SPED 4397  Introduction to Special Education within School Settings  
Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi  
College of Education  
Course Syllabus—Fall 2013; MWF 9:00-9:50 AM

PROFESSOR: Phyllis M. Robertson, Ph.D.  
EMAIL: Phyllis.Robertson@tamucc.edu  
OFFICE HOURS: Monday/Wednesday 1-4 or by appointment, FC 234  
PHONE: 361-825-3331

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course requires students to participate in various community centers, schools and programs. Students will be actively involved in the learning situation.

II. RATIONALE

Provides undergraduate students opportunities to teach special needs students in a variety of special education delivery systems.

III. STATE ADOPTED PROFICIENCIES FOR TEACHERS

The state adopted proficiencies covered in this course include the following:

1. Learner Centered Instruction. To create a learner-centered community, the teacher collaboratively identifies needs; and plans, implements, and assesses instruction using technology and other resources.

2. Equity in Excellence for All Learners. The teacher responds appropriately to diverse groups of learners. The administrator promotes equity in excellence for all by acknowledging, respecting, and responding to diversity among students and staff while building on shared values and other similarities that bond all people.

IV. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students in the EC-12 Special Education program will:

- demonstrate a depth of knowledge of understanding individuals with disabilities and evaluating their needs; (SPED 4310, SPED 4320, SPED 4330, and SPED 4335 are linked to this student learning outcome.)
- demonstrate a depth of knowledge of fostering learning and development for individuals with disabilities; (SPED 4320, SPED 4330, and SPED 4335 are linked to this student learning outcome.)
- demonstrate a depth of knowledge of foundations of special education
and professional roles and responsibilities of the special education teacher; (SPED 4310 and SPED 4330 are linked to this student learning outcome.)

- effectively apply the competencies of a special education teacher in their student teaching experience. (SPED 4310, SPED 4320, SPED 4325, SPED 4330, SPED 4335, SPED 4397 and SPED 4398 are linked to this student learning outcome.)

V. TExES COMPETENCIES

Competency 002: The special education teacher understands formal and informal assessment procedures and knows how to evaluate student competencies to make instructional decisions.

Competency 003: The special education teacher understands and applies knowledge of procedures for planning instruction for individuals with disabilities.

Competency 005: The special education teacher knows how to promote students’ educational performance in all content areas by facilitating their achievement in a variety of settings and situations.

Council for Exceptional Children: Initial Level Content Standards

Beginning special educators demonstrate their mastery of the following standards:

Initial Content Standard 1: Foundations
Special educators understand the field as an evolving and changing discipline based on:

- philosophies and evidence-based principles and theories
- relevant laws and policies
- diverse and historical points of view
- human issues that influence the field and professional practice
- issues of human diversity that can impact families, cultures, and schools
- relationships of organizations of special education to the organizations and functions of schools, school systems, and other agencies

Initial Content Standard 2: Development and Characteristics of Learners
Special educators:

- know and demonstrate respect for their students first as unique human beings
- understand the similarities and differences in human development
- understand how exceptional conditions can interact with the domains of human development
- use this knowledge to respond to the varying abilities and behaviors of individuals with exceptional learning needs
Initial Content Standard 3: Individual Learning Differences
Special educators:

- know and understand the effects that an exceptional condition can have on an individual’s learning in school and throughout life
- utilize active and resourceful means in seeking to understand how primary language, culture, and familial backgrounds interact with the individual’s exceptional condition
- understand learning differences provide the foundation upon which special educators individualize instruction

Initial Content Standard 4: Instructional Strategies
Special educators:

- possess a repertoire of evidence-based instructional strategies to individualize instruction for individuals with exceptional learning needs.
- select, adapt, and use these instructional strategies to promote positive learning results in general and special curricula
- modify learning environments appropriately for individuals with exceptional learning needs
- enhance the learning of critical thinking, problem-solving, and performance skills of individuals with exceptional learning needs
- promote increased student’ self-awareness, self-management, self-control, self-reliance, and self-esteem
- emphasize the development, maintenance, and generalization of knowledge and skills across environments, settings, and the life span.

Initial Content Standard 5: Learning Environments and Social Interactions
Special educators actively:

- create learning environments for individuals with exceptional learning needs
- foster cultural understanding, safety and emotional well-being, positive social interactions, and active engagement
- foster environments in which diversity is valued
- shape environments to encourage the independence, self-motivation, self-direction, personal empowerment, and self-advocacy
- help their general education colleagues integrate individuals with exceptional learning needs in general education environments and engage them in meaningful learning activities and interactions
- use direct motivational and instructional interventions
- teach students to respond effectively to current expectations
- intervene with individuals with exceptional learning needs in crisis
• coordinate all these efforts and provide guidance and direction to paraeducators and others, such as classroom volunteers and tutors.

Initial Content Standard 6: Language
Special educators:
• understand typical and atypical language development
• use individualized strategies to enhance language development and teach communication skills
• are familiar with augmentative, alternative, and assistive technologies to support and enhance communication
• match communication methods to an individual’s language proficiency and cultural and linguistic differences
• provide effective language models and use communication strategies and resources to facilitate understanding of subject matter for individuals with exceptional learning needs whose primary language is not English.

Initial Content Standard 7: Instructional Planning
Individualized decision-making and instruction is at the center of special education practice. Special educators:
• develop long-range individualized instructional plans anchored in both general and special education curricula
• systematically translate these individualized plans into carefully selected shorter-range goals and objectives taking into consideration an individual’s abilities and needs, the learning environment, and a myriad of cultural and linguistic factors
• emphasize explicit modeling and efficient guided practice to assure acquisition and fluency through maintenance and generalization.
• modify instructional plans based on ongoing analysis of the individual’s learning progress
• facilitate instructional planning in a collaborative context
• develop a variety of individualized transition plans from preschool to a variety of postsecondary work and learning contexts
• use appropriate technologies to support instructional planning and individualized instruction

Initial Content Standard 8: Assessment
Assessment is integral to the decision-making and teaching of special educators and special educators use multiple types of assessment information for a variety of educational decisions. Special educators use the results of assessments:
• to help identify exceptional learning needs and to develop and implement individualized instructional programs
• to adjust instruction in response to ongoing learning progress
Special educators understand:
- legal policies and ethical principles of measurement
- measurement theory and practices
- appropriate use and limitations of various types of assessments

Special educators collaborate with families and other colleagues to:
- assure nonbiased, meaningful assessments and decision-making
- conduct formal and informal assessments of behavior, learning, achievement and environments
- identify supports and adaptations required for individuals
- regularly monitor the progress of individuals
- use appropriate technologies to support their assessments.

Initial Content Standard 9: Professional and Ethical Practice
Special educators are guided by the profession’s ethical and professional practice standards to:
- to practice ongoing attention to legal matters along with serious professional and ethical considerations

Special educators view themselves as lifelong learners and regularly reflect on and adjust their practice to reflect current evidence-based best practices.

Initial 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 and promote and advocate the learning and well-being of individuals with exceptional learning needs across a wide range of settings and a range of different learning experiences.

**VI. COURSE OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES**

This course is designed to enable students to:

1. Gain practical information on setting up and organizing a classroom for students with special needs (III. 1; IV. 003).

2. Teach students both on an individual and group basis under a teacher’s supervision (III. 1, 2; IV. 005).

3. Document, monitor and evaluate instruction on a daily basis (III. 1; IV. 005).

VII. COURSE TOPICS

This is a practicum class in which the student interacts and teaches special needs students under the supervision of the classroom teacher.

VIII. INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND ACTIVITIES

The methods and activities for instruction include the following:

- Teacher modeling
- Guided practice
- Observing classroom instruction, ARD meeting, RTI meeting
- Teaching special needs students on an individual and small group basis
- Administering assessment devices
- Conducting Baseline/Intervention studies

IX. EVALUATION AND GRADE ASSIGNMENT

The major components of this course include the following assignments:

1. Field based component (minimum 30 hours). The student will spend 3 – 4 hours per week for a period of @ 8 weeks in a school setting serving students receiving special education services (inclusive, pull-out, self-contained, etc.). The student will work under the direct supervision of a special educator to gain experience that promotes professional growth and development leading to certification as a special education teacher. Attendance and sign-in sheet is required.

2. Reflective Journal (due weekly). You must submit at least one journal entry weekly during your placement. These are private; only the instructor will review each journal. These entries should be about an issue or incident that “stayed with you.” Each journal entry must contain: name of school, supervising teacher, number of students, type of classroom, etc.

3. Data Collection Implementation. Each student must complete a daily or weekly IEP data collection sheet, for one student, for approximately one month (dependent on the measure). Data will then be graphed to show student progress of the skill. Data collection will be reviewed in class.

4. Reading Responses. Our class will stay connected through our online course environment. Our class will participate in online course discussions regarding
your reading and field experience. These responses are our way to apply our current learning theory to what you are experiencing in the classroom. You must actively participate in these activities. There are three discussion topics assigned – you are welcome to address them any time prior to the due date. Record your due dates! You are also encouraged to respond, at least once, to a colleague’s post. This is a time to support one another!

5. Module Project. This project should be seen as several mini-assignments (approximately 1-2 pages each). You will submit your Module Project when all items are completed. The module project will be reviewed in class.

6. Final Reflection. At the end of your experience, you will review each of your journal entries and your module project. Develop an overall reflection of your experience—what you learned, what you will use, what you might do differently. This is not a negative reflection on your cooperating teacher/school. We all bring different gifts to the classroom – which makes teaching so unique! Be sure to discuss a few of the most valuable experiences that you’ve learned during this journey. Also, please share some areas in which you may do things differently. Grading is Credit (CR) or Non Credit (NCR). You must submit ALL work, on time, to receive a CR grade.

- Attendance & Punctuality
  - 3-4 hours a week
  - If you are absent, you must make up the time. If hours are not made up, one will receive a Non Credit (NCR) for the course.
  - If you are going to be absent, leave a message in advance with the cooperating teacher and the university instructor.
  - If you change days or times it must be approved in advance by the cooperating teacher and the university instructor.
  - If absent more than 4 times, one will receive Non Credit (NCR) for the course.

- Professionalism
  - Dress. No jeans. Even with permission from the school/cooperating teacher, you are not to wear blue jeans, sneakers, or t-shirts to your field experience. Dress should be professional – you are not only representing yourself as a future educator, but also TAMUCC. Any exception to the rule MUST be approved by me first.
  - Cell phone use. Do not use/take out your cell phone while at your placement. No texting. Cell phone use should only be used for emergencies (or supervisor request) and you must report the incident to me. Even during non-instructional times (i.e., recess), cell phones are not to be take out.
  - Request a teacher handbook or list of rules. Adhere to all school (and university) rules.
  - Use person-first language in all your professional discussions and written work.
o We will review the Code of Ethics and students should adhere to this code.

o Confidentiality. Respect confidentiality issues at all times. Do not use students’ names in written work or social conversations; always speak respectfully of students and school personnel. Do not engage in “negative talk.”

o All work must be typed, single or double spaced, well organized, fastened, and written at a graduate level (please edit all work prior to submission).

o If you have any difficulty or concern, please contact me immediately!

X. COURSE SCHEDULE AND POLICIES

Tentative Course Schedule
See attached.
This is a wonderful opportunity to learn from others in a school setting – make the most of it!!

Student Conduct
Professional behavior is expected of all students. Inappropriate class conduct (cursing, disruption, sidebar conversations, etc.) may result in a reduced final grade or failure of the course. All cell phones will be turned off or to the inaudible mode during class. Do not answer a call during class. Do not read or compose texts during class. Do not leave the classroom to answer a call, unless you anticipate an emergency call and warn me prior to class. All students are expected to act in a responsible manner with consideration of fellow students and toward TAMU-CC faculty and staff members. Specific rules and information is available in the TAMU-CC Student Handbook and available through the website http://studentaffairs.tamucc.edu/StudentCodeofConduct.pdf

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
The ADA is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disability. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit the Disability Services at (361)825-5816 in CCH 116.

If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

Grade Appeals
As stated in University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the
student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, and University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Office of Student Affairs.

**Academic Honesty**
University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, forgery, or plagiarism. (Plagiarism is the presentation of the work of another as one’s own work.)

Disciplinary action for academic misconduct is the responsibility of the faculty member assigned to the course. The faculty member is charged with assessing the gravity of any case of academic dishonesty, and with giving sanction to any student involved. Penalties that may be applied to individual cases of academic dishonesty include one or more of the following:

1. Written reprimand;
2. Requirement to re-do work in question;
3. Requirement to submit additional work;
4. Lowering of grade on work in question;
5. Assigning grade of “F” to work in question;
6. Assigning grade of “F” for course;
7. Recommendation for more severe punishment.

If the faculty member determines that assigning a grade of “F” to the course is the appropriate penalty and this disciplinary action occurs prior to the deadline for dropping courses, the student forfeits his/her right to drop the course in question.

The faculty member may file a record of cases of academic dishonesty, including a description of the disciplinary action taken, along with any materials involved, with his or her college dean and the Office of Student Affairs. The office of the academic dean of the college in which the offense took place will maintain records of all cases of academic dishonesty reported for a period of not more than two years.

**Dropping a Class**
I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with me before you decide to drop to be sure it is the best thing to do. Should dropping the
course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class.

XI. TEXTBOOK

**Required:**

**Recommended:**
A Guide to the Admission, Review, and Dismissal Process (March 2010) available on Texas Education Agency website. (download free)

It’s A New IDEA: The Manual for Parents and Students About Special Education Services in Texas 2012. Free publication available for download at: www.thearcoftexas.org or www.advocacyinc.org

XII. BIBLIOGRAPHY
Course content is supported by the following:


Helpful Teacher Websites:
AIMSweb http://www.aimsweb.com/

American Institute for Research, The Access Center
http://www.k8accesscenter.org/training_resources/math.asp
Crayola Lesson Plans [http://education.crayola.com/lessons/]

Discovery Lesson Plans, Customized Puzzles, K-12 with Modifications [http://discoveryschool.com]

Gateway to Educational Materials [http://www.thegateway.org/]

Illuminations [http://illuminations.nctm.org/]

Intervention Central [http://www.interventioncentral.org]

MathTools [http://www.mathforum.org/mathtools/]

The IRIS Center [http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/]

The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk [http://www.meadowscenter.org/]

PBS Teacher Source for Lesson Plans [http://www.pbs.org/teachersource/]


**Professional Organizations**
The following professional organizations and their respective publications are important resources for specialists in the disability field:

- TASH
- Council for Exceptional Children:
- Division for Physical and Health Disabilities
- Council of Administrators of Special Education
- Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders
- Division on Developmental Disabilities
- Division for Communicative Disabilities and Deafness
- Division for Learning Disabilities
- Division on Visual Impairments
- The Association for the Gifted
- Teacher Education Division
- Division for Early Childhood
- Council for Educational Diagnostic Services
- Technology and Media Division
- Division on Career Development and Transition
- Division for Research
- Division for Culturally & Linguistically Diverse Exceptional Learners
**Tentative Schedule:** We will meet as a class for the first few classes and on three additional occasions.

Attendance at your placement is critical.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weeks</th>
<th>Course Activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 4</td>
<td>Meet on Campus</td>
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<td>September 6</td>
<td>Meet on Campus</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 9</td>
<td>Meet on Campus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Work in Setting</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Week 4     | Work in Setting  
**Online Reading Response 1 Due** |
| Week 5     | Work in Setting                                         |
| Week 6     | Work in Setting  
**Online Reading Response 2 Due** |
| Week 7     | Work in Setting                                         |
| Week 8     | Work in Setting  
**Data Collection Sheet Due** |
| Week 9     | Work in Setting                                         |
| Week 20    | Work in Setting  
**Online Reading Response 3 Due** |
| Week 11    | Work in Setting                                         |
| Week 12    | Work in setting  
**Module Project Due** |
| Week 13    | Work in Setting  
**All Journal Entries Must Be Completed** |
| Week 14    | Work in Setting  
**Attendance/Sign in Sheets Must Be Submitted** |
| December 9 | Meet on Campus                                          |
Field Experience Module Project

Please address each module as a “mini-assignment.” All work should be well organized and completed in 12pt. font.

1. Classroom Structure
Describe the overall classroom structure – observe, discuss/conduct interview(s) with teacher(s).

Describe the physical environment and the students; review teacher lesson plans; learn how teachers document within on-going plans that IEP requirements are being met (e.g., how are student specific goals addressed? how are accommodations/modifications being incorporated into daily/ongoing written lesson plans?); review textbooks and other instructional materials; work with students one-on-one or in small groups under the supervision of the cooperating teacher; determine how the school provide a “continuum” of special education services. It may be possible to observe in several settings over time to optimize your learning experience.

2. Formal/Informal Assessments
Describe the assessment procedures utilized in the classroom.

Review assessments used for educational and behavioral purposes; observe different formal/informal assessments; seek information regarding CBAs/CBMs (curriculum based assessments/curriculum based measures); describe STAAR preparation and the role of the special educator in the process and administration.

3. Instruction/Administration
Document your participation in teaching.

- Lesson Plans
  o Thoroughly review the teacher’s lesson plans
  o Discuss additional ideas you may have with the teacher
  o Teach mini-lessons under the direction of cooperating teacher(s) – ask for feedback (See lesson observation feedback forms – choice of 2; submit copy of plan and feedback)
  o Accept and seek teaching opportunities

Describe the following administrative functions.

- Scheduling
  o Review schedule of students, staff, and support personnel
  o How are resources used (paraprofessionals, support staff, peer helpers, etc.)

- Team Leadership
  o How often does the special educator meet with paraprofessionals? Conduct trainings?
  o What suggestions would he/she provide for effectively and supportively supervising paraprofessionals?

- Communication
4. **IEP**
Describe IEP development.

Review the process for IEP development; try to observe during an IEP or other student planning meeting; describe the processes/procedures for monitoring goals/objectives (data collection).

5. **Behavior Support**
Describe the behavior support procedures.

Review a behavior intervention/change plan; discuss plan implementation; describe data collection procedures in the school setting with respect to academic and social behaviors under intervention.

6. **Classroom Management**
Describe the classroom management plan.

List the classroom rules and procedures; discuss ways in which the students learn those rules and procedures; list the consequences for positive and negative behavior.

7. **Assistive Technology**
Describe the assistive technology used in the classroom.

Interview a member of the school/district assistive technology team and determine where/how they are trained; discuss low, mid, and high tech devices used in the classroom on a regular basis.

8. **Inclusive Practices**
Describe the inclusion practices implemented at the school.

Discuss ways in which all students are included in the school community; identify opportunities for increasing inclusive practices.

9. **Specialization**
Describe the teacher(s) roles and responsibilities on campus.

Discuss ways in which the special educator acts as a resource to the school; discuss the special educator’s participation in the RTI process; observe an RTI meeting.

Does the special educator consult for the RTI team?
Observe a RTI meeting

10. **Applying your Knowledge**
Connect your field experience to content learned in other courses.

Review content/material studied in your classes throughout teacher preparation; make connections – university coursework to actual classroom application.
11. *Other*…
Please feel free to share any other information that you felt was valuable during your experience.