UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN
DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION DISORDERS

SPED 960:
Family-Centered Services for Children with Disabilities
3 credits

INSTRUCTOR: Chris Marvin, Ph.D.
Office: 202 Barkley Memorial Center
472-5483 (email: cmarvin1@unl.edu)

TIME: Thursday 6-9:00 PM

PLACE: Web and interactive TV on 1/20, 2/3, 2/24, 3/9, 4/6, 4/27 at the following locations:
   At UNK: Distance Learning Center, 1910 University Dr., UNK
   At UNMC: College of Nursing Room 2017 (on main level)
             S.E. corner of 42nd & Dewey Ave.. Come in the revolving doors
             Free parking available on levels 1-2 of Clarkston Parking Structure across the street.
   At UNL: Downtown Lincoln at the State Executive Bldg.
           521 S. 14th St., Suite #103

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This graduate course will describe normal and stressed family systems and the impact of having a child with special needs in the family. Particular attention will be given to understanding the normal family life cycle, family roles and functions and the family's need and use of support systems within and outside the immediate family structure. Attention will be given to understanding current and proposed models of parent-professional relationships in the public schools, with a focus on special education programs and personnel. Practical information regarding family-focused interviews and development of Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs) will be presented. Strategies for interacting effectively with families as child advocates, interventionists and service coordination managers will be discussed. Communication skills necessary for effective consultation/collaboration with parents and other community team members will be presented and practiced.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE KNOWLEDGE BASE:
This course expands upon the educator's knowledge base by focusing attention on the Profession and the educator's role in the application of new information in working with families. Families are studied as a culture and families with children with special needs are discussed in terms of their unique, individual differences. Students are challenged to explore the traditional role of families in educational services and develop a philosophy of working with families that might advance the abilities of the child and foster greater collaboration between educators and family members. Ethical practices are examined in light of traditional and newer definitions of family.
REQUIRED READING:


READINGS (Packet)


Handouts (Packet)
   Students will purchase a set of handouts through the university bookstore. Additional handouts will be made available through either the web or mailed free-of-charge to students as needed.

INSTRUCTIONAL FORMATS USED:
   Seminar format over the web and interactive TV with small group discussions, guest presenters, and in-class demonstrations/simulations. Projects include contacts with families and community practitioners as well as self-reflective activities. Students will be encouraged to share information from independent projects with each other.

EVALUATION/GRADES:
   Students will be evaluated using examinations, written papers, projects and class participation. Except for exams, all assignments will be graded on a point system associated with the quality/acceptability of the submitted assignment.
   - Unacceptable: does not meet the intent of the assignment.
   - Acceptable/Weak: meets the intent of the assignment but lacks detail, clarity or specifics necessary to demonstrate good understanding and integration of class content.
   - Acceptable: meets the intent of the assignment; shows understanding of class content.
   - Excellent/Superior: meets the intent of assignment and goes beyond the required/expected performance.

ASSIGNMENTS:
   Ask a professional who works with families of young children with disabilities to complete the survey Brass Tacks regarding their family-centered practices. Follow-up with an interview for clarification if necessary. Summarize your findings and the implications in a discussion group with classmates (electronically); be sure to compare the professional's practices to those reported by Trivette, Dunst, Boyde & Hamby (1995). Each campus will share a 1-2 page summary of findings. The author of the campus summary (randomly assigned but you can trade off) is excused from having to seek out a professional's completion of the survey. Everyone on each campus will be awarded (same) points for the campus summary.
   - Acceptable/Weak = 18, Acceptable = 23, Excellent = 25
   - Campus Summary Due Date: By the Week of February 7th.

Interview a family who has a member with disabilities. The member with the disabilities can be of any age, but should have begun receiving services during the preschool years (prior to age 5). The interview can be "in-person" or electronic (phone or email) but must continue over two or more "visits." Content for the interviews will be guided by the class topics as well as needed information for a final report (see Forms). The Final Report will reflect the information collected through the ongoing interaction with the family as well as the student's thoughts and reactions to it. In exchange for the family's time, students are encouraged to offer some service/help (see "barter ideas")
   - Unacceptable = 25, Acceptable/Weak = 38, Acceptable = 45, Excellent = 50
   - DUE DATE: First contact documented by February 10; Final report by April 20th.

Self-Critique of Communication Skills
   An interview or other interaction with a parent of a child with disabilities should be audio/video-taped (consent forms provided) early in the semester (by mid-term). Students are to review the
tapes and reflect on their communication skills. In a written report, students will provide examples (samples of dialogue) of their strengths and areas needing improvement. The report will also include a critique of how the student’s communication skills have improved over the semester.

Unacceptable = 25, Acceptable/Weak = 38, Acceptable = 45, Excellent = 50

DUE DATE: by April 27th

"Virtual" Family
Each student will have an imaginary child born to them the first weeks of class. Each week the instructor will inform students of new developments in the family and life of the child. Students will reflect on the different aspects of what each event will do to them and their family and enter their thoughts into an electronic journal. Writing style, length and exact format will not be considered in the grading nearly as much as commitment to journal regularly and a sincere demonstration of trying to imagine each event in the student’s life. Journals will be submitted every 3-4 weeks. Points will be given per entry (50 total points)

Unacceptable (no entry) = 0, Acceptable/Weak = 3, Acceptable = 4, Excellent = 5

DUE DATES: TBA monthly

Web Discussions. Students will participate in web-based small and large group discussions or contribute/share thoughts regarding particular class notes/activities on the web. No grades will be assigned for these contributions, but all students are encouraged to participate. These interactions will be electronic versions of the "small group activities" often used in on-campus graduate courses.

Extra Credit
Select the activities/projects most pertinent/possible and/or of greatest interest to you.
Total possible points equal 10.

Marvin’s Movie Minute: Provide a review of a video/movie you recently viewed. In a two-page report, (see Forms) describe the definition of "family" in the film and describe how that family met its members’ needs. Analyze the communication patterns of one character and describe how you would prepare yourself to work effectively with this person/family if they were to have a child with a disability. Provide a one paragraph "abstract" for web posting.

Unacceptable = 0 Acceptable/Weak = 5 Acceptable/Good = 8 Excellent = 10

Family Tales Revisited: Select one book from those about families, which are suggested in class or listed in Turnbull text or Lynch & Hanson text. In a two-page report, (see Forms) describe the definition of "family" in the book and describe how that family met its members’ needs. Analyze the communication patterns of one character and describe how you would prepare yourself to work effectively with this person/family if they were to have a child with a disability. Provide a one paragraph "abstract" for web posting.

Unacceptable = 0 Acceptable/Weak = 5 Acceptable/Good = 8 Excellent = 10

Critique a Colleagues’ Communication skills. Review the tape made by a classmate. Write a 1-2 page summary of your findings to share with your classmate. Provide the student feedback on their strengths and areas needing improvement by describing examples and justifying your suggestions for change or continued use.

Unacceptable = 5 Acceptable/Weak = 7 Acceptable/Good = 8 Excellent = 10

Community Resources. Investigate the availability of services for families with children with disabilities in your community (campus or home). Students are encouraged to become familiar with
various educational, social and medical services available in their local communities. Students will summarize their findings in an annotated listing of resources with contact names/numbers, referral procedures/information and description of services, etc. Efforts should be made to pursue resources in the areas of education/intervention, nutrition, social services and medicine/nursing. Other areas can be included as available and of interest to the student.

Unacceptable = 3    Acceptable/Weak = 7    Acceptable/Good = 8.5    Excellent = 10

**Review Parent Training/Support Programs** from your community by participating in them. Prepare a one-two page review of a parent program designed to assist families who have children with disabilities in your community as well as your experience participating in it. Discuss access, purpose, use, success, and match with a family-centered philosophy.

Unacceptable = 5    Acceptable/Weak = 7    Acceptable/Good = 8    Excellent = 10

**Extra Credit (5 points):** Read, summarize and comment on an article from your own professional journals on the topic of family-centered services in your discipline (see Forms)

Unacceptable = 0    Acceptable/Weak = 3    Acceptable/Good = 4    Excellent = 5

**Examinations**
- Exam #1: Family Systems 100 points (week of February 21st)
- Exam #2: Family-Centered Services 100 points (week of May 1st)