Course Information

EDPS 26000   Introduction to Special Education & Children with Exceptional Needs

Credits: 3, Spring 2026

Course Information		Instructor Information	
Meeting Dates and Times	Tuesdays and Thursdays 8:00 - 9:15 a.m. Location: CLO 310 Weekly assignments due on **Sundays by 11:59pm** Course Opens on **Monday, January 12th**	**Instructor:**	Dr. Danielle Starks she/her/hers
		Office:	CLO 309 – Hammond Campus
		Email:	Starks15@pnw.edu
		Phone:	(219) 989-2316
		Office Hours	
Course Webpage	Log into the course web page at: https://purdue.brightspace.com/d2l/home/6823	Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:00-a.m.-12:00 p.m. Hammond Campus In-person (Hammond and Westville campus) or virtual appointments can be coordinated upon request	
Student Resources for Online Learning	PNW Brightspace Student Resources Getting Started Checklist PNW Brightspace Training Videos Need Instructional Software Help? Contact OIT		

Conceptual Framework

The Educational Leader

The conceptual framework that guides the preparation of future educators at Purdue University Northwest (PNW) is called The Educational Leader.

Learn. Lead. Inspire. These are the values of the educator preparation programs at PNW where candidates are prepared to assume complex educational roles inside and outside of traditional educational environments. Following is the PNW educator preparation program mission:

To re-imagine and change education by creating opportunities for students, candidates, families, educators, and our local communities.

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course is designed to prepare scholars to identify, support, and advocate for students with disabilities and their families in inclusive educational settings. Specific objectives for this course are listed below in alignment with CEC and INTASC.

The candidate will:

1. Describe the role of society in limiting the lives of people with disabilities
2. Identify key elements related to special education as a civil rights movement and the historical context of the movement to integrate students with special needs
3. Identify special education's mission and primary goals as it relates to IDEA
4. Identify legislation protecting the rights of people who are disabled, their families, and service providers
5. Describe the legal definitions and characteristics of disabilities, individual differences, and positive expectations and effective teaching strategies within categories of those disabilities
6. Describe the role and strategies necessary for an effective special education partnership with general education
7. Describe key considerations for family involvement and parent-teacher partnerships
8. Apply principles of supportive inclusive education in the most appropriate least restrictive environment along with teaching strategies, differentiated instruction, accommodations, modifications, behavior management, and adaptations
9. Analyze current issues and trends in special education from a global perspective which embraces and celebrates diversity
10. Identify key elements related to early childhood special education and transition to adulthood in special education including collaboration, networking, and interagency cooperation
11. Establish your commitment and role as an advocate for students with disabilities and their families,

Course Objectives

Initial Practice-Based Professional Preparation Standards for Special Educators (2020)

1.1: Candidates practice within ethical guidelines and legal policies and procedures.

1.2: Candidates advocate for improved outcomes for individuals with exceptionalities and their families while addressing the unique needs of those with diverse social, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds.

1.3: Candidates design and implement professional learning activities based on ongoing analysis of student learning; self-reflection; professional standards, research, and contemporary practices.

2.1: Apply knowledge of family-centered practices, family systems theory, and the changing needs and priorities in families' lives to develop trusting, respectful, affirming, and culturally responsive partnerships with all families that allow for the mutual exchange of knowledge and information.

7.2: Candidates communicate, coordinate, and collaborate with families and other professionals within the educational setting to assess, plan, and implement effective programs and services that promote progress toward measurable outcomes for individuals with and without exceptionalities and their families.

Initial Practice-Based Professional Preparation Standards for Early Intervention and Special Education (2020)

1.4: Demonstrate an understanding of characteristics, etiologies, and individual differences within and across the range of abilities, including developmental delays and disabilities, their potential impact on children's early development and learning.

2.1: Apply knowledge of family-centered practices, family systems theory, and the changing needs and priorities in families' lives to develop trusting, respectful, affirming, and culturally responsive partnerships with all families that allow for the mutual exchange of knowledge and information.

3.3: Partner with families and other professionals to develop individualized plans and support the various transitions that occur for the young child and their family throughout the birth through 8 age span.

7.2: Engage in ongoing reflective practice and access evidence-based information to improve their own practices.

7.4: Practice within ethical and legal policies and procedures.

Special Education High-Leverage Practices (HLPs) and Division for Early Childhood Recommended Practices

This semester, the following high-leverage practices (K-12th) will be introduced and applied:

High-leverage Practices

HLP 1: Collaborate with professionals to increase student success.

HLP 3: Collaborate with families to support student learning and secure needed services.

HLP 7: Establish a consistent, organized, and respectful learning environment.

Course Outcomes

This course is designed to guide PNW Teacher Candidates towards:

1. Understand the history that led to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, Public Law 105-17) and the formal process of creating an Individual Education Plan (IEP) and Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP).

2. Demonstrate an understanding of characteristics, etiologies, and individual differences within and across the range of abilities, including developmental delays and disabilities, their potential impact on children's early development and learning.

3. Recognize the child and family's experience in the inclusive early childhood setting as well as the role of the family in individual education planning.

4. Identify key elements of professional and family collaboration in support of an inclusive early childhood setting and the various transitions that occur for the young child and their family throughout the age spans.

5. Apply and facilitate the principles of cultural and linguistic family diversity to the principle of early childhood collaboration, inclusion, assessment, and curriculum planning including universal design for learning and culturally responsive teaching.

6. Engage in ongoing reflective practice and access evidence-based information to improve an understanding of EI/ECSE resources, advocacy, and decision making

Instructional Methods

During your participation in this course, you will be involved in a variety of instructional methods including but not limited to lectures and Powerpoint presentations, videos, group activities in class, and discussion boards. Learning and assessment activities will also include the use of Brightspace. You will be expected to use such communicative tools to connect with myself and fellow students. As future educators, you will be working to develop your ability to support children and their families with an attention to equity and diversity.

Brightspace Support

The course will be managed through Brightspace. Use the following resources to navigate frequently asked questions.

- PNW Brightspace Student Resources
- Getting Started Checklist
- Self-paced Brightspace Training Course for Students
- PNW Brightspace Training Videos
- Office 365 Resource Website
- Screen Recording Resource Website
- Secure Testing Tools Resource Website

Need Instructional Software Help? Contact OIT

Course Expectations

In this course you will be taking a major step in your development as a future educator. The expectations for this course are focused on your role as a professional as well as a student. These behaviors apply to

your interactions with all faculty, staff, and students at PNW and in all teaching placements. The expectations include:

- **Participate productively** in class discussions, small group work and other class activities
- Demonstrate **responsibility and reliability** through self-monitoring, problem solving activities, attendance, completing assignments on time, use of active study and organizational skills
- **Respect** the views and efforts of others
- Assume an **inquiring attitude** toward what you disagree with or do not understand
- Maintain a **flexible and positive attitude**
- Take on the challenge of working toward **continuous improvement and change** to enhance learning and support a positive learning environment.

You can expect that I will meet these expectations myself. I will also demonstrate effective teaching and concern for your learning. If you have any questions or concerns about this course or your own learning do not hesitate to talk with me. I will be happy to meet with you during student hours or at another time convenient for us both.

Assignments Designed to Measure Course Objectives

In-class Participation and Professionalism:

You play an important role in the education and support of children with disabilities and their families. To adequately explore and internalize the essential objectives of the course your active participation within and outside of class are vital. Effective participation during the semester looks like:

- **Being fully prepared to participate** thoughtfully in the various kinds of activities and discussions that will constitute the ways of learning in this course.
- **Completion of readings and assignments** for each day to fully participate in and appreciate class discussions and activities.
- In-class assignments will often involve collaboration with peers. You should maintain **positive, timely, supportive communication with peers.**
- **Maintaining communication with me** throughout the semester regarding learning, questions, and concerns. If you must be absent, let me know ahead of time via email as many assignments will be completed in class. Please plan in advance and obtain assignments, class notes, etc. from another student.

Individual Assignments

- **Class Preparation and Participation (5 points each week):** I highly value your preparation and participation in our class. Active learning means you come to class prepared and that you participate in our classroom discussions. Each week, you will complete a self-assessment sheet telling me how many points you earned that week. You can earn points by sharing what you learned in the readings, asking questions, or sharing how the content applies to your own experiences with the class. You will not be able to make up participation points if you are not present in class**.**

- **My Point of View Introduction (10 points):** You will interview a classmate about their experiences and initial views about working with students with disabilities. You will present your interview in a newspaper article format.

- **Case Studies (10 points each):** During these discussions roles will be discussed (parent, general education teacher, teacher of record, student, administrator, public agency representative, and/or psychologist. Case studies can be completed as a group or independently.

- **Social Action Project (30 points**): Using information from class content and outside research, students will identify current themes or trends in special education and action steps needed to create equitable classrooms and systems. This project must speak for itself and not require presenter facilitation**.**

Course Policies

Graded Assignments

PLEASE NOTE: If an assignment or the expectations are not clear to you, it is *your responsibility* to ask for further details BEFORE the assignment is due!

Further details and resources for assignments and activities will be handed out and discussed in class as well as posted on our Brightspace site.

All projects and assignments will be evaluated on quality, scholarship, professional presentation (i.e., standard English mechanics, spelling, language, effort), clarity of thought, and fulfillment of objectives. If you have any questions about an assignment or project, please email me.

Late Assignment Policy:

What happens when assignments are late?
In the event that you cannot turn in an assignment by the due date, there is a two-day grace period with a point reduction that is reflected on the grading rubric. Assignments turned in more than two days late without approval will not be graded. A pattern of repeated late submissions may result in a dispositional referral or administrative removal from the course.

Contact the instructor about issues that interfere with completing assignments on time before the assignment is due.

Use of Generative AI:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a tool, like a calculator, spell check, or Google search. AI cannot critically appraise literature or synthesize concepts and has been found to be sometimes biased and inaccurate. The use of AI as a tool is acceptable. However, it cannot replace critical thinking, sound reasoning, and good judgment and requires verification and validation of the information. AI software does not count as a scholarly or required reference and must be disclosed to avoid violation of the academic integrity policy.

Incomplete Grades:

Incomplete grades can be granted at the end of a semester if extreme circumstances have prevented you from completing your coursework. However, in order to qualify for the Accessible template based on syllabus content guidelines approved by PNW Faculty Senate (document 16-32). an Incomplete grade, you must have completed at least 75% of the course work, and your grade must be a B or higher at the time you request an Incomplete. If either of those circumstances do not apply, I will not grant the Incomplete. If you are having difficulties of any kind and need to discuss options, including taking an Incomplete, please speak with me as soon as possible. Each situation will be treated on an individual basis.

Grade	Percentage
A+	98-100%
A	93-97%
A-	90-92%
B+	87-89%
B	83-86%
B-	80-82%
C+	77-79%
C	73-76%
C-	70-72%
D+	67-69%
D	63-66%
D-	60-62%
F	Under 60%

Schedule of Topics and Readings

Week/Date	Topics	Readings	Assignment Due
1- January 13 (Tu)	Introduction to Special Education Course Introduction – Syllabus review Assignment outlines and resources Introduction Activity	Review Syllabus	Learning Preferences Survey My Point of View Introductions
January 15 (Th)		Riccomini et al. (2017) Big Ideas in Special Education Spread-the-Word_-Specially-Designed-Instruction-SDI High-Leverage Practices (HLP)	
2 – January 20 (Tu)	The Disabilities Movement Create a Timeline	Textbook ch 1 and 3 Yell_1998_The Legal History of Special Education What a Long	Disability Rights Timeline My Point of View Interview Newspaper Article
January 22 (Th)	Indiana Disability History Project Fishbowl Activity New Teacher Tik Tok Trend		

3- January 27 (Tu)	People First Language Words Matter_ People First Language small group discussion Euphemism Public Service Announcement	**Snow (2001)- People First Language** **Liebowitz (2015)-I am Disabled: On Identity-First Versus People-First Language**	**Euphemism PSA**
January 29 (Th)	Present Euphemism PSA in class		
4 – February 3 (Tu)	Social Action Project Introduction to Social Action & Disability Rights		
February 5 (Th)	Social Action Project Issue Selection & Group Formation	**Chapters 1 & 2 _Change!_**	
5- February 10 (Tu)	Autism	**Sensory-Why do you repeat certain actions again and again?** **The Concept of Neurodiversity Is Dividing the Autism Community** **Neurodiversity and the Benefits of Autism**	**Autism Case Study**

February 12 (Th)	Social Action Project Root Cause Analysis	**Change! Chapter 3**	
6 –February 17 (Tu)	Cognitive Disabilities Work From Home Class	**Ted Talk on Cognitive Disabilities** **A Landmark Lawsuit Aimed to Fix Special Ed for California's Black Students. It Didn't.**	**Ted Talk Discussion Board** **Heuristica AI mind map**
February 19 (Th)	Social Action Project Research & Evidence Gathering	**Change! Chapter 4**	
7-February 24 (Tu)	Learning Disabilities	**Criteria for SLD** **What are some signs of learning disabilities?** **5 Ways to Leverage A.I. for Student Supports and Scaffolds** **How I Planned a Project Using ChatGPT**	**Learning Disability Case Study**
February 26 (Th)	Social Action Project Power Mapping & Stakeholder Analysis	**Change! Chapter 5**	

8 – March 3 (Tu)	Traumatic Brain Injury	**Enhancing and Practicing Executive Function Skills with Children- from Infancy to Adolescence** **Brain Injury in Children and Youth A Manual for Educators**	**Traumatic Brain Injury Case Study**
March 5 (Th)	Social Action Project Goal Setting & Action Planning	**Change! Ch. 7**	
9 – March 10 (Tu)	Hearing and Vision Impairments Center Activities		
March 12 (Th)	Social Action Project Work from Home Class Tactics for Disability Advocacy	**Change! Ch 8**	
10 – March 24 (Tu)	Developmental Delay	**Retention vs. Special Education in Kindergarten** **Indiana Early Learning Foundations**	**Developmental Delay Case Study**
March 26 (Th)	Social Action Project Coalitions & Partnerships	**Change! Ch. 9**	

11-March 31 (Tu)	Emotional Disabilities	**Walker & Barry (2018) Assessing and Supporting Social Skill Needs for Students with High-Incidence Disabilities**	**Emotional Disabilities Case Study**
April 2 (Th)	Social Action Project Implementation Work Session		
12-April 7 (Tu)	Other Health Impairment		**OHI Case Study**
April 9 (Th)	Social Action Project Action Day / Mini-Implementation		
13- April 14 (Tu)	Terminology and Other Odds and Ends		**Terminology Posters** **I Have, Who Has?**
April 16 (Th)	AI and Special Education	**Demystifying Disabilities ch 2,4,5**	**Terminology Posters** **Mix and Match Jigsaw**
14- April 21 (Tu)	Social Action Project Work From Home Class Evaluation & Reflection	Change! Ch 10	
April 23 (Th)	Social Action Project Odds and Ends		

15- April 28 and 30	Social Action Presentations		**Social Action Project**
16- May 4	**Finals Week – No Class**		

Instructor reserves right to change syllabus at any time – You will be notified of changes if/when they occur

University Policies

Students with Disabilities

Students who may need accommodations to address barriers caused by documented disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act need to register with the Disability Access Center (DAC) to receive accommodations. To request and receive accommodations, students schedule an appointment with the DAC to initiate review and approval of supporting documentation showing their disability, the barriers it causes, and the recommended accommodations. If documentation is approved, the DAC will email a letter to the student's current semester faculty members outlining the accommodations needed to ensure accessibility. Accommodations will be provided from the date the letter originates from the DAC. It is important to register as soon as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. The DAC is located at the Hammond campus in the Student Union & Library Building (SUL) 341 and Westville in the Technology Building (TECH) 101. The DAC can be reached at (219) 989-2455 or emailing: dac@pnw.edu. DAC website[1].

Student Mental Health and Wellbeing

Recommended Statement: "Purdue University Northwest is committed to supporting and advancing the mental health and well-being of our PNW students. During the course of their academic careers, students often experience personal challenges that contribute to barriers in learning, such as drug/alcohol problems, strained relationships, chronic worrying, persistent sadness or loss of interest in enjoyable activities, family conflict, grief and loss, domestic violence, difficulty concentrating, problems with organization, procrastination and/or lack of motivation. Students also sometimes come to college with a history of learning difficulties (e.g., any form of special education), experience difficulties succeeding in a particular subject (e.g., math, reading), or have experienced some form of trauma be it emotional or physical (e.g., head injury). These mental health concerns can lead to diminished academic performance and can interfere with daily life activities. If you or someone you know has a history of mental health concerns or if you are unsure and would like a consultation, a variety of confidential services are available. The Counseling Center is located in Gyte 05 in Hammond and TECH 101 in Westville. You can also reach us at (219) 989-2366 or on the Counseling website.[2] National Suicide Prevention Hotline[3] at (800) 273-TALK or on the web.

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[1] www.pnw.edu/dac
[2] www.pnw.edu/counseling/
[3] suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Non-Discrimination

Purdue University Northwest prohibits discrimination against any member of the University community on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin or ancestry, genetic information, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, disability, or status as a veteran. Any student who believes they have witnessed or experienced discrimination are encouraged to report the incident to the Office of Equity, Diversity & Inclusion in Lawshe 231, Hammond or call (219) 989-2337 or in Schwarz 25, Westville or call (219) 785-5545. Additional information can be found on the Diversity website.[4]

Emergency Preparedness

"An information sheet, with instructions for various types of possible emergencies, is posted in each room on campus. These emergencies include criminal activity, severe weather, fire, medical emergencies, and noises sounding like gunshots. Students are strongly encouraged to review this instruction sheet carefully and acquaint themselves with these important guidelines. PNW will hold annual drills to prepare for emergencies such as severe weather, active shooter and fire. It is strongly encouraged that all students participate in these drills in an effort to strengthen our emergency preparedness efforts."

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[4] http://www.pnw.edu/diversity

Written and Oral Language

The faculty of special education believes that the ability to communicate in writing is an important professional skill and one that plays a critical role in any professional educator's position. For this reason, assignments will be graded on content as well as writing style. Writing style refers to grammar, punctuation, capitalization, organization, and spelling. Students who need assistance with writing are encouraged to use the writing center at PNW.

We will use person-first language in our class discussions and written assignments (and ideally in our professional practice). Please also replace the term "Mental Retardation" with "Intellectual Disabilities" in your oral and written communication in accordance with Rosa's Law signed by President Obama in 2010 (see the following document for additional information: https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2017/07/11/2017-14343/rosas-law).

APA Style 7.0 Edition is the standard format for any written work in the course. If students are unfamiliar with APA, it would benefit them to purchase the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (6th ed.). Students are required to use APA 7.0 format for all course assignments. Please use the following website for APA format guidelines: http://apastyle.apa.org.

Writing Reminders

Because a special education teacher is expected to write I.E.P.s, take minutes at meetings, and communicate in writing with parents and staff, writing as a professional is emphasized in this class. Clear writing is vital when collaborating. Please remember to use the following when writing papers for this class:

1. **Always use IDEA people-first language**.
   Inappropriate: I teach learning disabled students.
   Appropriate: I teach students with learning disabilities.
   Similarly, do **not** write: The student *suffers* from a disability; simply write the student has a disability.
2. **Avoid informal language** such as kids, mom, or dad or guys or stuff. Instead, use more appropriate and slightly more formal language.
   Inappropriate: The kids in my class represent various cultures.
   Appropriate: The students in my class represent various cultures.
3. Avoid using "you"
   Inappropriate: You need to make accommodations for students with disabilities.
   Appropriate: Teachers need to make accommodations for students with   disabilities.
4. Use complete sentences rather than fragments or sentences using commas when periods would be more appropriate.
   Incorrect: I observed at West Elementary School, it is a nice building.
   Better: I observed at West Elementary School. It is a nice building.

5. Avoid semi colons as much as possible.

6. Avoid ending sentences or phrases with prepositions.

    Incorrect: I do not know what grade he is in.

    Better: I do not know his current grade level.

7. Use **"who" to refer to a person**.

    Less acceptable: I know a teacher that is very creative.

    Better: I know a teacher who is very creative.

8. If possible, **avoid starting sentences with "there".**

    Wordy: There is a law called IDEA that states that…

    More efficient: IDEA states that…

9. Be careful with **since and because**. Since connotes time, and because connotes cause and effect.

    Correct: I have known you since January.

    Correct: Because I studied, I earned an A.

10. Use **commas in compound sentences**.

    Incorrect: I am taking math methods, and science methods

           Correct: I am taking math methods, and I am also enrolled in science methods.

Netiquitte:

How we engage as an online community of learners

Adapted: https://accc.uic.edu/news-stories/make-the-most-of-online-learning-netiquette-best-practices/

1. **Review & follow instructor communication guidelines.**

   Be sure to review your course syllabus and any emails, instruction or announcements from your professor to familiarize yourself with expectations.

2. **Select a quiet space.**

   To the best of your abilities, make sure that the space you select for your online classes is quiet and as free of distractions as possible.

3. **Actively participate & introduce yourself.**

   Keep engaged through speaking or chat. Note your name the first few times you speak to let moderators and other session attendees know who is participating.

4. **Mute yourself when not speaking.**

   This reduces background noise such as sirens, typing, barking, eating, or a private conversation, that can distract the session.

5. **Use a civil tone & non-offensive language. NEVER use caps.**

   While you are encouraged to think critically and engage in rigorous debate, please avoid using personal attacks, crude language and CAPS.

6. **Be cautious when using humor or sarcasm.**

   With online communication, be more polite than you might be in person. It's quite easy for misunderstandings to develop online because you aren't able to use tone of voice (audio) or facial expression (video).

7. **Write clearly & succinctly.**
   Aim to make your messages easy to read and understand. If you frequently rely on idioms or slang phrases, consider how they may be rephrased for clarity.
8. **Stay focused on your online courses by avoiding distractions.**
   Separate your online course-related computer time use with that of your personal use. While working on your online class, do not watch TV, talk on the phone, check personal email, surf the Web, or interact with family members.
9. **Be professional & respect others.**
   Be mindful of your peers and instructors. Don't talk over others. Raise your hand if there is no opening to speak. Type questions and feedback in the chat. Be careful of what you say or write. Remember that anything you write to one person could be easily forwarded to others.

E-mail Etiquette

Adapted from
https://www.academia.edu/2490285/How_to_Email_Academic_Staff

Before sending an email to the instructor:
1. Try to find the answer on your own. Review your notes and the syllabus, check Brightspace, and/or ask a classmate.
2. Set-up a time to talk to me before or after class. Or attend office hours.

If you do send an email:
1. Please do not email questions that require only a "yes" or "no" answer. Feel free to ask those in person.
2. Remember that you are making a request, and address your instructor courteously and professionally (e.g., "Dear Professor Starks" or "Hello Professor Starks," – not just "Hey").
3. Write clearly and concisely, identify yourself, and include a topic in the subject line, and a reference to the course.
4. Your instructor teaches your class, but I also have numerous other professional responsibilities; please allow time to respond to your request.
5. Remember, while the course content is available online 24/7 that does not mean I am. Please allow 24 hours to receive a response.