Strategies for Teaching Students with Autism/Asperger’s Syndrome

Course Outline

Course Description
This course is designed to focus on developing an understanding of Autism and Asperger’s Syndrome, intervention strategies to enhance communication and learning for these students and methods of teaching social skills to assist them in interacting with their peers. This course will provide teachers with tools and strategies to implement effective teaching practices for students with Autism/Asperger’s Syndrome.

Objectives
- Examine the definition of autism and how it is diagnosed
- Analyze the characteristics of autism and their effects on the classroom dynamic
- Utilize resources found on the Internet
- Evaluate the secondary skill challenges of autism: cognitive/language/motor/sensory
- Facilitate methods to improve learning by teaching specific activities for social skills
- Analyze the range and impact of communication challenges and how to support these differences using strategies
- Devise appropriate responses to the different types of behaviors that typically accompany Autism (challenging/ritualistic)
- Determine how to appropriately interact and respond to a child with Autism
- Compare and contrast students with these disorders with other students, and how to teach them given these differences
- Critique articles and Internet resources on Austism/Asperger’s
- Acquire a basic knowledge of the existing body of research dealing with Autism
- Evaluate the course

Curriculum Design & Time Requirements
There are a series of major assessment concepts systematically presented by the instructor using the Socratic or Instructional Conversation method. Each concept acts as a building block to form a basic understanding that teachers can weave into their own classroom strategies and best practices to assist teachers in creating a school setting where assessment and learning go hand in hand. This is a forty-five hour, three credit graduate level course completed over a thirteen-week period. This course is taught both in the classroom and online.
Course Materials
The required textbook for this course is *You’re Gonna Love This Kid!* by Paula Kluth. (ISBN 1-55766-614-8). Online readings and website reviews (including journal articles and best practices from the body of educational research) will be assigned during the course to enhance learning.

Session Outline

Session 1: Introduction and Defining Autism
Contents:
1. Member introductions
2. Individual and group expectations
3. Course modules, resources and requirements
4. Defining autism
5. Diagnosis of autism
6. Increase in prevalence
7. Assignments

Session 2: Collaboration and Cooperation
Contents:
1. Principles of Collaboration
2. Team members
3. Team teaching
4. Independent instruction
5. Peer support
6. Assignments

Session 3: Friendships, Social Relationships and Belonging
Contents:
1. Common social deficits in autistic students
2. Building a ‘community’ in the classroom
3. Social stories
4. Using role play to enhance social skills
5. Promoting acceptance and belonging in the classroom.
6. Assignments

Session 4: Sensory Needs
Contents:
1. Sensory processing issues
2. Sensory overload
3. Sensory Integration Therapy
4. Multi-sensory approaches
5. Self-stimulation
6. Assignments

Session 5: Building Communication
Contents:
1. Echolalia
2. Eye contact
3. Communication boards  
4. Using BoardMaker  
5. Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)  
6. Augmentative communication  
7. Assignments  

Session 6: Fostering Independence  
Contents:  
1. Teaching life skills  
2. Using work systems to build independence  
3. Creating personal schedules  
4. Dealing with transitions  
5. Long term goals  
6. Assignments  

Session 7: Rethinking Behavior: Positive Ways to Teach and Support  
Contents:  
1. Positive ways to support behavior  
2. Rewards and reinforcement  
3. Challenging behaviors  
4. Ritualistic behaviors  
5. Applied Behavior Analysis  
6. Assignments  

Session 8: Creating a Comfortable Classroom  
Contents:  
1. Monitoring the atmosphere (lighting, smells, temperature)  
2. Seating challenges  
3. Importance of classroom organization  
4. Allowing opportunities for movement  
5. Assignments  

Session 9: Lesson Planning  
Contents:  
1. Cooperative learning  
2. Service learning  
3. Project-based instruction  
4. Using centers/stations  
5. Authentic assessment  
6. Assignments  

Session 10: Teaching Strategies  
Contents:  
1. Routines and schedules  
2. Successful transitions  
3. Helping students with organizational skills  
4. Providing choices  
5. Opportunities for breaks  
6. Using nonverbal cues
7. Assignments

Grading

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Grading Scale</th>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100 – 93</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-Class assignments</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>92 – 85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Project</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>84 – 77</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Points</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
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Student Requirements
1. Attend all class sessions for the requisite number of hours and actively participate in all class activities.
2. A rubric for the final project will be distributed in the first session that will outline the components and elaboration necessary to achieve the corresponding grades.
3. Complete all written reflections & assignments.
4. Students will be required to construct a portfolio during the course that will serve as a toolkit of specific ideas and protocols for their classrooms as a part of their final project.
5. Pass a final exam.

Student Academic Integrity
Participants guarantee that all academic class work is original. Any academic dishonesty or plagiarism (to take ideas, writings, etc. from another and offer them as one's own), is a violation of student academic behavior standards as outlined by our partnering colleges and universities and is subject to academic disciplinary action.