Working with Families and Children: Ethical and Legal Issues
PSU course #: SE 5765

Instructor: Mary-Ellen Azem, M.Ed.
e-mail: mazem@plymouth.edu
Home Phone: 528-6425
Cell Phone: 455-0972

Course Description
This course will familiarize the student with the ethical responsibilities required of special education professionals. The specific issues to be addressed in this course include the following:
- developing working relationships with professionals and families
- application of ethical standards to conflict situations
- exploration of behavior change processes within an educational institution
- confidentiality
- ethical decision-making process

Major Topics Covered by the Course:
- collaboration, mutual respect and democratic principles
- advocacy – understanding the role of an advocate for children and families
- supporting and respecting varying perspectives when encountering differing opinions
- consistent application of ethical principles

Essential Questions:
- What are the major ethical issues encountered by special education professionals?
- What impact does federal legislation and mandates have in the administration of special education?
- What are responsive strategies that promote effective communication, conflict resolution, and collaboration with individuals with disabilities, families, and school personnel?
- What are the roles of administrators, general education teachers, other school personnel and parents in supporting access to the general curriculum of an individual with disabilities?
- What are successful problem solving methods that facilitate collaboration?

Performance Based Objectives
Students will be able to:
- Identify and discuss major ethical considerations in various aspects and practices in Special Education
- Explain how to support the role of individuals with disabilities, their families and school and community personnel in planning an individualized
program, and maintain confidential communication about individuals with disabilities and their families

- Explain how assessment procedures can respectfully include individuals with disabilities and their families
- Explain how to foster respectful and beneficial relationships among individuals and incorporate individuals with disabilities and their parents as active participants in the educational team
- Discuss ways of communicating effectively with school personnel and parents including those from diverse backgrounds and their families

**Content of Course Which Addresses Technological Competence:**
Students will be required to employ technology in assignments, research and classroom presentations.

**Content of Course Which Addresses Diversity Issues:**
Students will explore issues of cultural diversity in relation to individuals with disabilities and their families focusing on communication and informed consent.

**Content of Course Which Addresses Special Needs Issues:**
This course focuses on individuals with special needs and their families in addressing ethical concerns related to the implementation of special education law.

**COUNCIL FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN STANDARDS**
**NCATE ACCREDITATION**

**Standard #1 – Foundations**

CC1K1 - Models theories and philosophies that form the basis for special education practice.
CC1K2 - Laws, policies and ethical principles regarding behavior management planning and implementation.
CC1K4 - Rights and responsibilities of students, parents, teachers and other professionals, and schools related to exceptional learning needs.
CC1K6 - Issues, assurances and due process rights related to assessment, eligibility, and placement within a continuum of services.
GC1K5 - Continuum of placement and services available for individuals with disabilities.
GC1K8 - Principles of normalization and concept of least restrictive environment.

**Standard #7 – Instructional Planning**

CC7K1 - Theories and research that form the basis of curriculum development and instructional practice.

**Standard #8 – Assessment**

CC8K1 - Basic terminology used in assessment.
CC8K2 - Legal provisions and ethical principles regarding assessment of individuals.
CC8K4 - Use and limitations of assessment instruments.
CC8K5 - National, state or provincial and local accommodations and modifications.
GC8K1 - Specialized terminology used in the assessment of individuals with disabilities.
GC8K2 - Laws and policies regarding referral and placement procedures for individuals with disabilities.
CC8S6 - Use assessment information in making eligibility, program and placement decisions for individuals with exceptional learning needs, including those from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds.
GC8S3 - Select, adapt and modify assessments to accommodate the unique abilities and needs of individuals with disabilities.

**Standard #9 – Professional and Ethical Practice**

CC9S1 - Practice with the CEC Code of Ethics and other standards of the profession.
CC9S2 - Uphold high standards of competence and integrity and exercise sound judgment in the practice of the profession.
CC9S3 - Act ethically in advocating for appropriate services.
CC9S4 - Conduct professional activities in compliance with applicable laws and policies.
CC9S7 - Practice within one’s skill limits and obtain assistance as needed.
CC9S11 - Reflect on one’s practice to improve instruction and guide professional growth.
GC9S2 - Ethical responsibility to advocate for appropriate service for individuals with disabilities.

Standard #10 – Collaboration
CC10K1 - Models and strategies of consultation and collaboration.
CC10K2 - Roles of individuals with exceptional learning needs, families and school and community personnel in planning an individualized program.
GC10S1 - Maintain confidential communication about individuals with exceptional learning needs.
CC10S3 - Foster respectful and beneficial relationships between families and professionals.
CC10S4 - Assist individuals with exceptional learning needs and their families in becoming active participants in the educational team.
CC10S7 - Use group problem solving skills to develop, implement and evaluate collaborative Activities.

NH Certification Task Force Professional Education Standards
J. Is a reflective practitioner who continually evaluates the effects of his or her choices and actions on students, parents and others in the school community.
L. Understands schools as complex organizations within a larger community and collaborates effectively with school staff, parents and others to support students’ learning and well being.
O. Base his or her practice on a clear understanding of professional ethics and the legal rights and responsibilities of educators and students.

National Education Technology Standards
Students will use technology to locate, evaluate and collect information from a variety of sources. (I, IV, V) E, K

PSU Conceptual Frameworks CHECK Standards
Commitment
• dedication, perseverance and individual and social responsibility
• responsibility of educators to take a thoughtful and critical stance toward themselves and their profession

Holism
• affirming diversity and understanding the “whole child” within the family, community and cultural context

Collaboration
• working with students, families and colleagues effectively toward shared goals, showing respect and openness toward diverse perspectives and confronting and resolving conflicts effectively and respectfully

Knowledge
• teaching that engages all learners combines a knowledge of students and one’s subject within cultural, social and institutional context.

Evaluation
Student’s grade will be determined as follows:

![Reflections – 20%](image)
![Case Studies – 45% (15% each)](image)
![Final Project & Presentation – 25%](image)
![Attendance and Participation – 10%](image)

**Reflections** – Students are expected to e-mail a reflection after each class. Reflections may contain comments on the content of the class, questions for further discussion, and/or applications to a personal situation and **must be comprehensive, showing insight into class discussions**. Reflections are due at noon on the day following
each class. (Meets CEC Standards CC1K1, CC1K2, CC1K4, CC1K6, GC1K5, GC1K8, GS9S2, CC9S2, CC9S4; NH Cert. Prof. Ed. Standards L,O; PSU Conceptual Frameworks – Collaboration and Knowledge)

Reflections will receive a rating of 1 - 3 as follows:
  3 - Reflection is thorough, thoughtful, insightful and directly addresses issues raised in class discussions.
  2 - Reflection shows some insight and thought but may not directly address issues or provide any in-depth assessment.
  1 - Reflection is more of a retelling of what was taught rather than the student's insights.

**Case Studies** – Students will be asked to identify the ethical issues presented in each case and formulate a plan to address these issues. *Case studies must include thoughtful application of principles discussed in class, completeness of responses, and the ability to address the problem from varying perspectives.*

**Final Project and Presentation** - Students will choose an ethical issue directly related to special education. (Meets CEC Standards CC7K1, CC9S11, NH Cert. Prof. Ed. Standards J, PSU Conceptual Frameworks –Knowledge, Technology Standards (I, IV, V) E, K) Topic must be approved by XXXXXX. Students will research the topic and be able to present their personal perspective and the rationale for that position. In addition, students must also address and explain an opposing opinion. Information will be presented in a paper that is expected to show scholarly treatment of the topic, including at least four primary sources, a strong rationale for stated positions and overall quality writing (mechanics and grammar). Students will also prepare a presentation designed to educate parents on the topic. The presentation must be at least 20 minutes in length. Students will also prepare some type of document (handout, pamphlet, informational guide) that parents could use as a resource.

Grading will for both case studies and the final paper will be based upon the following rubric:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>4 – Excellent</th>
<th>3 – Good</th>
<th>2 – Satisfactory</th>
<th>1 – Needs Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus Organization</td>
<td>Organization is clearly evident. Excellent transitions from point to point. Paragraphs support topic sentences.</td>
<td>Generally clear and appropriate. May have a few unclear transitions. Examples used to support most points.</td>
<td>Focus may wander. Few or weak transitions. Points often lack supporting evidence.</td>
<td>No clear focus. Transitions are confusing and unclear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>Analysis of issues</td>
<td>Analysis of issues</td>
<td>Analysis may be</td>
<td>Weak analysis.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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flows logically. Ideas presented are reasonable and sound.

is clear, and makes sense. Information shows a basic understanding of the issues presented.

unclear. Ideas may be hazy or difficult to follow.

Ideas do not make sense.

Mechanics Spelling/Grammar
No errors present. Sentence structure and grammar are excellent.

Only minor errors are present. Do not detract from readability.

Some difficulties with sentence structure. Several errors in punctuation and spelling.

Major difficulties with sentence structure and spelling. Seriously limit readability.

Grading for the presentation will be based upon the following:

**Presentation Rubric**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speaking Skills</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>= ______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>= ______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>= ______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting Document</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>= ______</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Score: / 20

**Course Policies**

**Attendance:** Participation in class activities and discussions is **essential** to successful completion of this course. You are expected to attend all classes and to be on time. More than **2 absences** (unless medical in nature) will result in a failing grade. Written documentation must be provided for any absence to be excused.

**Assignments:** Assigned readings should be completed in advance of the class and all assignments should be completed by the date due/time. **Late assignments will not receive a grade higher than a C. Assignments more than five days late will not be accepted.**
Texts:  
**Case Studies in Special Education Law,**  
Mary Konya Weishaar, Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007

**Education for All - Critical Issues in the Education of Children and Youth with Disabilities**  

**Class Topics**

- Review IDEIA and No Child Left Behind
- Concept of Ethics
- Accountability and Mandated Assessment
- Nondiscriminatory Assessment
- Child Study, Pre-referral and Referral
- Discipline
- FAPE and IEPs
- LRE – Least Restrictive Environment
- Due Process and Advocacy
- Parental Roles in Special Education
- Ethical Responsibilities of Special Education Teachers