The Education Assistant Role in the Education System

EDAS 1120    Course Outline    2011

Course Dates:    Wednesday and Friday 12:30 – 3:00pm
                 September 7th – October 14th and November 9th – December 2nd, 2011
                 Room 8009

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Course Description:
At the end of this course, students will have an understanding of roles and responsibilities of people at all levels of the school system (ministry, district and school), and how the role of the Education Assistant fits within the context of the school and district. Students will also be required to demonstrate an understanding of what it means to act in a professional manner and to be aware of how their system of values and beliefs affect practice.

Learning Outcomes:
1. Describe how values and beliefs impact their role as an Education Assistant.
2. Explain the impact of historical developments in special education to the role of the Education Assistant.
3. Describe roles and responsibilities of education partners.
4. Describe the role of the Education Assistant and how it relates to other members of the educational team.
5. Describe professionalism through ethical practice.
6. Reflect on current issues in education and their impact on the education of students with special needs.
**Major Themes for Discussion**

**Values and Beliefs**
- Sense of Self
- Framework for Self Awareness
- Valuing Diversity
- Impact on role of EA

**The Education System**
- Historical Development (Exclusion to Inclusion)
  - Organization of Ministry of Education
  - Organization of School Districts
  - Organization of Schools

**Roles and Responsibilities**
- The Role of the EA and the Teacher
  - “The Good EA”
- Dealing with Discrepancies

**Individual Education Plan (IEP)**
- Purpose of IEP
- Components of an IEP
- Education Assistant Input

**Ethical Practice**
- Codes of Ethics
- Characteristics of a Profession
- Making Ethical Decisions
- Ethical Dilemmas and Alternative Solutions

**Current Issues**
- Belonging and Inclusion
- Impact on the Work of the EA
**Evaluation:**

**How Personal Values and Beliefs Influence the Education Assistant**

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<th>Category</th>
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<tr>
<td>Personal Values</td>
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<td>Current Issues</td>
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**Roles and Responsibilities**

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<tr>
<td>Information Gathering</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflection</td>
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**In-class role playing**

20%

**Participation and Professionalism**

20%

This is evaluated by considering your positive and meaningful participation, quizzes, attendance, punctuality, timely submission of assignments, completed homework assignments...

**Note:** All assignments must be completed to receive a final grade for the course. Marks will be deducted for late assignments at 5% per day.

**Instructional Format:**

This course will use group discussions and activities, role playing, simulations, sharing of life experiences and practicum experiences, lectures and readings as models of learning.

**Textbook:**

There is currently no textbook required.
Assignment #1: How Personal Values and Beliefs Influence the Education Assistant

Personal Values 10%

Current Issues 20%

The purpose of this assignment is to clearly define your values or beliefs that will influence you in your work as an Educational Assistant. With these personal values and beliefs in mind, you will critically reflect on an issue currently facing the education system as it relates to students with special needs.

Personal Values:
In this section, you will explore how your beliefs, values and principles construct your awareness of “self”. You will clearly define and illustrate 4 of these values, beliefs or principles. You will be given freedom to represent this knowledge in any manner other than a written essay. Be creative! Try creating a collage, write a poem or a song, paint or draw your representation..... Be prepared to share your “self” with the class.

Current Issues:
Given your representation of your personal values, beliefs and principles, you will connect to one current issue in the field of special education. The purpose of this section is to demonstrate critical and reflective thinking about where your values “fit” in relation to your role as an Education Assistant supporting students who have special needs. This reflection should be based on a newspaper article, a magazine article or a journal article and will be 2-3 pages in length.

1. Please submit a copy of your article with this reflection paper.
2. In a thorough and articulate manner, report the “issue” and its consequences.
3. Clearly articulate your views and how they relate to your values and beliefs.
4. Explore the influence on your role as an EA.
5. Briefly outline the views other stakeholders might have and any bias on the author’s part.

Please feel comfortable to explore and challenge your ideas and feelings about this material. This reflective paper is very individual – there are no “right or wrong answers”, only personal views based on accurate information gathering, making thoughtful connections and engaging in insightful reflection.

Due: ________________________________________________
Assignment #2: Roles and Responsibilities

Information Gathering 15%
Reflection 15%

The purpose of this assignment is to develop an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the Education Assistant in the school and to begin to understand the factors that influence their work.

Information Gathering: 15%

1. Complete a "Practicum Task Inventory" with your supervising teacher.

2. Observe and interview one EA in the school. This will report a detailed record of the daily activities of the EA including:
   a. Who the EA interacts with,
   b. The purpose of the interaction,
   c. The knowledge and skills required for each task.

3. You will design a series of interview questions and provide a record of the interview or notes from informal conversations you have had with the EA.

   *This assignment will be completed during your practicum in October. It is essential that you clearly inform the staff of the parameters of this assignment, ask permission to use the information for your assignment, and let the staff know that you will not use their name or school reference and the information will only be shared with your instructor.

Reflection: 15%

In your reflective paper you will address:
- The perceived role of the EA.
- The teacher’s perception of the EA’s role.
- Discrepancies between what you have learned about the role in theory and what you have observed in practice.
- The knowledge and skills required for the EA job.
- The importance of teamwork and communication.
- How the EA defines and supports inclusion.
- Observations about how the teacher’s or EA’s values and beliefs influences their practice.

Due Date: ____________________________
Assignment #3: In-Class Role Playing

20%

One of the characteristics of a profession is a Code of Ethics. A Code of Ethics outlines core values or principles that are considered important for a given profession. When a professional is confronted with a difficult situation, the Code of Ethics should be brought into the decision making process. Traditionally, codes of ethics also included specific rules to guide ethical conduct. As Educational Assistants take on increasing responsibilities as members of the educational team, they need a Code of Ethics by which to practice and to guide them when dilemmas arise.

The purpose of this activity is to demonstrate an understanding of what a Code of Ethics contains and how this code can guide one in working through an ethical dilemma.

In a group you will...

1. Develop a Code of Ethics: the group will develop a Code of Ethics that will guide them as future EAs in their practice to act in a professional manner. This code should act as the guidelines for: competent practice, rights and responsibilities and, a guide for interaction with others in the workplace.

2. Role play a dilemma and the process for resolving it using the Code of Ethics: The group will develop a dilemma for which they can utilize the code to guide them working through the dilemma towards a resolution and present it to the class. The presentation should be approximately 10 minutes in length.

As individuals you will each write a reflective response - specific questions will be given following all presentations. It is highly recommended that each group member engages in a thoughtful and attentive manner during the group preparation and presentation to facilitate this reflective writing activity.

Due Date: ________________________________
Participation and In-class Activities

Participation 10%

Outstanding Contributor (9-10 pts): Contributions in class reflect exceptional preparation. Ideas offered are always substantive, provide one or more major insights and spur discussion in new and interesting directions. Challenges are well substantiated and persuasively presented. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of the course as a whole would be diminished markedly.

Good Contributor (6-8 pts): Contributions in class reflect thorough preparation. Ideas offered are usually substantive, provide good insights and sometimes spur discussion in new and interesting directions. Challenges are well substantiated and often persuasive. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of discussion would be diminished.

Adequate Contributor (2-5) pts: Contributions in class reflect satisfactory preparation. Ideas offered are sometimes substantive, provide generally useful insights but seldom offer a new direction for the discussion. Challenges are sometimes presented, fairly well substantiated, and are sometimes persuasive. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of discussion would be diminished somewhat.

Non-Participant (0-1 pt): This person says little or nothing in class. Hence, there is not an adequate basis for evaluation. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of discussion would not be changed.

 Unsatisfactory Contributor (0 pts): Contributions in class reflect inadequate preparation. Ideas offered are seldom substantive; provide few if any insights and never a constructive direction for the class. Integrative comments and effective challenges are absent. If this person were not a member of the class, valuable air-time would be saved.

Guidelines for Evaluating Class Participation
(adapted from those developed by Assistant Professor John Tyler, Brown University)

In-Class Activities 10%

This will include a cumulative evaluation by the instructor which will consider attendance, punctuality, timely submission of assignments, completed homework assignments, being prepared for classes, consistent and meaningful participation in group activities, completing quizzes...