



Educating Students with Autism: Evidence-based Best Practice Site-based Participant Syllabus

Course Description

This course is designed to provide K-8 educators, paraprofessionals, and/or administrators with a widespread knowledge of Autism Spectrum Disorders. Participants will explore historical data and diagnosis statistics, characteristics of Autism Spectrum Disorders, and co-morbid diagnoses. Additionally, course content will focus on implementation of classroom strategies to meet the diverse learning needs of students on the Autism Spectrum. Participants will research, analyze, and effectively select evidence-based strategies appropriate for students with Autism.

Course Prerequisites

Educators enrolled in the course are required to hold a baccalaureate degree. No prerequisites for this course are required.

System Requirements

- Computer with word processing software
- Internet access connection
- Online video viewing capabilities/Adobe flash player
- Software capable of reading PDF files

Text Books/Supplemental Reading

There is not a required textbook for this class. However, refer to weekly reading assignments and additional materials within each milestone.

The following books have been recommended to help guide your understanding of the student with Autism Spectrum Disorder:

Notbohm, E., & Zysk, V. (2010). *1001 great ideas for teaching and raising children with autism or Asperger's*. Arlington, TX: Future Horizons, Inc.

Randolph, M. (2009). *Evidence-based practice and autism in the schools: A guide to providing appropriate interventions to students with autism spectrum disorders*.

Randolph, MA: National Autism Center.

Global Goals of the Course

To deepen and/or apply the content and skills of the teacher's existing professional knowledge base by meeting the following global goals of this course:

1. To examine characteristics associated with Autism Spectrum Disorder, as well as co-morbid diagnoses that can accompany the ASD diagnosis, and how the above these affect learning in the classroom (CEC 1, 2, 3; InTASC 1, 2; NBPTS 1)
2. To demonstrate an understanding of how to differentiate the learning environment to be successful for learners with ASD (CEC 3, 4, 5, 7; InTASC 1-3, 5, 7, 8; NBPTS 1, 2)
3. To develop a thorough understanding of how to select evidence-based strategies to utilize in the classroom vs. emerging strategies for the learner with ASD (CEC 4, 6, 7, 9; InTASC 1-5, 7-9; NBPTS 1-4)
4. To analyze and implement the strategies recommended to successfully educate the learner with ASD (CEC 3-6; InTASC 2-5, 7, 8; NBPTS 1-4)
5. To facilitate a positive collaboration between educators, support staff, related-services staff, and parents/caregivers of the learner with ASD (CEC 1, 2, 7, 10; InTASC 10; NBPTS 5)

Instructional Objectives

By the conclusion of the course, each participant should be able to do the following:

1. Develop a comprehensive understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorders.
 - 1.1 Understand the statistical increase via historical and diagnostic data.
 - 1.2 Explore possible causes and co-morbid diagnoses.
 - 1.3 Examine treatment/therapies chosen by parents.
 - 1.4 Reflect on personal experience and/or lack of knowledge.
2. Identify characteristics of learners with Autism Spectrum Disorders.
 - 2.1 Examine language and communication deficits.
 - 2.2 Assess behavior concerns and the causes of behavior.
 - 2.3 Identify social skill deficits.
 - 2.4 Construct plans to meet individual sensory processing needs.
 - 2.5 Explore accommodations to facilitate learning of students with ASD.
3. Develop an understanding of strategies in the classroom to support the learner with Autism Spectrum Disorder.
 - 3.1 Analyze evidence-based strategies, emerging strategies, and non-supported strategies.
 - 3.2 Decipher the difference between the strategies, as well as the importance of research.
 - 3.3 Construct a plan for implementation of research-based strategies in the classroom.

- 3.4 Reflect on personal usage of strategies.
4. Understand IDEA Partnership, Functional Behavior Assessments, and IEP goal writing as to benefit the learner with Autism Spectrum Disorder.
 - 4.1 Utilize the resources available through the IDEA Partnership and the benefits for the learner with ASD.
 - 4.2 Identify the need for a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) and understand the implementation process.
 - 4.3 Develop meaningful and measurable IEP goals to support and challenge the learner with ASD.
5. Recognize supports for positive team collaboration.
 - 5.1 Address parental concerns while offering support and communication.
 - 5.2 Review implementations of classroom strategies with support staff/related-services staff.
 - 5.3 Identify trainings and/or professional development opportunities to maintain current educational recommendations.

Teaching Methodology and Delivery Model

Teaching methodologies of this course are designed to support intensive, graduate-level course work in an interactive setting. Instructional plans support the content of this course, which focuses on the improvement of professional teaching expertise in any or all of the following categories: assessment, collaboration, communication, diverse learners, educational reform, instructional strategies, planning instruction, productivity, reflection of practice, student learning, subject matter, and/or technology.

- Methodologies include instructor presentations, specific skill practice, discussions, audio-visual presentations, self-evaluation, project development, course readings, research/inquiry exercises, and the synthesis of new knowledge and skills with previously acquired skills/expertise in relation to transition knowledge and content.
- The course is taught with instructor-participant and participant-participant feedback. Course content, activities, and assessments are organized into 8 modules totaling 45 seat hours. Assessments are due two-weeks following the end of the course.
- Research-based content, presentations, educator resources in print and on the Internet, notes from instructor presentations, class activity work pages, references, and assessments are supported by content designed specifically for educators.
- Daily activities include a variety of research-based instructional approaches appropriate for adult learners. Class participants actively construct their own learning and make it personally relevant by acquiring and applying course knowledge/skills during hands-on practice and problem-solving activities, personal reflection, in-class presentations, whole-class and small group discussions and activities, assigned readings, research/inquiry, projects, and collaborative work in various group formats. All are designed to make it possible for educators and other

school-related personnel to learn the same basic content and skills with an emphasis on application to their own specific content area or grade level.

Learning Assessment

Formative assessment of learning objectives for this course is conducted informally throughout the course via discussion, critiques, peer- and self-evaluations, journal entries, instructor feedback, small-group sharing and activities requiring participants to make sense of new knowledge and/or skills within their realm of teaching. Additionally, three formative assessments are embedded within the course. Summative assessment for the course occurs in the form of a final project which requires each participant to synthesize class content and apply it within the teacher's specific teaching environment.

Topics Agenda

Milestone One: The Autism Spectrum in detail, historical facts, diagnosis procedure, and current statistical data

This milestone will introduce the participant to the different diagnoses included under the name of Autism Spectrum Disorders. Historical trends will be explored in great detail, as well as current diagnostic procedures. Past and current statistical data will be reviewed and analyzed.

Milestone Two: Co-morbid diagnoses, and possible causes and treatments of Autism Spectrum Disorders

A detailed look into the possible co-morbid diagnoses of ASD will be discussed during this milestone including: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, Seizure Disorders, etc. Additionally, we will examine the controversial possibilities of causes of ASD (e.g., genetics, environment, vaccines) and the most commonly chosen treatments (traditional and non-traditional) for children with ASD.

Milestone Three: Characteristics of ASD – Communication and Social Skills

This milestone will introduce the participant to the different characteristics of Autism Spectrum Disorders, beginning with communication and social skill deficits. Video examples will be utilized to help the participant understand the characteristics being discussed. The participant will also learn how to identify these characteristics in students within their classroom.

Milestone Four: Characteristics of ASD – Sensory Processing and Behavior

This milestone will explore ASD characteristics including Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD). Hypo- sensitive seekers and hyper-sensitive seekers will be thoroughly discussed throughout. This milestone will also provide an extensive exploration of behavior patterns of the learner with Autism Spectrum Disorder. The four types of behavior will be studied.

Milestone Five: Evidence -based Strategies

This module will be based upon identification of the eleven evidence-based strategies for learners with Autism. The strategies include: antecedent package, behavioral package, comprehensive behavioral treatment for young children, joint attention intervention, modeling, naturalistic teaching strategies, peer training package, pivotal response treatment, schedules, self-management, and story-based intervention package. During this milestone, we will also determine what defines a strategy to be evidence-based vs. non-research based. A comparison of classroom accommodations and modifications vs. evidence-based strategies and the implementation of all will be discussed.

Milestone Six: Emerging Strategies

This milestone is an exploration of the twenty-one emerging strategies for teaching learners with ASD. The emerging strategies include: augmentative and alternative communication device, cognitive behavioral intervention package, developmental relationship based treatment, exercise, exposure package, imitation based interaction, initiation training, language training, massage/touch therapy, multi-component package, music therapy, peer-mediated instructional arrangement, picture exchange communication system, reductive package, scripting, sign instruction, social communication intervention, social skills package, structured teaching, technology-based treatment, and theory of mind training.

Milestone Seven: Non-evidence based strategies

During this milestone, participants will learn about the non-evidence based strategies that have yet to be determined effective in the classroom for learners with ASD. These strategies include: academic interventions, auditory integration training, facilitated communication, gluten and casein free diet, and sensory integrative package.

Milestone Eight: IDEA Partnership, Functional Behavioral Assessments, and IEP goal writing

Participants will explore and gather information from the IDEA Partnership website. They will discuss the resources available through the partnership and how those resources can be applied to the success of the learner with ASD in the classroom. Functional Behavior Assessments will be explained and discussion of their implementation will take place. Finally, we will discuss IEP goal writing and how to produce meaningful and measurable objectives for the learner with ASD.

Final Projects

Assignments/ assessments should reflect that each participant is accountable for a high degree of learning appropriate for graduate level credit. Therefore, instructors will assign 3 formative assignments which can be completed throughout the course. These

assignments will correlate to the instructional learning objectives. All courses will also include a final summative project which requires critical thinking, analysis, synthesis, evaluation or application. Assessment of the assignments should not be limited to the quantity of work submitted but should carefully consider the quality and intellectual value of the work.

Final projects are due within two weeks of the end of class. Projects submitted during the third week "grace period" will have their grade reduced one full letter grade. No papers will be accepted past the grace period, and participants will, consequently, forfeit credit for the course. Papers are expected to be properly formatted and submitted to the instructor either in person or via mail or an email attachment.

Participants taking professional development unit (not-for-credit) courses must attend all scheduled class sessions and complete all in-class readings and assignments as directed by the instructor. However, they will be exempt from completing the final summative project unless otherwise noted. Proof of seat hours will be presented to the participants after completing state required course reflection via the student portal and all hours are met.

Grading

Throughout the course, participants will engage in both formal and informal formative and summative assessments. Points are assigned based on a four-point criterion rubric specifically delineated for each assessment that can be further defined as follows:

Distinguished: The assessment is highly imaginative; demonstrates critical thought; is unique; shows substantial application to one's own teaching or professional position; *goes above and beyond requirements*; is creative; demonstrates both breadth and depth of knowledge of transition-related subject matter; shows individual's personality; is professional in presentation and appearance; and demonstrates considerable effort. The assessment is exceptionally completed and demonstrates clear understanding of the tasks, gives explanations, and shows how the assessment applies to a teaching/learning situation. The assessment meets the specific criteria delineated in "Distinguished" on the course rubric.

Proficient: The assessment is well-organized and complete; is effectively and clearly presented; demonstrates clear understandings; applies what has been learned to the author's own classroom situation; clearly shows connections; is detailed; and is thoughtful and supported with ideas. A thoroughly completed assessment demonstrates that the participant shows awareness of the tasks, gives explanations, and shows how the assessment applies to a teaching/learning situation. The assessment meets the specific criteria delineated in "Proficient" on the course rubric.

Basic: This is the lowest passing grade. The assessment meets minimum requirements; includes general information but lacks descriptive detail; shows limited application to teaching/learning; and lacks originality. This denotes work that does not meet **all** aspects of standards for academic performance in a graduate-level course. The assessment meets the specific criteria delineated in “Basic” on the course rubric.

Unsatisfactory: The assessment is missing evidence or information; is sloppy and poorly organized; demonstrates only surface understandings; shows no evidence of application to the author’s own teaching situation; is poorly written; and does not meet minimum standards for academic performance in a graduate-level course. The assessment meets the specific criteria delineated in “Unsatisfactory” on the course rubric.

The assessments for this course are weighted as follows:

Participation and Reflection	30%
Formative Assessments	30%
Summative Assessments	40%

Academic Honesty and Integrity

All participants are expected to maintain academic honesty and integrity by doing their own work to the best of their ability. Academic dishonesty (cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, etc.) will result in the participant receiving a zero for that assignment or paper.

Americans with Disabilities Act Compliance

In compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and The Americans with Disabilities Act, participants who have any condition, either permanent or temporary, which might affect their ability to perform in this class, are encouraged to inform the Director of Academic Affairs prior to the first class session. Reasonable academic accommodations, aids, and adjustments may be made as needed to provide for equitable participation.

Attendance

Participants are required to attend all classes as well as participate in class discussions, small group activities, and projects. Absence from any part of the class will require that you withdraw from the class. You will need to contact The Connecting Link at (888) 550-5465 in the event this occurs.

Late Work and Make-Up Policy

Participants are expected to keep pace with assignments and expectations. If a situation arises in which an assignment cannot be completed, the participant is

expected to make arrangements with the instructor for the timely submission of such work. Failure to complete all work in this time frame will result in an **incomplete** or a grade of **F** for the work, depending on the reason for the delay.

University Compliance

Course content and instruction are bound by policies associated with the university granting academic credit for the course. Such policies include, but are not limited to: academic integrity and honor codes, institutional objectives and grade grievance procedures. These policies are located within the official academic catalogs which can be accessed through the university's official website.