ED 361: Special Education and the General Classroom Teacher

2 Credits

Course description:
An introductory course covering the range of handicapping conditions, designed for elementary or secondary teachers who seek to develop an awareness of the emotional, educational, and social implications imposed by handicaps and to formulate some practical applications of this knowledge when teaching students with disabilities in the general classroom.

This section of ED 361 is intended to be part of a special block consisting of ED 306, 311/316, and 483. The goal of this block is to help elementary education majors become more aware of the connections between these subject areas.

Course Format:
This course is a semester-long course. Class will be held one afternoon a week for one hour and fifty minutes each session. Attendance and class participation are required.

Goals and Objectives for the Course:
Upon completion of this course, the student will be able to:
Identify the socio-political and economic factors that contributed to the growth of services for individuals with exceptionalities;
understand the reasons for the growth of parental involvement and support in the development of programs for individuals with exceptionalities and ways to maintain involvement;
discuss the roles played by government organizations at the federal, state, and local levels in relation to special education;
understand major Federal and Michigan definitions and classification systems related to special education;
recognize some of the methods and tools of assessment used in identification;
identify the general characteristics, individual differences, and specific needs of various types of learners with exceptionalities;
identify the process for placement and types of service delivery (including related services) available;
understand some implications of various positions/philosophies (e.g., mainstreaming, inclusion, least restrictive environment) used in special education;
demonstrate an understanding of multicultural differences as they relate to individuals with exceptionalities;
formulate rudimentary behavioral goals, objectives, and suggestions for teaching various types of individuals with exceptionalities in the general classroom.

Entry Level Standards Met for the Methods Phase of NMU’s Teacher Education Program through ED 361:

(B1a) Communicates what is to be learned so that students understand and value the learning.
(B3f) Uses high expectations for optimal achievement.
(B5d) Plans instruction to accommodate diversity.
(B5e) Uses a variety of methodologies, technologies, and techniques.
(C1a) Understands evaluation and assessment, including test construction and administration.

Course Requirements and Expectations:

1. Attendance is mandatory and students are expected to arrive on time. However, if unusual circumstances arise, you will need to notify the instructor before class. There will be one excused absence with notification of the instructor and extenuating circumstances. One grade level (A to A-, B+ to B) will be deducted from final grade for each unexcused absence. Excessive tardiness will also result in a deduction from final grade.

All assignments are due on the day listed in the syllabus. Five percent will be deducted for each day assignments are late excluding weekends (one week late, 25% deduction) unless previous arrangements are made with the instructor. Please do not submit assignments via e-mail unless requested. Assignments will not be accepted two weeks after the due date. All assignments must be completed in order to receive a passing grade.

Incompletes will be considered under extreme circumstances with a documented, compelling, reason. 70% of the coursework must be completed. The student must negotiate an agreement to fulfill the course requirements during the next semester of registration or a failing grade will be awarded.

All students in this class are expected to conform to a code of academic honesty. If you have questions on what is considered appropriate, ask.
Academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating, copying material from the Internet) will result in disciplinary action and a zero on the assignment in question.

Students are expected to be familiar with the professional education goals and performance indicators found in the field experiences and student teaching handbook available on the School of Education website http://www.nmu.edu/education/handbook.htm. The behaviors expected for student work, attitude and conduct in this classroom are outlined there. Students are also expected to be aware of the School of Education’s Conceptual framework.

Participation in class discussions and group projects is expected. Failure to do so will result in deduction from final grade.

Please be sure any cell phones or pagers or other devices do not produce sounds during class.

Book Group Reflection:
Select and read one of these books dealing with individuals who have disabilities: Rules, Al Capone does my shirts, or The curious incident of the dog in the night-time.
After reading the book:
Prepare 3-4 discussion questions, reflection questions, or questions for additional research regarding the book you read to share with your book group. Questions should not be literal comprehension questions (Who were the main characters? How did the story end?); rather, they should be more open-ended, critical questions (How do you help a student who struggles with social cues find successful in the classroom?) (Use Bloom’s Taxonomy as a reference). Choose one or two of your questions and learn more about the topic/issue by reading at least 2 articles that deal with teaching students with autism. Be prepared to share what you learned in the articles and your questions with people in the class. These questions could be the start of the research you will do for the disability paper.
Compare the definition of autism from the state of Michigan to the characteristics of the person in book.
You will turn in your typed questions, APA citation of the articles you read with a brief (1 paragraph summary what you learned from the article), the definition of autism and your comparison. Also, see additional expectations earlier in the syllabus)
Autism Paper:
Use the book you read (Curious incident, Rules, or Al Capone does my shirts) as a prompt for your own research on the disability and issues presented in that book in a well written (computer generated) 4-6 page paper. I expect you to use APA in-text citations and provide a reference page. Only APA format will be accepted. There are many sites that provide guidance on APA style. There is also a document in WebCT. Please use Times New Roman font no larger that 12 pt. and 1 inch margins on all sides. At least four (4) other sources must be used (at least three must be refereed journal articles (see note above on Wikepedia). Remember, the paper is about autism and teaching students who have autism in the general classroom, not about the book. The book should prompt your research on the topic. In your discussion please:
1. Briefly discuss the characteristics commonly associated with the disability and behaviors of individuals with this disability. Go beyond the definition of the disability and discuss the needs of persons with this disability. Your text is a good starting reference; however, you will need to do additional research. Again, online journal articles found through WilsonSelectPlus or from professional journals in the library are required sources.
***MOST IMPORTANTLY***
2. Connect themes or issues you identify with from the book to what the research says, and what you know, about education and this disability. What would you need to be aware of when teaching a student with these characteristics, what would be beneficial for a student with this disability in school. Reflect on an issue of importance to teaching and learning which may or may not have been directly discussed in the book.
3. As a future teacher, reflect on what [schools, classrooms, teachers, students] needs to be done to prepare students with disabilities to achieve a successful life.

Group Presentation:
In assigned groups, each student will participate in the development and delivery of a presentation about a particular disability listed below. Allow for the presentation of information to take approximately 20 minutes with an additional 15-20 (total 35-40 minutes) for discussion, group activity, questions. Each presentation should briefly provide background information (i.e., definition, causes, characteristics) of the disability, and a discussion about related research and/or teaching practices to advance the audience's knowledge about the topic. Education implications and teaching strategies are key. Groups should include, if appropriate, assistive technology that is used to support learning and tips for enhancing academic and social success for students with
this disability.
Groups should find information about the topic from resources beyond the course’s textbook (professional journals must be used, web sites, other text resources are also acceptable for additional information).
To support this discussion, each group will also prepare and disseminate a handout (3-5 pages) to each classmate on the day of presentation and the PowerPoint (if used) outline in advance. Handouts should include strategies or tools that will enhance your presentation and that will help you share information about the students you are talking about. You are encouraged to provide supplemental materials (visuals, examples of children’s books, video clip, etc.) and you must have and interactive activity (aka using good teaching strategies) in your delivery to help strengthen the presentation. The activity should help us understand the content being presented. Each person in the assigned group is required to participate in the presentation in addition to gathering and preparing the materials and information presented. Presentations are graded on 4 factors: presentation and modeling good teaching practices, handout, education connection, and accuracy/currency of information.
- learning disabilities  - emotional impairment  - traumatic brain injury
- cognitive impairment  - gifted and talented  - speech & language impairment

Site Observation: (choose from one of the following 2 options)
Choice 1: Reflect on a classroom placement for a current methods course and the modifications that are being made for students with special needs or for those at-risk. When you begin observing in the classroom look for one student who draws your attention; some of the children you identify will have disabilities others may not. Observe a student and answer the nine questions on the teacher functional assessment interview sheet from the PBS document (in WebCT). Once you have completed the interview you may discuss your observations with the classroom teacher and gather any additional information. Be sure to identify the student’s strengths as well as your concerns.

After spending time in this classroom a well written, APA-style referenced, 3-4 page paper, research the strategies that are being used in the classroom or other strategies that may be beneficial. You may also research information pertinent to the child and the particular problems inherent with the disability (if present). Find at least two journal articles (you may supplement these with other on-line resources, however you must have at least 2 refereed journal articles) that support your observation or provide additional strategies that may be helpful. You may support what you have been observing or find articles that may indicate a different method or strategy for providing instruction. Reflect on how
this research may be useful in this classroom or with this student. Research, reflect, and connections are the important parts of this paper.

-OR-

Choice 2: Visit a classroom or program that serves students with disabilities that you would like to learn more about (i.e. resource room, functional skills classroom, social skills program, alternative school, youth home school).

Classrooms that serve students with disabilities may focus on serving identified students in a self-contained environment or an inclusive one. Before the visit write several preliminary questions that you’d like to have answered and spend 10 minutes writing what you believe you will see and what your perceptions are about this placement before you visit. Interview the person providing direct service to the students and observe the placement, talk with the students about their perceptions, goals, etc.

After the visit, in a well written, APA-style referenced, 3-4 page paper, research the strategies that are being used in the classroom or other strategies that may be beneficial that would apply to a general education classroom or any other issue that this visit raised for you. Find at least two journal articles (you may supplement these with other on-line resources, however you must have at least 2 refereed journal articles) that support your observation or provide additional knowledge for you. You may support what you have been observing or find articles that may indicate a different method or strategy for providing instruction. Reflect on how this research may be useful in this classroom or with this/these student(s) or information about how children and/or families are served, program specifics, observations noted. Please include what you learned and changes to your perception at the end. Plan to spend at least 2-3 hours visiting. Placements need to be approved by the instructor in advance.

Reflective Toolkit:
Create a personal resource kit including information for meeting the needs of students with special needs and reflection on the significance of your choices. This may eventually be part of your portfolio or help you as you start to set up your first classroom. It is probably easiest to think of each topic as a “page” of information to think about. Some may require more than one actual piece of paper but most should not. Be sure to discuss the importance of the items you are including and WHY these ideas will help your students succeed and help you meet the various needs of the learners in your classroom. Reflect; DO NOT just list facts and strategies. Discuss the importance of the items you are including and WHY these ideas will help your students succeed and help you meet the various needs of the learners in your classroom. (Use single spacing for
Topics that must be addressed:
Review the educational philosophy you wrote in your pre-methods class. Use that as a start to reflect, expand, and explain how you are going to incorporate students with special needs into your educational outlook.
Disability reflection. What have you learned about students with disabilities? (this should not be a list of characteristics, rather a more holistic reflection)
How will you set high expectations for optimal achievement? Why?
As a general education teacher, you are going to be responsible for providing “Tier 1” or basic accommodations for students who are not being successful with the general curriculum. Identify the “top 10” accommodations you will make for a student who is struggling in your content area and explain why these are the first interventions you will try. Why?
Identify your “top 5” websites that will help you help students with disabilities succeed. Why have you chosen these sites and what do you like about them?
We have spent a great deal of time talking about proactive behavior management. What are your “top 5” proactive behavior strategies? Explain why these are most significant for you.
Create a sample positive behavior support plan for a student. Explain what it is any why it is important.
Create a lesson concepts accommodation/modification. (explanation in WebCT)
Create a tic-tac-toe assignment guide for a topic of you choice. The 9 assignments must demonstrate differentiated instruction and use higher order skills (knowledge/comprehension, application/analysis, synthesis/evaluation). Label each choice. Explain why it is important to differentiate instruction and assignments and why you organized the way you did.
Your choice. What else do you want me to know you know?