced content standards that will be addressed in this class are from the Special Education Administrator standards (page down to find these). Advanced Standard 6: Collaboration is the primary area of emphasis for this course. The initial content standards that are also relevant are noted as follows:

Special Education Content Standard 9: Professional and Ethical Practice

Special educators are guided by the profession's ethical and professional practice standards. Special educators practice in multiple roles and complex situations across wide age and developmental ranges. Their practice requires ongoing attention to legal matters along with serious professional and ethical considerations. Special educators engage in professional activities and participate in learning communities that benefit individuals with ELN, their families, colleagues, and their own professional growth. Special educators view themselves as lifelong learners and regularly reflect on and adjust their practice. Special educators are aware of how their own and others attitudes, behaviors, and ways of communicating can influence their practice. Special educators understand that culture and language can interact with exceptionalities, and are sensitive to the many aspects of diversity of individuals with ELN and their families. Special educators actively plan and engage in activities that foster their professional growth and keep them current with evidence-based best practices. Special educators know their own limits of practice and practice within them.

Special Education Content Standard 10: Collaboration

Special educators routinely and effectively collaborate with families, other educators, related service providers, and personnel from community agencies in culturally responsive ways. This collaboration assures that the needs of individuals with ELN are addressed throughout schooling. Moreover, special educators embrace their special role as advocate for individuals with ELN. Special educators promote and advocate the learning and well being of individuals with ELN across a wide range of settings and a range of different learning experiences. Special educators are viewed as specialists by a myriad of people who actively seek their collaboration to effectively include and teach individuals with ELN. Special educators are a resource to their colleagues in understanding the laws and policies relevant to Individuals with ELN. Special educators use collaboration to facilitate the successful transitions of individuals with ELN across settings and services.

COURSE TEXTS AND MATERIALS

Required Texts:

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>

TaskStream

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/taskstream/>. Failure to submit the assignment to TaskStream will result in reporting the course grade as Incomplete (IN). Unless this grade is changed, upon completion of the required submission, the IN will convert to an F nine weeks into the following semester.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

George Mason University Email: Every student is required to establish a GMU email account to access Blackboard (BB) and other important university correspondence that will be sent to GMU email accounts only. Once an email account has been established, it is possible to forward email sent to the GMU account to another email account. Students are responsible for any information shared electronically and should check e-mail regularly. Emails sent via BB do not forward to your regular account.

George Mason Blackboard: <http://courses.gmu.edu>. From this link, you will find a variety of materials related to this course. The site will be updated as the course progresses. **Students are responsible** for any information shared via Blackboard and should check the site regularly

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://gmucommunity.blackboard.com> and begin by entering the User Name “cohort” followed by the Password “cohort” then click “login” to access a variety of materials including the Frequently Asked Questions Guide, Enrollment forms, Textbook information, and TaskStream support.

Advising Contact Information: Please make sure that you are being advised on a regular basis as to your status and progress through the special education program. You may wish to contact Jancy Templeton, GMU Special Education Advisor, at jtemple1@gmu.edu or 703-993-2387. When contacting her, be prepared to provide your G number.

APA Style: The standard format for any written work in the College of Education. If you are unfamiliar with APA, it would benefit you to purchase the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (6th ed.) or to access one of the internet sites that provides a summary of this information. All work produced outside of class must be typed unless otherwise noted.

Academic Integrity: Students in this course are expected to exhibit academic integrity at all times. Be aware that plagiarism is presenting someone else's work as your own. **Whether the act is deliberate or unintentional is irrelevant.** You must take great care to give credit to an author when you borrow either exact words or ideas. Generally, if you use 4 or more words in a row you should use quotation marks and a proper citation. Evidence of plagiarism or any other form of cheating in this class will result in a zero on that assignment and a report of the incident to the registrar. Remember that plagiarism is a very serious offense and can result in dismissal from the University. The instructor reserves the right to submit your work to **turnitin** or **safeassign**, plagiarism detection services, for an integrity assessment as needed.

Graduate School of Education Dispositions Criteria: Students are expected to exhibit professional behavior and dispositions. See <http://gse.gmu.edu/facultystaffres/profdisp.htm> for a listing of these dispositions.

George Mason University Honor Code: Students must follow the guidelines of the University Honor Code. See <http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode/> for the full honor code. The honor code defines student and faculty conduct to promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community. The honor code deals specifically with cheating and attempted cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing.

Responsible Use of Computing: Students must agree to abide by the university policy for the responsible use of computing. See <http://www.gmu.edu/facstaff/policy/newpolicy/1301gen.html>

Students with Disabilities: Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the GMU Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform the instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester. See <http://www2.gmu.edu/dpt/unilife/ods/> or call 703-993-2474 to access the ODS.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

- For a satisfactory grade in the course, students are expected to attend all classes, arrive on time, demonstrate professional behavior in the classroom (see Professional Disposition Criteria), 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.
- 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.
- Retain electronic copies of all course products for use during the portfolio phases of the M.Ed. or licensure programs.
- Exemplary work should be considered for presentation or publication opportunities.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

Below are the basic weights of the various kinds of work required for the course, but students should always bear in mind that grading is primarily a judgment about your performance on a particular assignment. Grades are designed to indicate your success in completing assignments, not the level of effort you put into them.

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

NOTE: Points will be deducted for work submitted late (up to 10% per day). This includes any items that are not submitted upon request due to class absence or tardiness. This includes items initiated or modified during class as well as those listed in the syllabus.

1) Participatory Activities

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 there will be the opportunity to earn point(s) for successful completion of graded in-class activities (e.g. case analysis, reflection activities, small group activities, discussion of readings, etc.). If students are not in attendance, thus not able to participate and contribute to class 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.

2) Application Activities

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.

3) Exploratory of Current Setting

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.

4) Collaboration Plan for Creating School Change: 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.

5) Presentation of Collaboration Plan

Develop a brief overview of your plan that can be shared on BB for others to read. When printed, this summary should not exceed 2 pages (e.g. bulleted narrative, up to 12 PowerPoint slides, brochure, etc.). Develop prompts for an in-class discussion of your ideas so you can glean feedback from others. Complete a written reflection regarding the feedback given and make changes to your plan as needed.

Note: The final Collaboration Plan is the required Signature Assignment for this course. Therefore, a rubric detailing how this assignment will be evaluated for the course and in TaskStream will be posted in BB.

Grading Scale (traditional rounding principles apply):

A	=	94 – 100 percent	A-	=	90 – 93 percent
B+	=	86 – 89 percent	B	=	80 – 85 percent
C	=	70 – 79 percent	F	=	Below 70 percent

Tentative Class Schedule

Date	Topic	Readings and Assignments
Week 1 9/16	Introduction to Text Discussion of Syllabus Overview of Collaboration	Holcomb Ch. 1
Week 2 9/23	Assessing the Situation: Where are we now? Identifying Different Collaboration Styles	Holcomb Ch. 2 <i>Application Activity 1</i>
Week 3 9/30	Finding the Vision: Where do we want to go? Strategies for Dealing with Different Collaboration Styles	Holcomb Ch. 3 <i>Application Activity 2</i>
Week 4 10/7	Taking Action: How will we get there?	Holcomb Ch. 4 <i>Exploratory of Current Setting</i>
Week 5 10/14	Assessing Progress: How will we know we are getting there?	Holcomb Ch. 5 <i>Application Activity 3</i>
Week 6 10/21	Sustaining Change: How will we sustain focus and momentum? Conflict and Resistance: Issues we can count on	Holcomb Ch. 6 <i>Application Activity 4</i>
Week 7 10/28 ONLINE	Dispute Resolution Techniques for Special Education	Materials in Folder on BB <i>Application Activity 5</i>
Week 8 11/4	Powerful Questions to Shape Practice Instructional Collaboration Methods Specific to Special Education: Co-teaching, UDL, and more	Holcomb Ch. 7 Materials in Folder on BB <i>Post Presentation Summaries by midnight on Saturday 11/6</i>
Week 9 11/11	Value-added: The Importance of Different Perspectives	Read Project Postings from Peers <i>Presentation Sessions</i>
Week 10 11/18	The Role of Special Education Leaders in the Development of Collaborative Culture	<i>Collaboration Plan Due</i>

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.