

Teaching Exceptional Adolescents: Instructor Guide

Title:

Teaching Exceptional Adolescents

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Discipline:

Education

Target Audience

Introductory, majors



Keywords

Disabilities, Secondary Education, Special Education, Teacher Education

Length of Time/Staging

Semester (course)

Abstract

Students who have special education needs spend much of their instructional time in general education classrooms. General education teachers at the secondary level must be prepared to teach academically diverse classes. Students in this course worked through a series of problem-based learning exercises framed by four questions:

1. Who are adolescents with exceptional learning needs?
2. Which instructional principles and practices should teachers employ in academically diverse classrooms?
3. How can classroom and school communities be shaped to support the success of adolescents with exceptional learning needs?
4. How do historical, legal, and values frameworks influence educational decisions regarding delivery of services and supports to exceptional adolescents?

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Student Learning Objectives

Unit 1. Who are adolescents with exceptional learning needs?

Content:

1. Learn characteristics of exceptional youth including their strengths, needs, concerns
2. Introduce some core concepts (e.g., self-determination, transition)
3. Identify learning issues

Process:

1. Introduce students to each other and range of disciplinary perspectives represented in the class
2. Become familiar with education databases, special education journals and websites, and other resources for teachers
3. Develop professional writing skills, including use of APA-style, and oral presentation skills
4. Practice teamwork skills, including a code of conduct



Unit 2. Which instructional principles and practices should teachers employ in academically diverse classrooms?

Content:

1. Know critical instructional principles and become familiar with research-based practices
2. Understand application of critical concepts (*e.g.*, accommodation, modification, differentiated instruction, universal design, content enhancement, learning strategy) in secondary education settings, including students' discipline areas
3. Apply principles and practices to specific instructional problems

Process:

(these repeat for Units 3 and 4)

1. Practice teamwork skills
2. Develop professional writing and presentation skills
3. Further explore education resources that support teachers' work

Unit 3. How can classroom and school communities be shaped to support the success of adolescents with exceptional learning needs?

Content:

1. Become familiar with current reform initiatives that make a difference for students with exceptional learning needs (*e.g.*, Schoolwide Positive Behavior Supports, Inclusive Schools)
2. Learn and apply components of classroom management approaches

Process:

(see Unit 2)

Unit 4. How do historical, legal and values frameworks influence educational decisions regarding delivery of services and supports to exceptional adolescents?

Content:

1. Know major principles of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA)
2. Identify historical and values bases for IDEA requirements
3. Learn components and processes involved in Individual Education Program (IEP) and other educational planning meetings
4. Identify principles and practices that promote collaboration in educational decision-making, including cultural reciprocity with families

Process:

(see Unit 2)



Format of Delivery

Teaching Exceptional Adolescents was a required course at University of Delaware for all pre-service secondary general education majors (twenty+ disciplinary majors, from Colleges of Arts & Sciences, Health Sciences, Agriculture & Natural Resources). Students usually took the course as sophomores or juniors, occasionally as seniors, and less often as freshmen. The course also served a few graduate students who were pursuing initial teaching certification. Class size was approximately thirty five students.

The class met twice each week for one hour and fifteen minutes per session. We also have taught the course on a schedule of three hour classes once each week across a regular semester and in a compressed five-week semester during which the class met twice weekly for three to four-hour sessions. We think the compressed session format is less desirable given the limited time students have to investigate problems, collaborate with group members, and write and reflect between class sessions. A sample course schedule is available below.

Across the semester, the instructor introduced the four course questions and related problems in a predetermined sequence as four units staged from simplest to most complex. As students worked on problems within each unit, the instructor also provided planned and spontaneous lectures related to difficult concepts (*e.g.*, least restrictive environment; reasonable accommodations) and other issues arising from students' questions. Between classes, students read introductory text chapters related to their assigned cases and located supplemental readings to help them answer the questions raised within their groups. Additionally, class time was reserved at the end of each unit for group presentations. The type of presentation varied by unit and included lecture, demonstration, poster session, and roleplay.

The units were not equal in length; more time was devoted to the first and second units. During the first unit students, were learning how to work within the PBL format and about the course performance expectations. The second unit required more time because the students examined foundational concepts that were unfamiliar or about which they had common misunderstandings.

Before the semester, we created seven cases that represented different exceptionalities (or combinations of exceptionalities) that secondary general educators would be likely to encounter in their classrooms (*e.g.*, Learning Disability, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Intellectual Disability, Behavior Disorder, Gifted/Talented) or conditions that are less common but raise interesting and important educational issues (*e.g.*, Asperger's Syndrome, English Language Learner with Visual Impairment). These cases were rotated among the assigned student groups such that each group worked on four different cases by the end of the semester. In other words, a group worked with one case during Unit 1 activities, then worked with three other cases in the three subsequent units. We found that by the end of the semester many students felt strongly involved with the case students; we heard them make comments wondering about whether the next group would take good care with *their* student or that they *missed* a case student they had worked on earlier.

In advance, we grouped students heterogeneously as much as possible by major, gender, and level (*e.g.*, sophomore). At maximum enrollment there were seven groups of five students.



Groups were not permitted to include more than five students. Students remained in these groups throughout the semester.

We used MyCourses (WebCT) as a platform for posting course materials and creating private discussion forums where group members shared their work in progress. We also created public (to course members) discussion forums for each of the seven cases. The public forums served as public archives of the groups' final case products, which were posted by students at the end of each unit.



Sample Schedule

DATE	TOPIC	READINGS	DUE
Q1: Who are adolescents with exceptional learning needs?			
T 8/29	Course Introduction/ Discuss Problem-Based Learning Expectations		
R 8/31	Q1	Read textbook Chapter 1. Read at least the following sections of the text chapter relevant to your assigned group: Identifying; Evaluating; Designing. Read at least two student-selected readings relevant to assigned questions/problems.	
T 9/5	Q1		Post 1
R 9/7	Q1		
T 9/12	Q1		Post 2
R 9/14	Group Presentations	Review each group's publication in the Case Discussion forums. Other readings suggested by the instructor.	Individual Summary Paper
T 9/19	Group Presentations		
R 9/21	Group Presentations		
Q2: Which instructional principles and practices should teachers employ in academically diverse classrooms?			
T 9/26	Q2	Read textbook Chapter 2 Read at least the following sections of the text chapter relevant to your assigned group: Instructional Strategies; Including; Assessing. Read at least two student-selected readings relevant to assigned questions/problems.	614: Challenge Papers
R 9/28	Q2		(One or more postings during unit)
T 10/3	Q2		



R 10/5	Q2		
T 10/10	Q2		
R 10/12	Group Presentations	Review each group's publication in the Case Discussion forums. Other readings suggested by the instructor.	Individual Summary Paper
T 10/17	Group Presentations		
R 10/19	Group Presentations		
Q3: How can classroom and school communities be shaped to support the success of adolescents with exceptional learning needs?			
T 10/24	Q3	Read textbook Chapter 3. Review the text chapter relevant to your assigned group. Read at least two student-selected readings relevant to assigned questions/problems.	614: Challenge Papers
R 10/26	Q3		(One or more postings during unit)
T 10/31	Q3		
R 11/2	Q3		
T 11/7	Election Day	No Class	
R 11/9	Group Presentations	Review each group's publication in the Case Discussion forums. Other readings suggested by the instructor.	Individual Summary Paper
T 11/14	Group Presentations		
Q4: How do historical, legal, and values frameworks influence educational decisions regarding delivery of services and supports to exceptional adolescents?			
R 11/16	Q4	Read textbook Chapter 4. Review Chapter 1. Review the text chapter relevant to your	614: Challenge Papers



T 11/21	Q4	assigned group. Read at least two student-selected readings relevant to assigned questions/problems.	(One or more postings during the Q4 unit)
R 11/23	Thanksgiving	No Class	
T 11/28	Q4	Review each group's publication in the Case Discussion forums.	
R 11/30	Group Presentations		Individual Summary Paper
T 12/5	Group Presentations		

Student Resources

Turnbull, A., Turnbull, R., & Wehmeyer, M. (2007). *Exceptional Lives: Special Education in Today's Schools* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

We required students to use this introductory textbook on special education as an initial resource from which they could extend their investigations. We liked this book because it included the most recent information about special education topics and provided access to a variety of online resources relevant to each chapter. Also, we valued the authors' emphasis on the importance of understanding the strengths and individual characteristics of students with exceptional learning needs rather than focusing on traditional deficit models of difference.

To prepare for group work and individual summary papers that were completed in each unit, every student was responsible for locating and reading at least two articles or other resources that could be used to answer questions raised by his or her group. We told students that no more than half of these could be web-only publications.

We also assigned supplemental readings related to unit topics and posted additional resources that students could use to gain further information about a topic. The following are examples of supplemental material.

Unit 1:

Snow, K. (2007). *People-First Language*. Available:
<http://www.disabilityisnatural.com/explore/people-first-language>

Unit 2:

CAST (2007). *Teaching every student*. Available:
<http://www.cast.org/our-work/publications/2002/universal-design-learning-udl-teaching-every-student-rose.html#.VZ07KvIViko>

Ellis, E. Farmer, T., & Newman, J. (2005). Big ideas about teaching with big ideas. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 38(1), 34-40.

Lenz, B.K., Ehren, B.J., & Deshler, D.D. (2005). The content literacy continuum: A school reform framework for improving adolescent literacy for all students. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 37(6), 60-63.

Unit 3:

Moore, C., Gilbreath, D., & Maiuri, F. (1998). *Educating students with disabilities in general education classrooms: A summary of the research*. Eugene, OR: Western Regional Resource Center.

Turnbull, A. et al. (2002). A blueprint for schoolwide positive behavior support: Implementation of three components. *Exceptional Children*, 68, 377-422.



Unit 4:

U.S. Department of Education (2007). Building the legacy: IDEA 2004. Available: idea.ed.gov/explore/home

Furthermore, we posted guides and resources that students could consult when creating their papers and presentations. For example, we posted links to APA style guides and explanations of professional poster presentations.

Instructor Resources

Halmhuber, N. (1995). Knowledge, motivation and helping behaviors in an introductory special education course. (Paper presented at the 73rd annual convention of the Council for Exceptional Children, Indianapolis, IN). Available: ERIC database.

Lenz, B.K., & Deshler, D.D. (2004). Teaching content to all: Evidence-based inclusive practices in middle and secondary schools. Boston: Pearson, Allyn & Bacon.

Levin, B., Hibbard, K., & Rock, T. (2002). Using problem-based learning as a tool for learning to teach students with special needs. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 25(3), 278-290.

Porath, M., & Jordan, E. (2004). Problem-based learning in teacher education: Constructing knowledge of exceptionality. *Exceptionality Education Canada*, 14(2-3), 47-63.

Teaching Notes

Unit 1.

1. The instructor opened the class with the Congratulations activity. As groups reported the results of their discussion, the instructor helped them to clarify or elaborate as necessary. To save time, the instructor asked reporters to give an additive or contrasting report; that is, only report out new or different items that had not been previously reported. At the end of class, the instructor collected the individual students' written notes. These were reviewed to identify other issues or questions that were not part of the in-class reporting and might be of importance to later discussions.
2. Next, the instructor presented the four course questions and explained how the students questions (from the Congratulations activity) could fit into the course work. The instructor explained the general format of the course and each unit, especially noting the kinds of activities and assessments that would recur.
3. Students were given their group assignments and completed a Code of Conduct exercise (below). Students were informed that their codes should be as specific as possible, because they would be used to evaluate each group member's performance. They also were told that codes could be revised if needed. The groups posted their codes in their group discussion forums.



4. Students completed the First Day and Point of View activities with the instructor providing assistance to individual groups as needed. The instructor made a point of explaining how these activities related to their next tasks of researching answers to their group-selected questions, posting information to the group discussion forum, writing an individual summary paper and creating a presentation. The instructor asked groups to share a sample question from their group work and their ideas about where to find information.
5. The instructor highlighted specific databases and other resources that students could use to support their investigations (*e.g.*, ERIC and Education Fulltext and practitioner journals such as *Teaching Exceptional Children* and *Intervention in School & Clinic*). The instructor also prompted students to use their texts and the supplemental readings as initial sources of information.
6. In some course formats, the First Day and Point of View exercises were conducted on separate occasions and students were responsible for developing a set of group questions and completing investigations for each exercise separately (resulting in two Works in Progress posts).
7. After completing their investigations, the groups were given time in class to discuss and synthesize what they had learned. Additionally, they were instructed to make notes during their group discussions about information they encountered that was difficult to understand, inconsistent, possibly inaccurate, or biased. The instructor circulated to troubleshoot and help students expand upon and organize their ideas. Each group gave a brief oral presentation to the whole class highlighting one or two headlines from their work. The instructor suggested that the groups add the headlines and a related summary of group notes to the group discussion forums.
8. Time was given in class also for students to review the presentation rubric and to consider what content they should include in their presentation, whether they needed to find additional information, and who would take on what presentation tasks.
9. The instructor provided a brief lecture and whole class discussion regarding the post-school outcomes of youth with disabilities. The intent was to introduce students to research about the difficulties encountered by some youth with disabilities and how teachers and schools can contribute to their academic and social achievements. This led to additional lecture and discussion on the concepts of transition and self-determination. Students also watched and discussed an award-winning one-minute video clip entitled *Thumbs Down to Pity*, which was produced by an adolescent with cerebral palsy. At the end of the lecture and whole class discussions, the instructor presented three questions about the key concepts and asked students to talk in their groups about how these applied to their case students.
10. Each group presentation included a brief Q&A time to permit the instructor and class members to seek clarification or additional information about the presentation material. As needed, the instructor later posted supplemental information in the public Discussion

Forums or Other Resources areas of MyCourses. On the rare occasion when a group's presentation contained a serious error, the instructor would correct the misunderstanding in class and assist the group to correct the information in the material to be posted in the case discussion forums.

Unit 2.

1. After introducing the unit objectives, the instructor provided a lecture to introduce and explain relationships among the concepts of standards-based curriculum, access to the general curriculum, Understanding by Design, differentiated instruction, and universal design.
2. The class then broke into their groups and reviewed a sample social studies lesson plan provided by the instructor to become familiar with its parts. Then they watched a brief video of a student with significant physical disabilities who was successfully participating in a high school mathematics class. The groups' task was to identify what they would need to do to ensure that the video student could participate and learn in a class where the sample lesson plan was being taught. Groups shared their ideas with the whole class. Building on their ideas, the instructor defined the concepts of accommodation and modification and provided additional examples.
3. The groups received a written snapshot of the case student they would work with in this unit. They were instructed to make notes about any vocabulary or ideas in the snapshot that they wished to have explained. They also were told to develop questions they might have if the student was in a class that they were teaching. Students posted sample questions on the blackboard or poster paper organized by discipline areas (i.e., mathematics, science, social studies, English, etc.) and the instructor facilitated whole class discuss regarding which questions were truly discipline-specific and which would be of interest across disciplines. Groups then had time to decide what questions they wanted to investigate in regard to their case students. The instructor encouraged the students to review the published group presentations from unit 1 as they began their investigations.
4. The instructor provided another lecture on principles of effective instruction for students with special education needs and introduced two categories of instructional techniques that can be used in general education settings—content enhancements and learning strategies. The instructor also explained the content literacy continuum model and how this model and the prior principles and techniques related to the concept of inclusive education. During this lecture, the instructor intentionally modeled the use of content enhancements, learning strategies, and formative assessments.
5. The groups met in class to discuss the results of their individual case investigations, which they had posted prior to class. In addition to sharing and synthesizing what they learned, the instructor asked them to generate a list of techniques they had found and to determine whether any of these could be considered content enhancements, learning strategies, accommodations, or modifications. Also, they had to provide references that supported the effectiveness of each technique. Students had time in class to consult with

the instructor and do initial planning for their group presentation. They again completed individual summary papers about what they had learned from their research.

6. Following each presentation, the instructor and class members would ask questions about the techniques demonstrated. Also, the groups often spontaneously analyzed what they had done. For example, one group had designed a small group activity as part of their demonstration, but quickly realized as their demonstration unfolded that the high volume of talk and the multi-step task they had devised probably would confuse rather than help their case student. They remarked on this discovery at the end of their presentation and the class members helped them to brainstorm other ways to accomplish their original instructional goal. For this unit, the students had to publish in the case discussion forums a written summary of the techniques presented in class with supporting citations and information about additional resources pertinent to their case student.

Unit 3.

1. Students began the unit by completing a discipline beliefs inventory, the results of which were discussed later in the unit. Then the instructor introduced the objectives for Unit 3.
2. The instructor gave the groups scenarios involving their new case students. The groups brainstormed questions relevant to designing positive classroom and school environments and managing any problematic behaviors of the case student. The instructor also gave the students a problem-solving framework with prompts to guide them toward their unit presentation—a poster explaining their case recommendations. As part of their investigations, students were encouraged to review the publications about their case student from the prior units. As in previous units, students posted their individual research contributions in MyCourses and submitted an individual summary paper.
3. The instructor gave a lecture on the conceptual model and components of schoolwide positive behavior supports initiatives. Groups discussed which of the components would be most relevant to their case student. The instructor gave a second lecture on classroom management and discipline. In their groups, students reviewed a handout containing a variety of classroom management techniques and discussed which would be useful with their case student. Then the instructor split the class into three groups based on their self-scored discipline style profiles (from the inventory administered earlier) and led the class in a discussion about the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches to discipline. The class also watched a video that demonstrated positive and negative examples of teachers responding to students' problem behaviors, and they discussed how the positive examples could inform their own approach to discipline.
4. Along with reviewing the group presentation rubric, the instructor shared examples of poster presentations and put links in MyCourses to information about how to construct a poster. Students were given time in class to consult with the instructor and begin work on their posters.
5. On the last day of the unit, the class presented their posters. Posters were stationed around the room. Each group split in two; half the group stayed with their poster and the

other half was the audience. Audience members visited each poster; listening to the presenters' brief overview of the case, asking questions, and reviewing the related briefing papers. Halfway through the class, the students rotated so that those who had been staffing the posters became the audience and the others took a turn as the presenters. The instructor gave each student a two-sided evaluation form with the name of a case on each side. When they were audience members, students completed evaluations of two case posters. The evaluation responsibilities were divided in such a way that every poster was evaluated by multiple students from across the groups. After the poster session, groups posted their briefing papers into the public case discussion forum. Some groups also posted the outline or slides comprising their posters.

Unit 4.

1. When introducing the objectives for this unit, the instructor informed the students that their final unit presentation would be different from the prior ones. They would need to investigate issues as before, but would participate in a roleplay in class rather than present a group product to the class. Also, the instructor explained how their individual summary papers for this unit would be different from the others they had completed.
2. The instructor gave a brief lecture on the history of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), highlighting how prevalent theories about genetic and cultural difference and the civil rights movement led to particular models of education for people with disabilities at different times. The instructor also explained how the major legal principles of IDEA grew from these historical roots. Students reviewed examples of Individual Education Program (IEP) and procedural safeguards documents.
3. To illustrate how IDEA principles might be enacted for a particular student, volunteers from the class participated in roleplays about IEP meetings.. The roleplays also provided an opportunity for the class to see how their final group roleplays would be conducted. Each participant was given information about the person they were portraying and some information about the student who was the subject of the meeting. One of the participants was designated as the meeting leader and was given a brief agenda for conducting the meeting. The roleplay was designed to introduce one or more conflicts of values or educational approaches that the participants would need to try to resolve in accordance with IDEA principles. The instructor explained that s/he would occasionally 'freeze' the action in the roleplay so the class could discuss or ask questions about what was happening.
4. Groups were given a brief statement that identified which case student they would have for this unit, the type of meeting they would attend and the general issue that would be explored during their group roleplay. For example, one group was told they would participate in an annual IEP meeting for their student and discuss transition goals. Another was told they would participate in a disciplinary hearing involving their student and expulsion might be an issue. They also learned who would participate in the meeting (e.g., parents, student, special education teacher, *etc.*) Groups discussed what they would

need to know about the student and about such a meeting in order to participate. They developed questions for investigation, and later posted the results of their research.

5. The instructor gave another brief lecture and led a whole class discussion on cultural values embedded in IDEA. The instructor introduced the idea of cultural reciprocity as a tool for working with families and students who may have different values and assumptions about educational practices than the teacher or other school professionals.
6. Groups had time in class to share what they had learned through their investigations. The instructor asked them to identify at least three points based on a stem—“Every parent should know...” or “Every teacher should know...” Groups shared these points with the class and explained why they had selected them.
7. Each group participated in a roleplay that was created by the instructor and conducted in the same manner as the sample roleplay they had witnessed. The instructor stopped the action at points for instructional purposes. Sometimes this occurred when one or more of the group members were stuck on an issue, a character revealed something unexpected that changed the course of the meeting, or when the audience reacted strongly to an issue raised in the meeting. The groups were not permitted to finish their meetings; instead each group member had to complete an individual summary paper in which they analyzed what had transpired at the meeting and propose next steps. After four of the roleplays had been conducted, the instructor asked groups to revisit their “Every parent/teacher should know...” lists to determine if they would add or revise anything on the list. The students did this again after the last set of roleplays.

Code of Conduct Exercise

Major causes of team conflict result from a number of factors, but the following often play a role.

- Differing performance expectations.
- Availability (how often do we meet, attendance at meetings, overall availability, vacation during a project).
- Personality conflicts.
- Differing priorities (e.g., work or family takes precedent).

To reduce these concerns, a helpful exercise is to discuss and define expectations early in the team's formation so that these expectations can be more easily managed later.

Step 1:

In this exercise, discuss the points above as a team. Initially, keep the discussion open: don't attempt to reach a consensus on the points too early. Let everyone speak; be sure to listen (avoid thinking about what you will say next). Instead think about what the person is saying, and the implications that his or her concerns have for the team.

For each point consider:

- How might the factor affect your ability to perform as a member of the team?
- How have these factors affected your performance in other classes or on your job?
- What productive methods have you used or seen that address the above problems?

Step 2:

- For each point above (or others identified by the team), decide as a team the acceptable standards of conduct (e.g., if you cannot attend a meeting, you must contact a member one hour in advance).
- Agree on a contingency plan. If a team member violates the code of conduct, what action will be taken? Consider both minor and major violations. Important: Be sure the actions and violations are objective and measurable.
- Blackout times. Create a list of times when everyone is available (potential meeting times). Also create a list when team members are definitely not available. These can be regular commitments (e.g., work) or ad hoc commitments (e.g., upcoming vacation). NOTE: Depending on the nature of the absence, teams may compel a member to commit to added work to make up for an absence.

Code of Conduct for Team _____



Our code of conduct:

We the members of _____ agree to live by this document for the remainder of the semester. I also understand that the instructor will enforce this code of conduct if team disagreements arise in the future.

X_____ X_____

X_____ X_____

X_____ X_____



Assessment Strategies

An overview of course assignments is provided below. Full descriptions of assignments and grading rubrics as presented to students are available below. [Note: There is no rubric for the Work in Progress Posts, except for the explanation given at the end of that assignment description. The instructors created a content-specific rubric for the final exam that provided examples of acceptable answers and point values for limited, acceptable, and strong answers.]

Work in Progress Posts:

Each student was required to post notes to his or her group's private discussion forum at least once (sometimes twice) each unit. The notes were based on the readings s/he located independently in response to the group-selected and -assigned questions. The posts were intended to provide the instructor and other group members with evidence of individual contributions toward the group's work. The posts also served as a way to share information outside of class with other group members in preparation for group presentations and the individual summary papers.

Individual Summary Papers:

Each student wrote a brief paper (e.g., about three pages double-spaced) in which s/he summarized and reflected upon the answer to his/her assigned problems/questions from group work in each unit. The individual papers provided an opportunity for students to demonstrate their understanding of key concepts and new ideas addressed in the unit.

Group Presentations:

At the end of each unit, groups gave presentations to the class based on their work. The presentations were opportunities for the groups to summarize and apply what they had learned during the unit. The presentations (and related products) also served as supplemental lessons or examples for the other class members. The type of presentation varied by unit.

For the first unit, groups gave a twenty-minute oral presentation about characteristics of students similar to their cases. They could supplement the presentations with powerpoint and brief audience interactions if they wished.

For the second unit, each group had twenty minutes to demonstrate multiple teaching techniques that would be appropriate for use in a general education classroom that included their case student. The group could present a skit performed by the group members or engage the whole class in a mini-lesson.

For the third unit, groups created a poster display and briefing paper explaining their solution to a particular case problem, and they participated in a class-wide poster session.



For the fourth unit, students participated in roleplays of team meetings in which they had to discuss and attempt to resolve issues related to educational services, including disciplinary actions. Group members did not know prior to arriving in class the details of the case situation or which team member roles (*e.g.*, student, teacher, parent, administrator) they would be assigned. If a roleplay involved more roles than there were group members, then volunteers from the class filled the extra roles. Each participant in the roleplay held different information about the case, which they could choose to reveal or not during the roleplay. These final presentations were not evaluated, but served as a prompt for in-class discussions.

Groups were required to post products from their first three presentations in the public discussion forums. Also, each student privately rated and commented upon other groups' presentations. These peer evaluations were not used for grading purposes, although the instructor reviewed the comments as a way to validate his or her own observations and to identify potential misunderstandings about the assignment or content. Also, the peer evaluations were intended to encourage students to consider and compare the effectiveness of others' efforts to their own.

Finally, each student was responsible for sending a brief note to the instructor at the end of each unit regarding his or her assessment of other group members' performance based on the group's code of conduct.

Graduate Student Challenge Papers:

In addition to other assignments, graduate students completed three brief papers related to the first three units. The purpose of these papers was to allow the graduate students to demonstrate more advanced knowledge. Students could choose to critique and extend their group's presentation content or describe a model research-based practice relevant to the unit topic.

Final exam:

The purpose of the final exam was to assess students' ability to accurately identify, apply, and explain critical concepts from the course. During a final exam period, students responded individually in written, short answer format to ten questions about brief scenarios that related to major topics in the course.

Participation:

We also gave some credit for regular engagement in group and whole class activities. Participation was noted by student signature on group worksheets collected in class or by the instructor through roll call. Students had to be on-time and present for the whole class session to receive credit for participation.



Assignments

Work in Progress Posts

The purpose of the posts is to provide evidence of your independent contributions to your group's work. The posts also provide an opportunity for you to share "draft" work within your group that can be refined for use in your Individual Summary Papers and Group Presentations/Papers. These posts will not be formally evaluated for writing style or content, but should be readily comprehensible to readers (group members and instructor) and relevant to the assignment.

Within each unit (represented by a Course Question), you will be responsible for posting one or more "work in progress." Each post should include:

1. Identifying Information:
 - Your Name;
 - Course Question # (i.e., 1-4); and
 - Case Name
2. Brief Annotation:
 - In a few sentences, summarize the topic and content of your post.
3. Notes:
 - The content will vary depending on your question. You may present your notes in narrative, outline or "bullet" format. You may include links to relevant websites or references for interesting resources. Listing links or references without providing related notes is NOT acceptable.
4. Sources:
 - This may include formal citations that you'll use in your Individual Summary Paper or Group Presentation; or may be more general information about where you searched for and found information.

Grading: The instructor will verify that you have made the required number of posts, submitted on time, and included all components as described above.

Individual Summary Papers

The purpose of the summary papers is to demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of key material within each unit, including the information gained as a result of researching the specific questions you were assigned by your group. Furthermore, the summary papers provide an opportunity for you to reflect on what you have learned. The papers should be brief (e.g., three to four double-spaced pages).



The paper must include:

1. Identifying Information:

- Your Name;
- Course Question # (i.e., 1-4); and
- Case Name

2. Specific Questions:

- List the questions you were assigned to answer during group activities

3. Summary

- Summarize the key informational points that you contributed to the group as a result of your outside readings. You may include relevant information from the text.
- Include APA-style citations.

4. Reflections

- Explain the most interesting or important thing you learned.
- Discuss why this information is important and/or provide specific examples of how it could be used in professional practice.

5. References

- Provide an APA-style reference list for all cited work. (Min. 2; no more than half from web-only sources)

Note: Individual Summary Paper #4 has different content requirements than the first three. Refer to the ISP4 rubric for specifics.

Group Presentations

The purpose of the group presentations is to provide the class with a synthesis of key information on unit topics. The group presentations are an opportunity for students to learn from each other and to critically analyze ideas and perspectives.

The required components for each of the four unit presentations will vary. The specific assignment descriptions will be discussed in class and are described in the rubrics!

Additional Requirement for all four group presentations: Each student must independently submit an evaluation of the contributions made by each group member, including him/herself, based on the group's code of conduct. Evaluations must be given to the instructor following the group's presentation (in class or via e-mail within 24 hours).



Challenge Papers (Graduate Students Only)

The purpose of the Challenge Papers is to demonstrate advanced knowledge through thoughtful critique and further elaboration on a topic. Each paper should be approximately three to five pages double-spaced. You have two options:

1. Knowledge Option "Critical Essay"

- critique your group's response/solution to the case in this unit.
- expand on the group's response/solution (or propose alternatives).
- integrate information from assigned readings AND additional, credible sources.

OR

1. Skills Option "Principled Practice"

- identify a model practice relevant to the unit topic.
- briefly discuss evidence from research and practice that indicates the value of the model.
- describe a specific example of how the practice could be incorporated into a class that you might teach.

Final Exam

The purpose of the final exam is to assess your ability to accurately recall, apply, and explain critical concepts from the course. You will respond individually in written short answer format to ten questions about brief scenarios that relate to major topics in the course (i.e., characteristics of youth with exceptional learning needs; instructional principles and practices; schoolwide and individual supports for student success; legal and values bases for special education services).

Grading Rubrics

Available in file folder

