1 credit online course

Title

Strength-Based Learning for Students with Moderate Disabilities

Target Audience

This course is intended for in-service teachers, grades K to 12, to address improving access to the Common Core State Standards in general education inclusive classes.

Prerequisites

To successfully participate and complete the assignments in this course, the learner must:

- Be familiar with taking an online course
- Have some experience in grades K-12 classrooms.
- Have an interest in the instruction of students in inclusive environments.

Description

Designed for the professional development of elementary and secondary general educators working in inclusive learning classrooms, this course will explore the strengths, talents, and abilities of students within these special needs categories: Learning disabilities, ADD/ADHD, Autistic spectrum disorders, Intellectual disabilities, and emotional and behavioral disorders. With this deeper understanding brain based research of what these students can do, educators will then assess and design instructional projects and activities to access these strengths and talents in the classroom while also meeting the requirements of the Common Core State Standards.

Instructor/Facilitator

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Goals

The overall goals of this course are for learners to develop an understanding of the strengths and talents of students with diverse abilities and effective strategies for supporting the instruction of these students in inclusive classes.

By the end of the course learners will appreciate, understand, and be able to use the following in their classrooms:

- An appreciation of student diversity as a replacement for disability.
- The establishment of favorable environments in which diverse students can flourish.
- Assistive technologies and Universal Design for Learning methodologies.
- Positive role models.
- Implementation of strength-based learning strategies.

Course Objectives

Students completing this course will be able to:

- apply your knowledge of the learning-teaching process in the classroom.
- collaborate with colleagues to improve learning and teaching.
- create organized and positive environments that maximize learning while promoting independence, social competence, and positive self-concept.
- assess student needs and progress through qualitative and authentic as well as quantitative means.
- describe the importance of adapting classroom strategies to meet the needs of children with unique learning characteristics.
- articulate an understanding of the unique characteristics of students with special needs.
- design developmentally appropriate learning opportunities that support the diverse needs of learners.

Resources:


Outline of Content and Assignments

After previewing the documents in the Course Information, learners will proceed to the Course Content to complete the five sessions of the course, working through each session in order. Essential information pertaining to the topic is presented within each session. Throughout the
sessions, learners are also asked to articulate their ideas in various forms; for example, they reflect on their ideas and experiences. The two-week long discussions in the discussion forum are designed to allow learners to glean information from other learners’ experiences with strategies both prior to and following the completion of the weekly assignments. The learner will complete a project where they are asked to modify either a unit plan of their own or a Model Curriculum Unit from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

**Session 1: What is Neurodiversity?**

**Read**

Introduction and Chapter 1 of *Neurodiversity in the Classroom*. Complete the response guide by writing summaries to the questions.

**Participate in Online Discussions**

• Introduce themselves to other learners.

• Respond to: Discuss the idea of what it means to be "normal" in our society. Describe the kind of person that one typically associates with being "normal," or alternatively, argue for the difficulty or even impossibility of characterizing someone as "normal."

**Reflection Question:**

What are the educational implications of using a “rain forest” metaphor for the brain rather than a “machine” or “computer” metaphor?

**Session 2: What is Niche Construction?**

**Read**

Chapter 2, 3, and 4 of *Neurodiversity in the Classroom*. Complete the response guide by writing summaries to the questions.

**Internet Resource:**


**Written Assignment:**

Compare the practice of differentiated instruction with the idea of "positive niche construction" described in *Neurodiversity in the Classroom*. What are the similarities and differences between the two concepts?
Session 3: How can I begin to apply the Strength-Based Learning to my Teaching?

Read

Chapter 5 and 6 of Neurodiversity in the Classroom. Complete the response guide by writing summaries to the questions.

Assignment:

Choose a unit or lesson plan. Incorporate assistive technologies, Universal Design for Learning methodologies, strength-based learning strategies, and appropriate environmental modifications in the plan that support the development of students with learning disabilities (LD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism spectrum disorders (ASD), intellectual disabilities (ID), and emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD). Share your plan on the Google Drive. Then read the plans that other learners have submitted, and provide feedback in the plan for the person who wrote it.

Session 4: Putting it all together.

Read

Chapter 7 of Neurodiversity in the Classroom. Complete the response guide by writing summaries to the questions.

Assignment:

Respond to the feedback provided by your classmates, and make refinements to your plan.

Questions for reflection:

1. What are your own personal images of what a “strength-based” classroom or school looks like?
2. What other questions or reflections do you have about the material presented in this course?

Requirements

Learners are expected to:

- Complete all assignments.
- Participate regularly in discussion boards.
- Submit the course project and other assignments in a timely fashion (determined by the facilitator).
Materials

Technical Requirements

- Word processor
- Internet service provider
- E-mail

Students with Exceptionalities:

Bridgewater State University is committed to ensuring all individuals equal access to its programs and services. Bridgewater offers a number of services to students who have a documented medical condition, are physically challenged, or have emotional or learning disabilities. The Disability Resource office is located in the Academic Achievement center in Maxwell Library. If you wish to learn more to seek equal access because you have a documented condition, visit https://my.bridgew.edu/departments/DRO/SitePages/Home.aspx for more information.

Academic Integrity Policy

The College of Graduate Studies at Bridgewater State University, like all institutions of higher learning, considers academic integrity to be an important hallmark for graduate students and scholars. The importance of academic integrity and honesty, which is taught at the undergraduate level, continues to be even more vital for scholars and researchers at the graduate level, who find themselves writing seminar papers, research papers and theses. All graduate degree programs at Bridgewater State University require courses in research where conventions of documentation are taught. Graduate students, who are acquiring scholarly habits and skills in degree programs, must rely on the scholarship that has preceded them, and they must acknowledge the scholarship in their own academic work by adhering to the time-honored conventions of their discipline. In short, graduate students are entering a community of scholars and must respect the rules and traditions of that community. To learn more about academic integrity visit this web site: http://catalog.bridgew.edu/content.php?catoid=7&navoid=494

Evaluation

Achievement of course objectives will be measured through the instructor’s evaluation of student participation in assignments, discussions, and projects. Specific requirements and evaluation procedures are provided in the Course Assignments that will be handed out in class.
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