



School of Education

Course	EDSP 5378
Semester	Spring 2026
Location	Online
Instructor	Derek Daskalakes, Ph.D.
Email	ddaskalakes@uttyler.edu
Zoom Office Hours	Wednesday 4-7pm and by appointment
Zoom Link	Zoom Room (Dr. D.)

Course Catalog Description:

An in-depth study of federal and state education laws, court cases, related legal issues affecting special education. Content includes legal/administrative responsibilities inherent in special education program planning and development, alternative program formats, funding sources, consultation, and communication techniques.

Student Outcomes:

Objective/Learning Outcomes	Standards: SBEC CEC	Assessment
1. Students will understand the history of the law regarding children with disabilities	Domain IV Standard I, II ACC1K4, ED1K1, ACC5K1	Quizzes
2. Students will demonstrate understanding of the fundamentals of the legal system in the United States	Domain IV Standard I, II ACC1K4	Quizzes
3. Students will identify major federal laws including (IDEA, Section 504, ADA, ESEA)	Domain IV Standard I, II Acc1K4, ED1K1, ACC5K1	Quizzes, Article Review, Module Activities, IEP Parent Pres.
4. Students will identify case laws pertaining to special education and treatment of individuals with disabilities in the United States.	Domain IV Standard I, II ACC1K4, ED1K1, ACC5K1	Due Process Hearings

5. Student will demonstrate understanding of the specific rules and regulations that are applicable to special education in the state of Texas.	Domain IV Standard I, II, ACC1K4, ED1K1, ACC5K1	Quizzes, Due Process Hearings, IEP Parent Pres.
6. Students will demonstrate and apply professional and ethical standards for educational practitioners (NCED).	Domain IV Standard I, II ACC5K1, ACC5K2, ED5K3, ACC5SI, ACC5S3	Director/Diag. Interview

Evaluation and Grading:

Students will be assessed according to the stated objectives in this syllabus.

Summary of Course Assignments:	Maximum Points
Syllabus Scavenger Hunt	10
Discussion Board Activities (10 per x 6)	60
Quizzes (30 per x 4)	120
Module Activities (25 per x 2)	50
IEP Parent Presentation	50
Due Process Hearing Reviews (30 per x 4)	120
Director/Diagnostician Interview	35

Total Possible Points: **445 points**

Grading is based on your accumulated score as a percent of the total cumulative score available.

The last day to withdraw from courses is March 30

Grading Rubric:

A (90 –100%)	B (80 – 89%)	C (70 – 79%)	D (60 – 69%)	F (less than 60%)
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Description of Grading and Evaluation

Throughout the semester, a variety of online activities/assignments will be assigned. These activities are extensions of the topic discussed throughout the online modules.

Assignment Submission:

For written assignments a “page” is defined as:

- 8½” x 11” paper
- Times New Roman or Arial 12-point font
- Double-spaced (unless otherwise directed)
- 1-inch margin on all sides.
- Put page numbers on the top right-hand side.
- Put the title of the assignment on your paper. **You only need the title at the top of your paper.**
- Upload written assignments on the Canvas website under the assignment tab

Teaching Strategies:

The following instructional strategies will be employed during this class:

- Lecture, multimedia, and simulations
- Demonstration and case studies
- Cooperative learning
- Written assignments

Required Text and Related Readings

- Yell, M. L. (2019). *The law in special education* (5th edition). New York, NY: Pearson.
- ** Other readings as assigned in class.

NOTE: *A student of this institution is not under any obligation to purchase a textbook from a university-affiliated bookstore. The same textbook may also be available from an independent retailer, including an online retailer.*

Brief Summary of Assignments

Syllabus Scavenger Hunt: Students will be asked to complete a quick and fun activity designed to ensure that they have reviewed and understand the contents of the course syllabus.

Discussion Board Activities: Students will be asked to respond to critical questions about course material using a discussion board format, as well as thoughtfully engage with the responses of their class peers.

Quizzes: Students will complete a series of quizzes designed to assess their completion and understanding of course readings.

Module Activities: Students will be asked to complete module activities that provide an in-depth engagement with themes relevant to the course.

IEP Parent Presentation: Students will develop, deliver, and record a presentation describing the IEP process, contents, and core legal protections to a hypothetical parent.

Due Process Hearing Reviews: These activities will familiarize you with the due process hearing in the state of Texas. Actual recent Texas special education hearings will be reviewed. The Texas Education Agency website provides links to all hearing officers decisions.

Director/Diagnostician Interview: Students are responsible for locating and interviewing a director or diagnostician regarding legal issues in special education. See Appendix A for further guidance.

Plagiarism: Your work needs to be in your own words!! Plagiarism will be an automatic zero for an assignment and grounds for a disposition. All appropriate assignments will be submitted within the plagiarism software within Canvas.

- All appropriate written assignments will be submitted via the submission link that utilizes TurnItIn, which is a plagiarism detection device. A similarity match of 25% or greater indicates that you engaged in unethical behavior. Any written assignments with a 25% or greater match will receive a grade of zero.

Code of Conduct: Please see Section 2.098 or the University's handbook of Operating Procedures for specific information about expectations related to student conduct. It is the responsibility of the student to bring to the instructor's attention any question, misunderstanding or confusions he/she has concerning classroom policy or course requirements BEFORE an adverse effect on student's grade results.

Course Policies

People First Language/Class Etiquette: Our language is a reflection of our attitudes. Always refer to persons with disabilities with respect. Degrading terminology will not be tolerated. In this class we will strive to use "people first" language at all times. "People First" language always refers to the person first and not as a label or a category. For example, refer to "a student with autism" and not "an autistic child".

Safe Zone: I consider our digital classroom to be a place where you will be treated with respect as human being – regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, political beliefs, age, or ability. Additionally, diversity of thought is appreciated and encouraged, provided you can agree to disagree. It is my expectation that ALL students consider the digital classroom a safe environment.

Communication: You'll need to log in to Canvas regularly (at least once a week) to view that week's assignments and check announcements. I tend to send out a weekly announcement as a way of touching base with everyone, and ensuring that module contents are clearly understood.

You are welcome to email me using either Canvas or my UT Tyler address. I normally respond to emails within 24 hours during the week, and up to 48 hours on a weekend. If you email me over a weekend, holiday break, or semester break, there may be a longer response time.

Also, it is my policy to discuss grades in a live, one-on-one meeting so that we can clearly communicate, and I can hear your perspective and you can hear mine as this promotes open dialogue. If you have questions about grades or your performance in this class, I'm

happy to meet with you in a Zoom conference or if you reside close to our campus during a face-to-face office visit.

Course Organization and Frequent Logins: This course is organized into learning modules. The modules will open Mondays at 9:00 a.m. Note that not all assignments within a module may be due at the same time. Because this is an online course, on-campus attendance is not applicable. However, you must demonstrate self-motivation and be disciplined to complete the course activities and assignments in a timely manner. Thus, frequent (not less than once a week) logins to the course are expected.

Assignment Submission: All assignments will be submitted to Canvas. Assignments will not be accepted through email or any other format unless prior approval is given by the instructor.

Late Work Policy: Because this is an online class, you have a lot of flexibility in where and when you complete many of your assignments. You have many opportunities to submit the assignment on time throughout the week. Education is a deadline-driven field, so it is expected that assignments will be turned in on time. An assignment will be considered late if it is not submitted by the due date/time specified on Canvas. **Late assignments will not be accepted unless prior approval is given by the instructor at least 24 hours prior to the due date.**

Written assignments: Possessing the ability to clearly communicate in writing is an essential skill in our jobs as educational diagnosticians for the children and families we serve. Therefore, written assignments must be typed using double spacing lines and have page numbers. In addition, work submitted must reflect a professional quality in terms of scope, depth, writing mechanics, and appearance. Proofread all assignments as only materials with minimal or no errors will receive high scores. Plagiarism is not tolerated.

Academic Dishonesty: To be successful in this class, you must invest time for study. Honesty is expected. Academic dishonesty (e.g., cheating, plagiarism, collusion) will NOT be tolerated and will result in a grade of zero (0) for the assignment. A second infraction will result in automatic failure of the class. Dishonesty is defined as (a) the use of unauthorized materials, (b) any communication with peers during quizzes, (c) representing another's work as one's own (i.e. plagiarism), or (d) fabricating information. The professor reserves the right to determine occurrences of cheating. Additional information on Academic Dishonesty is found in the Selected University Policies section of this syllabus.

Canvas

You will access class lectures, assignments, grades, and course information through Canvas. Any changes to the course schedule, schedule of assignments, or any special assignments will be posted on Canvas.

Technology

Because this is an online course, you are expected to possess basic technology skills. However, if you are struggling with technology, please post your questions on coffee and conversations, or in many cases you can find answers to your question on Google or other search engines. For issues related to Canvas, please contact IT Support at itsupport@uttyler.edu.

Tentative Course Schedule

* Subject to change based on circumstances and instructor discretion

** Note that assignment due dates will be provided on Canvas

Module/Dates	Readings	Assignments
Module 1 (Jan. 12-18)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course syllabus • Review course shell on Canvas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion Board #1 (introductions) • Syllabus scavenger hunt activity
Module 2 (Jan 19 – Feb. 8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 1 (1-12) • Ch. 3 (37-52) • Ch. 4 (53-82) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Module 2 Quiz (Q1) • Complete FERPA and Confidentiality modules (ESC 20 website) • Due Process Hearing #1 • Discussion Board #2
Module 3 (Feb. 9 – Mar. 15) • Mar. 9-13 → Spring Break	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 5 (83-118) • Ch. 6 (120-135) • Ch. 7 (136-156) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Module 3 Quiz (Q2) • Complete Section 504 module • Complete Director/Diag. interview assignment • Due Process Hearing #2 • Discussion Board #3
Module 4 (Mar. 16 – Apr. 5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 8 (158-191) • Ch. 9 (195-216) • Ch. 10 (219-252) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Module 4 Quiz (Q3) • Due Process Hearing #3 • Discussion Board #4
Module 5 (Apr. 6 – Apr. 19)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 11 (256-277) • Ch. 12 (279-313) • Ch. 13 (316-347) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Module 5 Quiz (Q4) • Due Process Hearing #4 • Discussion Board #5
Module 6 (Apr. 20 – Apr. 26)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No readings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Assignment – IEP Parent Presentation • Discussion Board #6

Appendix

Director/Diagnostician Interview Assignment

You will be required to interview either a special education director, supervisor, or a diagnostician. The purpose of this assignment is to acquaint you with the legal aspects of the job of a director/diagnostician. This interview may be conducted in person or via Zoom (both have their advantages). A list of mandatory interview questions can be found below, but note that you are not limited to them and can include additional questions that may be interesting and relevant for you. Further details to your support your work on the assignment will be provided through Canvas and in-class discussions.

Following the interview, you will be required to write a report (minimum of 5 pages) on your experience. This should be written in narrative form rather than repeating the Q&A sequence.

The report should include these 4 sections: (*all sections must be labeled*)

- **Section I – Teacher Description**
- **Section II – Reflection**
- **Section III – Value for You**

Section I – Director/Diagnostician Background: This would include such information as number of years as a director/diagnostician, number of years in position, teaching background, etc. You will use the list of mandatory questions below for your interview.

MANDATORY QUESTIONS

1. As a director/diagnostician, what preparation did you have to assist you with the legal issues of your position?
2. What type of training does the school district/campus provide for administrators in special education law?
3. When changes are made in special education law or in district special education procedures how are administrators made aware of the changes?
4. What is the most challenging part of your job?
5. Have you ever had to prepare for a due process hearing? If so, could you elaborate on the steps you took to prepare for the hearing?
6. How do you keep abreast of special education law?
7. What advice would you have for a future diagnostician who is concerned with keeping up with the legal issues in special education?
8. Do you use the legal framework from Region 18 ESC or the Commissioner's Rules (Side- by-Side) in your job? How?

Section II – Reflection: A description and analysis of your reaction/reflection on the experience of interviewing a teacher in the field.

Section III – Value for You: Explanation of what you believe you have learned through the

assignment that might contribute to you becoming a better practitioner.

Submission requirements:

- Put your name and page numbers on your paper
- Double space, 12-point font
- Label all sections
- Summarize interview responses (not verbatim transcript)
- ** Further details will be provided on Canvas