



Characteristics of Learners with Moderate to Severe Disabilities

SPED 526, 81033, Section 01W

COURSE SYLLABUS: Fall 2026

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Dr. Belinda Rudinger, EdD, Assistant Professor
Office Location: Henderson Hall, 235
Office Hours: Wednesdays, 9:00am-2:00pm, on Zoom
University Email Address: Belinda.Rudinger@etamu.edu
Preferred Form of Communication: University Email
Communication Response Time: within 72 hours, weekdays

COURSE INFORMATION

Materials – Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings

Textbook(s) Required

Instruction of Students with Severe Disabilities, 9th edition Brown, Fredda, E. et al.

Text (you may choose one of the following for your research report):

Ashby, W. (2017). *Impaired, but Empowered*. Up-Words
Press. ISBN-10: 0998398705
ISBN-13: 978-0998398709

OR

Draper, S. M. (2010). *Out of my mind*. New York, NY: Athenum Books for Young Reader.

Course Description

SPED 526 examines the characteristics of students with moderate to severe disabilities. Emphasis is placed on etiology, ethics, contributing factors, conditions that affect learning, the challenges of identifying students with disabilities, and the need for academic, social, and emotional accommodations, assistive technology, and support.

The syllabus/schedule are subject to change.

Student Learning Outcomes

Essential Skills:

- **IDEA eligibility criteria for special education and related services for students with moderate to severe disabilities**
- **Texas Education Agency procedural rights and safeguards**
- **Procedures and timelines for evaluation, service implementation, and dismissal**

Texas Special Education

Competencies EC-6 and 6-12:

1. Standard B. Legal and Ethical Guidelines. The Early Childhood-Grade 6 special education teacher demonstrates knowledge of all applicable state and federal laws, including Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008; Texas Education Code specific to students with disabilities; Texas Administrative Code specific to students with disabilities; and Family Education Rights and Privacy Act. The Early Childhood-Grade 6 special education teacher must:

3) demonstrate knowledge of IDEA 2004 eligibility categories;

EC-6 (19) 6-12 (24) demonstrate understanding that students served through special education may also have other special populations identifiers (i.e., gifted and talented, English learner, highly mobile and at risk, and dyslexia);

2. Standard C. Understanding and Addressing Each Individual's Developmental and Learning Needs. The Early Childhood-Grade 6 special education teacher must:

EC-6 (3) demonstrate knowledge of how exceptionalities can interact with development and learning;

6-12 (3) understand the impact of exceptionalities on developmental milestones, executive functioning, and social skills;

(8) demonstrate knowledge of a variety of assistive technologies to support individual developmental and learning needs;

(9) demonstrate knowledge of how developmental academic, social, and functional characteristics of individuals with high support needs impact levels of support needs;

6-12 Only:

1. Standard B. Legal and Ethical Guidelines. The Early Childhood-Grade 6 special education teacher demonstrates knowledge of all applicable state and federal laws, including Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008; Texas Education Code specific

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to students with disabilities; Texas Administrative Code specific to students with disabilities; and Family Education Rights and Privacy Act. The Early Childhood-Grade 6 special education teacher must:

27) knowledge of IEP transition activities to build students' readiness for postsecondary transition;

Texas Educational Diagnostician Competencies

1. Standard V. The educational diagnostician knows eligibility criteria and procedures for identifying students with disabilities and determining the presence of an educational need.
 - (1) The educational diagnostician knows and understands:
 - (A) characteristics of individuals with disabilities, including those with different levels of severity and with multiple disabilities;
 - (B) educational implications of various disabilities; and
 - (C) the variation in ability exhibited by individuals with particular types of disabilities.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Minimal Technical Skills Needed

Enrolled students will need a working knowledge of how to access the course online, access materials and resources the instructor posts, recording/posting videos, and the use of Microsoft Word for submitting assignments

Instructional Methods

This course will be facilitated using D2L, the learning management system used by East Texas A&M University. The instructor has included various forms of instructional tools in the course such as recorded lectures, videos, helpful websites/resources, scholarly articles, and discussion topics.

Student Responsibilities or Tips for Success in the Course

Enrolled students are responsible for logging into the course several times a week. The instructor may post announcements that need to be seen and responded to in a timely manner. Additionally, please be aware that you should be spending the equivalent to three hours a week of class time (listening to lectures/accessing class materials) on a three-hour course, with additional time being required to complete assignments.

GRADING

Final grades in this course will be based on the following scale:

A = 90%-100%

B = 80%-89%

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C = 70%-79%
D = 60%-69%
F = 59% or Below

Total points corresponding to the final letter grades

A = 315- 350 Points
B = 280- 314.4 Points
C = 245- 279.4 Points
D = 210- 244.4 Points
F = 209.4 & > Points

Weights of the assessments in the calculation of the final letter grade.

Assignments	60%
Discussions	40%
TOTAL	100%

Assessments

Discussions (140 points):

Students are expected to participate actively in assigned discussions. For each discussion, you are to contribute at least one original thought by posting your **reflection** to a thought-provoking question based on assigned readings / videos, etc. Discussions will be posted to a discussion forum as specified in each assignment. For some discussion forum posts, you may be required to respond to one or more postings of one of your classmates (**peer response**).

Functional Scheme Reflection (25 points): <http://activelearningspace.org/assessment>

Video at bottom of page on Functional Scheme – Students will write reflection on Functional Scheme; Reflections must contain students it would address and impact on services in the classroom.

Assistive Technology Case Study (30 points): Enrolled students will complete a study of AT videos, documents for including AT in the IEP, and applying the SETT framework to select appropriate AT. Students will work through a training case study that is provided and then apply the knowledge to a different case study.

Transition Google Site (50 points): Students will create a Google Site for educators and parents to aid in the transition process. Remember that transition doesn't have to be from high school to post-secondary/a vocation.

This Google Site is intended to be something to inform your practice, but also to be shareable with parents to give them resources/guidance for how to maneuver the transition process. Feel free to customize it with information relevant to practices in your individual ISD. However, your Google Site must include:

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1. Definition of the transition process and examples of transition points in education; why parent involvement is crucial
2. Two of the Information Briefs (student-selected from a collection provided) with an explanation of each.
3. Two research-based articles for fostering successful transitions/transition-related skills
4. Embed High Leverage Practices for collaboration and how they can be implemented to foster successful transition (this means do more than just hyperlink to the HLP document)
5. Coordination of agency services/Long-term planning tips—are there waiting lists that parents need to be on now to be able to get their student needed services?

PLEASE FOLLOW THE DIRECTIONS AT THIS LINK TO MAKE SURE YOUR GOOGLE SITE AND ALL THE PAGES/CONTENT IS VIEWABLE:

<https://support.google.com/sites/answer/6372880?hl=en#zippy=%2Cchoose-who-can-see-your-site>

Special Education Critical Concepts Outlines (50 points)

One of the crucial elements of this course is for enrolled students to leave with mastery of basic information about each IDEA eligibility category, especially the category definition and eligibility criteria. Each student will create outlines containing information about disabilities emphasized in this course. Information should be presented as headings with bullets of information. There is a template posted in D2L that you may choose to use (or you can do it in another format, such as a Power Point, that best matches your learning preferences) to complete your outlines.

You may only turn in two pages for each of the disability categories. Make sure to delete any blank pages. ALL PAGES SHOULD BE TYPED AND TURNED IN IN ONE FILE WITH YOUR NAME AS A HEADER.

Info to Include on Each Page of the Exceptionalities Handbook:

1. IDEA Definition, including types as appropriate. In preparation for comps, you may choose to include your study technique for remembering the definition, such as the example in D2L of the 5 components of the ED definition illustrated as fingers on a hand. (You can use this one for ED if you choose, but you will need to come up with the remainder on your own.)
2. Causes
3. Prevalence (provide percentages/numbers as much as possible)
4. Prevention
5. Characteristics
6. Teaching strategies/Accommodations

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7. Assistive Technology
8. Resources

You will have ONE handbook page for each of the following topics:

Intellectual Disabilities (moderate and severe)
Orthopedic Impairments (Physical Disabilities)

Traumatic Brain Injury

Deaf and Hard of Hearing
Low Vision and Blindness

GRADING: 5 pages @ 10 points each = 50 points total

****Note:** The other disabilities that fall within these categories can be listed as part of the definition. For example, on the sheet for orthopedic impairments, cerebral palsy can be listed as part of the definition as types of disorders in this category.

Research Report: (50 points)

Each student will demonstrate ability to summarize, apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate research-based findings from professional sources by developing one written report. Required components are (1) sources, short summary of selected book, and topic selection, (2) summary of information/literature review [knowledge & comprehension/*Bloom's Taxonomy*], (3) relevance of information for 21st century schools [application, analysis & synthesis/*Bloom's Taxonomy*], and (4) personal reaction [evaluation/*Bloom's Taxonomy*]. There is a rubric and template posted in D2L.

Course Outline/Calendar

Module	Topic	Readings/Materials	Assignments
One	<i>Characteristics</i>	Reading 1.1 – Chapter One (Brown et al. 2020) Reading 1.2 – Chapter Nine (Brown et al. 2020) Reading 1.3 – Chapter Ten (Brown et al. 2020) Reading 1.4 – Five Essential Features of Quality Educational Programs for Students with Moderate and Severe	Discussion Post 1 Discussion Post 2 Special Education Critical Concepts Outlines

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		Intellectual Disability (Pennington et al., 2016) Multimedia 1.5 – Region 10 Low Incidence Disability Resources Multimedia 1.6 – More than meets the eye: Working with students with visual impairments	
Two	Assessment	Reading 1.1 – Chapter Three Reading 1.2 – Chapter Four Reading 1.3 – Chapter Eight Reading 1.4 – Assessment & Instructional Resources Matrix Multimedia 1.5 – Collaborative Evaluations by Marnee Loftin Multimedia 1.6 – Review and watch video at Functional Scheme Website Multimedia 1.7 – Highlighting Potential: A Beginners Guide to Evaluating Students with Blindness, Low Vision and Deafblindness Multimedia 1.8 – Deaf/Hard of Hearing Texas Deaf Ed Gallaudet Guidelines Multimedia 1.9 – Evaluation Resources	Discussion Post 3 Discussion Post 4 Functional Scheme Reflection
Three	Instruction	Reading 1.1 – Chapter Five Reading 1.2 – Chapter Six Reading 1.3 – Chapter Eleven	Discussion Post 5 Assistive Technology Case Study Discussion Post 6

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		Reading 1.4 – Chapter Thirteen Reading 1.5 – Chapter Fourteen Multimedia 1.6 – When your new student has a visual impairment Multimedia 1.7 – Tools to support a student with a visual impairment in class Multimedia 1.8 – Setting Up a Structured Classroom Multimedia 1.9 – The TEACHH Approach Multimedia 1.10 – Mainstream Accessibility Options Apple Accessibility: • Cognitive • Vision • Hearing • Speech • Mobility Google Accessibility: • Cognitive • Vision • Hearing • Speech • Mobility & Dexterity Windows Accessibility (scroll down on page for each item in order) • Vision • Hearing • Dexterity & Mobility • Focus	Discussion Post 7
Four	Collaboration & Transition	Reading 1.1 – Chapter Two	• Research Presentation

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		Reading 1.2 – Chapter Seven Reading 1.3 – Chapter Twelve Reading 1.4 – Chapter Fifteen Reading 1.5 – Chapter Sixteen Reading 1.6 – Effective Home School Partnerships (Okeke 2014) Multimedia 1.7 – Transition in the IEP Website Multimedia 1.8 – Transition in the IEP Webinar Multimedia 1.9 – Nothing About Me Without Me video	• Transition Google Site
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Calendar: Please note that the calendar is tentative and may change at any time and as many times as necessary during the semester. In case of any changes, you will be informed in a timely manner. It is your responsibility to regularly check your email and D2L for announcements regarding any changes.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

LMS

All course sections offered by East Texas A&M University have a corresponding course shell in the myLeo Online Learning Management System (LMS). Below are technical requirements

LMS Requirements:

<https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Brightspace-Platform-Requirements>

LMS Browser Support:

https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser_support.htm

Zoom Video Conferencing Tool

https://inside.tamuc.edu/campuslife/CampusServices/CITESupportCenter/Zoom_Account.aspx?source=universalmenu

ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

The syllabus/schedule are subject to change.

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@etamu.edu.

Note: Personal computer and internet connection problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner. Each student needs to have a backup method to deal with these inevitable problems. These methods might include the availability of a backup PC at home or work, the temporary use of a computer at a friend's home, the local library, office service companies, Starbucks, an ETAMU campus open computer lab, etc.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact your Instructor.

Technical Support

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778. Other support options can be found here:

<https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport>

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES FOR COURSE

CWID and Password

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@etamu.edu.

Technology-Related Issues

Personal computer and internet connection problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner. Each student needs to have a backup method to deal with these inevitable problems. These methods might include the availability of a backup PC at home or work, the temporary use of a computer at a friend's home, the local library, office service companies, Starbucks, a ETAMU campus open computer lab, etc.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS AND SUPPORT

Minimal Technical Skills Needed

Students will need reliable computer and internet access for this course. Students must be able to effectively use myLeo email, myLeo Online D2L, and Microsoft Office.

Learning Management System (LMS) – D2L

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All course sections offered by East Texas A&M University have a corresponding course shell in the myLeo Online Learning Management System (LMS). Below are the technical requirements:

- View the [Learning Management System Requirements Webpage](#).
- Learn more on the [LMS Browser Support Webpage](#).

Technical Support

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778. Other support options can be found on the [Brightspace Support Webpage](#).

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

Interaction with Instructor Statement

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact your instructor. Correspondence will always be through university email (your “myLeo” mail) and announcements in myLeo online (D2L). You will not RECEIVE email through D2L, so be sure to check your ETAMU email for communication. Students are encouraged to check university email daily.

Include the Following in Emails with Instructor:

- Course name and subject in the subject line
- Salutation (Good afternoon, Dr. Jackson)
- Proper email etiquette (no “text” emails – use proper grammar and punctuation)
- Student name and CWID after the body of the email (possibly add to student signature on email)

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Syllabus Change Policy

The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events, such as student progress, may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced in advance.

Student Conduct

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All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. The [Code of Student Conduct](#) is described in detail online in the [Student Guidebook](#).

Students should also consult the [Rules of Netiquette Webpage](#) for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum.

ETAMU Attendance

For more information about the attendance policy, please view the [Attendance Webpage](#) and the [Class Attendance Policy](#)

Academic Integrity

Students at East Texas A&M University are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all their scholastic work. For more details and the definition of academic dishonesty see the following procedures:

[Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty University Procedure 13.99.99.R0.03](#)

[Undergraduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form](#)

[Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty University Procedure 13.99.99.R0.10](#)

[Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form](#)

Use of Artificial Intelligence

East Texas A&M University acknowledges that there are legitimate uses of Artificial Intelligence, ChatBots, or other software that has the capacity to generate text, or suggest replacements for text beyond individual words, as determined by the instructor of the course.

Any use of such software must be documented. Any undocumented use of such software constitutes an instance of academic dishonesty (plagiarism).

Individual instructors may disallow entirely the use of such software for individual assignments or for the entire course. Students should be aware of such requirements and follow their instructors' guidelines. If no instructions are provided the student should assume that the use of such software is disallowed.

In any case, students are fully responsible for the content of any assignment they submit, regardless of whether they used an AI, in any way. This specifically includes cases in which the AI plagiarized another text or misrepresented sources

Students with Disabilities-- ADA Statement

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The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

East Texas A&M University

Velma K. Waters Library Rm 162

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835

Fax (903) 468-8148

Email: studentdisabilityservices@etamu.edu

Website: [Office of Student Disability Services](#)

Nondiscrimination Notice

East Texas A&M University will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

Campus Concealed Carry Statement

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in East Texas A&M University buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and ETAMU Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.

For a list of locations, please refer to the [Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus](#) document and/or consult your event organizer.

Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all East Texas A&M University campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

East Texas A&M Supports Students' Mental Health – Counseling Services

The Counseling Center at East Texas A&M University, located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers counseling services, educational programming, and connection to community resources for students.

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Students have 24/7 access to the Counseling Center's crisis assessment services by calling 903-886-5145. For more information regarding Counseling Center events and confidential services, please visit www.tamuc.edu/counsel

Mental Health and Well-Being

The university aims to provide students with essential knowledge and tools to understand and support mental health. As part of our commitment to your well-being, we offer access to Telus Health, a service available 24/7/365 via chat, phone, or webinar. Scan the QR code to download the app and explore the resources available to you for guidance and support whenever you need it.



Tentative Course Schedule

Calendar: Please note that the calendar is tentative and may change at any time and as many times as necessary during the semester. In case of any changes, you will be informed in a timely manner. **It is your responsibility to regularly check your email and D2L for announcements regarding the course.**

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