Introduction to Teaching Students with Exceptionalities

Faculty of Education
The University of Western Ontario

EDUC 5480, section 001

Introduction to Teaching Students with Exceptionalities
ONLINE: Monday January 8 – Friday, March 9, 2018

Instructor:
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Meetings upon request

Course Coordinator:
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Calendar Copy: Students will critically understand various conceptions of education for students with exceptionalities and apply these to problems of practice. Common exceptionalities will be examined with reference to psychological characteristics, assessment, interventions, and program accommodations and modifications. Principles and policies regarding inclusive education and individual education plans (IEP) will be discussed. 0.5 credit, 4 hours/week
Learning Outcomes:

1) Understand categories of learning exceptionalities and models of special education delivery critically through psychological, sociological, and legal perspectives.
2) Understand the teacher’s role in identifying and intervening in learning difficulties as part of the school team.
3) Apply principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), strategies for Differentiated Instruction (DI), and policies on Assessment for Learning (AfL) as they relate to the development of the IEP and the creation of inclusive classrooms.

Course Materials: There is a required text for this course which is available in the Western bookstore and on course reserve at the Education library. Other material (e.g., videos and podcasts) will be embedded in the weekly “Lessons” section of the OWL course site.


Course Content:

Important Notes: This online, 0.5 credit course is equivalent to four hours per week onsite. Please set aside time for reading and participation accordingly. While most online courses run Saturday to Sunday, and you are welcome to interact with the content at any time during the week, the course instructors have set the deadline for posting and assignment submissions to be 4 pm on Thursdays for the following reasons. First, if you have problems with OWL, the Impact Group in room 1138 is available to help you. Second, Fridays are set aside for non-course related programming, and we want to protect that time for you.

We are not covering Chapter 6 and 7 of the course text, and instead spending two weeks to focus on chapter 2. This is not because these chapters are less important, rather, they are so vitally important that they are the subjects of two other courses, Inclusive Classrooms and Mental Health Literacy. This gives us time to focus on the role of the teacher in identification and programming for students with learning exceptionalities.
Due to time restrictions we will not formally cover Chapter 1, although it is recommended that it be read as preparation before the course starts.

Week 1: Monday January 8 – Thursday January 11

Text: Chapter 2, The Teacher’s Role in Identifying Exceptionality (pages 31-34)

Forum Discussion (posts and replies are to be entered into the Forum section of the course website in OWL under Week 1/Chapter 2): In chapter 2 of the text, the steps teachers should take if a student is having learning difficulties are clearly defined (see Figure 2.1). It has happened though, that students with exceptionalities may not be identified until much later than would have been expected, if at all. Explain (or speculate) why lack of identification may occur, referring to at least two types of exceptionality, and the teacher’s role in identification. A post here can be the initial response by someone or a reply or elaboration to the initial post. A valid reply however must contain new ideas, and not just support for the initial post (although supportive comments are certainly welcome).

Week 2: Saturday January 13 – Thursday January 18

Text: Chapter 2, The Teacher’s role in planning for inclusion (pages 34-54).

Assignment/Forum Discussion: Discuss ways you have seen collaboration for students with special needs and IEPs in use in your first practicum. How do your observations connect (or not) with the information in chapter 2? When you share observations, keep confidentiality in mind: do not identify students, teachers, or schools by name. Discuss critically but respectfully – whether the collaboration appeared to be working effectively or could be improved, and why that might be the case. How might the social (role expectations, personalities, etc.) and material (policies, schedules, spaces, resources etc.) context be influencing how people collaborate in this school? One page, single-spaced, 12-point font, 1 inch margins. Post a summary (100-250 words) in the Forum for discussion in Week2/Chapter 2. Alternatively you may reply to someone’s post with your own experiences. Again replies to posts should contain new ideas or examples. Post assignment in the Assignment section of the course website in OWL.
Week 3: Saturday January 20 – Thursday January 25

Text: Chapter 3: Learning and Behaviour Exceptionalities

Online: Interact with the content in the Lesson. Forum Discussion: What are some similarities and/or differences in approaching teaching students who are gifted, who have a learning disability, or who have behaviour exceptionalities? Refer to Chapters 1-3. Post your responses/replies in the Forum Week 3/Chapter 3.

Week 4: Saturday January 27 – Thursday February 1

Text: Chapter 4, Intellectual Disabilities and Autism

Online: Interact with the content in the Lesson. Forum discussion: What are some pros and cons of full inclusion for students with severe intellectual disabilities or autism? This question is not meant to argue whether we should have full inclusion; only to critically appraise the situation so that planning can be made to make any improvements necessary.
Post in Forum Week 4/Chapter 4.

Week 5 Saturday February 3 – Thursday February 8

Text: Chapter 5, Communication, Physical and Chronic Health

Online: Interact with the content and questions in the Lesson.

Assignment: The accommodations listed on the IEP on page 45 are typical: regardless of exceptionality, Ontario has a standard form with checkboxes to select. “Graphic organizers,” “organizational coaching” and “assistive technology” are very common accommodations for many students across exceptionalities, grades, and subject areas – consider the role of executive functioning and self-regulation on learning (pgs. 21, 37). But what does this look like in practice? It depends very much on the student, the teacher, and the human and material resources available.

Create an “ADAPT” (see pages 21-25) profile for a student who might require graphic organizers and organizational coaching. Include their grade, exceptionality, strengths/interests and needs, based on the typical demands of a classroom at that grade level. Then, provide examples (one for each) of a graphic organizer, strategy for organizational coaching, and piece of assistive technology (software and/or hardware – think an app on an i-pad, or speech to text on a laptop) that could help this student.
access the curriculum. Consider how you would teach and assess the effectiveness of each strategy, and whether it would be feasible, from a UDL standpoint, to have this in place for every student. You do not need to create your own strategies: look for the many excellent examples you can find online, in the library, or have seen in your practicum. Include visual samples if possible so that we can share amongst the class, and cite sources. (One page, single-spaced, for the ADAPT profile, plus a page for references, and visual examples attached if applicable).

Post a brief response or reply to the Forum Section of the course website in Forum Week 5/Chapter 5.
Post the assignment to the Assignment section of the course website in OWL.

Week 6: Saturday February 10 – Thursday February 15

Text: Chapter 8, UDL and DI

Online: Interact with the content in the Lesson. Forum Discussion: What do you see as the opportunities and challenges for implementing UDL and DI in the classroom?
Post a brief response or reply to the Forum Section of the course website; Week 6 Chapter 8.

Saturday February 17 – Thursday February 22

READING WEEK

Week 7: Saturday February 24 – Thursday March 1

Text: Chapter 9, Differentiating Assessment and Using Assessment to Differentiate Teaching

Online: Interact with the content in the Lesson. Assignment Submission/Forum Discussion: 1) Think about a student with a LD who is below grade level in reading and writing, and has problems with memorization. Besides reading questions on tests/assignments for this student and scribing answers (or using assistive technology to do so), how might you differentiate assessment in this class? 2) Think about a lesson you are teaching. What “Assessment for Learning” strategies could you embed throughout the lesson to plan differentiated instruction for students who are learning
the material at different rates? (One page, single-spaced, 12-point font, 1 inch margin). Post a summary (100-250 words max) in the Forum; Week 7/Chapter 9. Post the assignment to the Assignment section of the course website in OWL.

Week 8: Saturday March 3 – Thursday March 8

Text: Chapter 10 & 11, Enhancing Social Relations and Transitions

Online: Interact with the content in the Lesson. Forum Discussion: Pick one sub-topic in each chapter and summarize what you learned and why it is important. Post in Forum Week 8/Chapters 10&11.

Assignments/Assessment:

Assignments: There are three assignments in this course, weeks 2, 5 and 7 (see outline above). They are worth 60% of the course grade (20% each). A marking guide will be available in the Resources section of the OWL course site. Assignment length is not to exceed one page, single-spaced, 12-point font, 1 inch margins. The Assignment section of OWL will open at 8 am on Monday and close at 4 pm on Thursday for that week.

Lesson Content and Forum Discussions: There will be material and questions or prompts each week to engage with. Please read the directions carefully in the outline above, they will also be embedded each week in the Lesson section of the OWL site. Completion of these activities is marked pass/fail and worth 40% of the course grade (8% per week). The expectation is that you respond thoughtfully to prompts and questions in the weekly lessons and participate respectfully with others in the discussions, showing evidence that you have read the text and thoughtfully engaged with the embedded materials. A guideline for posting is 100-250 words per post, unless otherwise specified. A response post replying to someone else’s post will consist of adding new idea(s). Responses supporting others’ comments are appreciated but not considered for marking unless something new is added.
Note: Difficulties with OWL sometimes happen, so the best strategy is not to leave things to the last minute. The OWL support team is available if you have any problems.

The IMPACT GROUP
Room 1138, Faculty of Education Building
edu.tech.support@uwo.ca
519-661-2111 x 84839

Policy Statements:

Accessibility: The University of Western Ontario is committed to recognizing the dignity and independence of all students and seeks to ensure that persons with disabilities have genuine, open and unhindered access to academic services. Please contact the course instructor if you require course materials in an alternative format or if any other arrangements can make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 661-2111 x 82147 for information about requesting academic accommodation, or go to the following website: http://www.edu.uwo.ca/teacher-education/docs/policies/Accessibility_Western.pdf

ATTENDANCE: The B.Ed. program is an intense and demanding programs of professional preparation. You are expected to demonstrate high levels of both academic and professional integrity. This online course is equivalent to a half credit, 4 hours per week onsite course. Time spent reading and responding thoughtfully to questions and posts each week constitutes “attendance” as “participation” online. A guideline is three posts per week. The advantage of the online format is that your participation is flexible throughout the week, with the exception of assignment deadlines. See the course outline for assessment of participation and other assignments.

EXCUSED ABSENCES: If you are ill, require compassionate leave, or must miss classes for religious observance, your absence is excused; you will not be penalized but you are responsible for work missed.

UNEXCUSED ABSENCES: Any absence that is not a result of illness, bereavement, or religious observance is an unexcused absence. Three unexcused absences will result in you being referred to the Associate Dean and placed on academic probation. Any further unexcused absence will result in failure of the course and withdrawal from the program.

Language Proficiency: In accordance with regulations established by the Senate of the University, you must demonstrate the ability to write clearly and correctly. Work which lacks proficiency in the language of instruction is unacceptable for academic credit, and will either be failed or, at the discretion of the instructor, returned to you for revision to an acceptable level.

Academic Offences: Scholastic offences are taken very seriously in this professional Faculty. You are, after all, going to be a teacher. Read about what constitutes a Scholastic Offence at the following Web site: http://www.edu.uwo.ca/teacher-education/docs/policies/WEB_ScholasticDiscipline.pdf

Plagiarism: Plagiarism means presenting someone else’s words or ideas as your own. The concept applies to all assignments, including lesson and unit plans, laboratory reports, diagrams, and computer projects. Plagiarism includes copying and pasting material from a website or another student’s work. It also includes using another’s words by merely changing word order or replacing a few of the words – a good summary translates ideas into your own sentence structure and vocabulary. If you want to quote words or ideas directly, use quotation marks and reference the source in brackets. For further information,
consult your instructors, the Associate Dean’s Office, and current style manuals. Advice about plagiarism and how to avoid it can also be found here: http://www.edu.uwo.ca/preservice/downloads/Plagiarism%20Policy.pdf  

Plagiarism-Checking:

a. All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (http://www.turnitin.com).

b. Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.
SUPPORT SERVICES

A variety of support services are available at Western. If you need advice or assistance, do not hesitate to get in touch with any of these services.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE: Registrarial Services (http://www.registrar.uwo.ca)

WRITING SUPPORT: Student Development Centre (http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/)

LEARNING SKILLS SUPPORT: Student Development Centre (http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/)

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS: Student Development Centre (http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/)

ABORIGINAL STUDENTS: Student Development Centre (http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/)

STUDENTS with DISABILITIES: Student Development Centre (http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/)

SOCIAL & CULTURAL ISSUES: University Students’ Council (http://westernusc.ca/services/).

EMOTIONAL or MENTAL DISTRESS: Students who are in emotional or mental distress should refer to Mental Health @ Western http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/ for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

B.Ed. PROGRAM ISSUES: zuber@uwo.ca, Teacher Education Office, room 1131

NEED HELP but not sure what to do: zuber@uwo.ca, Teacher Education Office, room 1131