A. COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The purpose of this course is to enhance educators’ knowledge of family engagement and the skills required to develop collaborative partnerships with families of middle and high school students with disabilities. When we speak of achieving “success,” we encompass not only the end goal of transition for students with disabilities, which is to prepare them for further education, employment and independent living, but also the process goal of creating optimal conditions of communication and trust so that professionals and families can work together effectively. This course will focus on models of partnership, the requirements of the law, research findings, effective communication, and understanding and working with families, including issues specific to family systems, cultural competence, adolescents, transition and post-secondary options. As a final project, course candidates will create their own plan for family-professional partnerships in their school.

If you plan on matriculating into a graduate program at Fitchburg State University, please be aware that twelve semester hours of Fitchburg State University credit taken within a year prior to the student’s admission may be applied to the degree program with the approval of the program chairperson. Anything over 12 credits prior to matriculation will NOT be accepted towards the degree.

B. TEXTS:


**SUPPLEMENTAL TEXTS and Resources:**


Each week of the course provides additional supplemental texts and resources.

**Webinar** We will present a webinar on February 11, 2015 at 4:00. Directions on access will be sent to students through e-mail. This will be posted to the Federation website [www.fcsn.org](http://www.fcsn.org). Students who find the time inconvenient will be able to access the webinar online.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES / OBJECTIVES:**

**Knowledge:** As a result of the learning experiences in the course, you will become more cognizant of:
- Models of partnership between schools and parents
- Epstein’s six types of parent involvement
- Requirements of the law relating to IDEA and NCLB
- Grief this relates to parental cycle stages and how concerns
- Research findings related to parent involvement in education and outcomes for students
- Issues specific to adolescence, family systems, and cultural competence
- Transition planning for students with special needs
- Post-secondary options for graduates with special needs
- Role of community partners in relationship to schools

**Skill:** As a result of the learning experiences in the course, you will become better able to:
- Effectively communicate with families regarding the education of their child
- Partner with parents of students with special needs in the IEP and transition process
- Collaborate with the student/ family on transition planning and exploration of post-secondary options
- Increase parent involvement in their child’s education
- Map community resources which can support education and vocational goals

**Caring:** As a result of the learning experiences in the course, you will become more competent in your ability to:
- Discuss student challenges with families
Foster resilience and motivation to learn for students with special needs
Identify and respond to adolescent concerns which interfere with learning
Understand the emotional needs of parents as they negotiate developmental milestones and transition points in their student’s life

**Ethical:** As a result of the learning experiences in the course, you will become more competent in your ability to:
Establish professional boundaries with students and families
Respect cultural differences
Maintain transparency around IEP and transition planning

**INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES**

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<td>Creating Visual Illustrations of Concepts</td>
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**Technology Initiatives:**

Candidates will utilize technology as:
- Blackboard platform will be used to access the course, instruction modules, assignments, online articles, audio/visual resources and to access websites for research
- A communication method of interacting with each other in class through the forum responses and comments which will be posted on Blackboard
- A method of communication with the instructor (webinar and e-mail) for guidance and/or answers to questions related to the assignments and course material.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

There will be a forum discussion each week, based on the week’s course materials. In order to participate in the forum, candidates should read and then post answers to the week’s questions on the discussion board. Each time you answer a question, you will begin a “thread”. When you post an response to another student you will post it on their thread on the Black Board discussion board. Answers must be thorough and reflect engagement with course materials. Each candidate should reference two theories/best practices from class materials in their post which supports their answer to each question. A question may have multiple parts; the response must address each part.

The purpose of the forum is not only to answer questions but to respond to others’ ideas. Each forum requires a response to one of your colleague’s posts. Candidates should read what others have written and make relevant and well thought-out comments which move the discussion forward. Comments which indicate only agreement or disagreement will not be counted towards the grade. Thus, weekly forums will provide both an opportunity for class candidates to post their own reflections on the week’s course.
materials AND to respond to the thoughts of other class members. All new topics start on Thursday; all comments should be posted by 11 p.m. on the Wednesday before the start of the following week’s topic.

The weekly sections that have two questions are worth up to 3 points each. In general, weeks that have 1 question will receive up to 1.5 points. Comments on your response and the points will be e-mailed to you in a private e-mail.

This course requires two additional written assignments (500-750 words), assigned on Weeks 3 and 8, and due on Weeks 6 and 10. Assignments will be assessed on the extent to which answers demonstrate thoughtful consideration and understanding of course materials, self-reflection and analysis of how to apply new skills and practices in the candidate’s current school setting. Candidates must employ at least three references from the class materials to illustrate theory and/or best practices. The paper must contain the analysis as well as the content portion. All questions posed in the assignment must be answered. Spelling and grammar must conform to the expectations of graduate students. Please paginate all assignments and include your name and date.

Assignment One
This assignment has two parts:

1. **Parent Interview**: Identify a parent or guardian in your school who has a child on an IEP or 504 plan. Arrange an in-person interview with this person. Interview questions must include parent’s comments on quality of communication with school personnel, whether the parent feels he/she is a valued member of the Team, parent involvement in activities, views on family school engagement and parent suggestions on improvement in these areas or any others. Each interview should include at least one additional question posed by the candidate and based on his/her own experience. Each interview should be presented in a question and answer format rather than in a summary format.

2. **Analysis and Self-reflection**: Please review your interview. Include your reflections on the interview in terms of what has been presented in the text and readings. Does this resonate with you? Based on parent comments, the reading and your own experience what suggestions do you have for school improvement? The analysis must include at least three points of reference from the reading to support your observations and suggestions. Submit original interview along with your analysis and reflection through the assignment option on Blackboard.

Assignment Two: This assignment has two parts:

1. **Essay**: Write a short essay (500-700 words) on a communication “breakdown” that you or a colleague have experienced with a parent in school.

2. **Analysis** Using the theory you have learned in the two communication modules (including text, reading and web resources), analyze how and why the breakdown occurred. What steps could have been taken to prevent this? How could the situation be remedied? How would you proceed in a similar situation today? The candidate must use at least three references to theory and/or best practice to back up his/her response. Each candidate must submit a bibliography with the project.

**Final Project**: Course candidates will create a final project- a practical, stepwise, and comprehensive written plan for family-professional partnership with families who have middle or high school children with disabilities, for use in their own school. This is to be informed by what they have learned about (a) Joyce Epstein’s Six Types of Involvement, (b) the requirements of Federal and State Law, (c) family systems and issues in adolescence, (d) Family and Community Engagement, (e) cultural competence (f) trust and effective communication (g) transition and post-secondary options. Candidates must identify the issue or problem area; the plan will address a proposal to remedy this and the desired outcome.
Additionally the plan must include demographics regarding the school’s population, size of school and urban/suburban/rural location. The plan must map out stepwise implementation (include a calendar of activities) and include means for sharing with school colleagues, administration (and families where applicable) what course candidates have learned. References to theory and best practices described in the course materials (at least six topics should be covered) must be used to support the proposal and the activities designed to reach the desired outcome. A bibliography must be included.

As each educator serves different numbers and profiles of students in different types of schools and classroom settings, each plan will be specific and unique. Candidates are encouraged to share ideas and information with other course candidates while developing the project. However, each candidate must submit their own individual project. Candidates should contact the instructor by e-mail during Week 8 to give a written update on plans for the final project. The instructor will provide feedback and suggestions on drafts.

Spelling and grammar must conform to the expectations of graduate students. Please paginate all assignments and include your name and date. Students are invited to share thoughts and comments about the projects week 15 (this is optional).

This is a graduate level course and all work must be rooted in academic theory and is required to demonstrate a high level of critical thinking and synthesis of material. Candidates must receive prior approval from the instructor for work that will be submitted late. Work that is submitted late without discussion with the instructor may receive one grade lower. Candidates who need accommodations based on differences in learning style should contact the instructor at the beginning of the course.

FIELD-BASED REQUIREMENTS:
Candidates will create the opportunity for an in-person interview with a parent (or guardian) who has a child in their school on an IEP or 504 plan. The interview will include parent’s comments on adequacy of school / home communication, parent involvement activities, and parent’s suggestions for any improvements.

EVALUATION OR GRADING POLICY:

Forum responses – 40%
Written assignments -20%
Final project-40%

Grading Rubric

Forum Rubric

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<td>Demonstrating maximal engagement with course materials. Each response</td>
<td>Demonstrating very considerable engagement with course materials .Responds</td>
<td>Demonstrating moderate engagement with course materials</td>
<td>Demonstrating minimal engagement with course materials. Responds</td>
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to a question must include at least two references to course (theory/best practices) and answers to all parts of question. Must answer one candidate on the forum with a substantive comment. | materials with at least one reference to course (theory/ best practice) in each response. Must answer all parts of questions and respond to at least one candidate on the forum with a substantive comment. | with one reference to course materials and misses parts of a multi-part question or indicates only agreement with comment on forum to another’s post. | with no references to class material, misses part of multi part questions and /or does not respond to any post on the forum. |

### Assignments Rubric

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<td>Demonstrating extremely thoughtful consideration and understanding of course materials. Essay includes at least three references to course material on theory/best practice, and both content and analysis.</td>
<td>Demonstrating quite thoughtful consideration and understanding of course materials. Essay includes at least two references to course material on theory/best practice, and both content and analysis</td>
<td>Demonstrating moderately thoughtful consideration and understanding of course materials. Essay includes both content and analysis, but only one reference.</td>
<td>Demonstrating minimally thoughtful consideration and understanding of course materials. Essay lacks references to class material and/or does not include analysis.</td>
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### Final Project Rubric

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<td>Creates a plan for family professional partnership including references to material on Epstein’s work, family systems, communication, transition, cultural competence, research findings, family and community engagement and the law (at least 6 topics). Must include the following: demographics, proposal, activities to reach desired outcomes, calendar, dissemination plan and bibliography.</td>
<td>Creates a plan for family professional partnership but includes references to only 4 topics in course. Must include proposal, activities to reach desired outcomes, demographics, calendar, dissemination plan and bibliography.</td>
<td>Creates a plan for family professional partnership but includes references to only 3 topics in course. Must include proposal, activities to reach desired outcomes and two of the following: demographic background, calendar or plan for dissemination.</td>
<td>Creates a plan for family professional partnership but includes references to only 2 topics in course. Missing proposal, demographic background, activity calendar and/or plan for dissemination.</td>
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GRADUATE GRADING SYSTEM

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W  Withdrawn
IN  Incomplete
IP  In-Progress

COURSE CONTENT / TOPICAL OUTLINE

How to Partner with Families of Middle and High School Students with Disabilities to Achieve Success

Week One  January 29, 2015
After completing this week's assignments, candidates will know the seven principles of effective partnerships, a model of partnership between school and parents and will be able to explore how these principles may be applied in their work.

Week Two: Why Partner?  What the Law Says  February 5, 2015
In this module we have the opportunity to consider how the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and ESEA (NCLB), two federal laws which are closely aligned, provide the framework for your partnerships with families. I hope this lesson affords you an opportunity to step back and reflect on these laws from a fresh perspective, as the guarantors of civil rights for students with disabilities, as well as road maps toward a collaborative process between families and professionals.

Webinar  February 11, 2015-  This will be presented at 4:00 pm and students will be able to ask questions about the course. Students who find the time inconvenient will be able to access the webinar online. Directions will be sent out by e-mail prior to the webinar.

In this session, candidates will become familiar with research on family-professional partnerships at the middle and high school level, learn about evidence-based practices, and consider how research can inform their own professional practices. Candidates will learn how current research findings provide evidence based outcomes on the value of parental involvement in school.

**February 16-20, 2015  Winter Vacation**

**Week Four  A Framework for Family-Professional Partnerships  February 26, 2015**

In this session, course candidates will learn about the Six Types of Parent Involvement model developed by Joyce Epstein and her colleagues at the National Network of Partnership Schools and the Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships at Johns Hopkins University. Candidates will review Epstein’s framework in the light of their own experience and analyze how it could be used to structure effective partnerships in their schools and increase parent involvement in their child’s education. The Massachusetts Family, School, and Community Partnership Fundamentals reviews family engagement and strategies for teachers and schools to follow in partnering with families.

**Week Five  Understanding Families, Part One  March 5, 2014**

In this session, candidates will learn about family characteristics and challenges which can influence each family’s experience of disability. Candidates will understand the emotional needs of parents as they negotiate developmental milestones and transition points in their student’s lives. Candidates will learn about the Grief Cycle, how this may impact parents and how to communicate effectively during these times.

**Week Six: Understanding Families, Part Two:  March 12, 2015**

In this session, course candidates will understand family system theory as view families as systems with varied levels of cohesion and adaptability. Candidates will understand the impact of disability on family functions and consider how this affects family-professional partnerships. Establishing professional boundaries with students and families is also explored.

**Week 7  Cultural Competence  March 19, 2015**

Candidates will learn respect for cultural differences and begin to understand the effect of culture on professional and family attitudes and perspectives. Candidates will appreciate how culture impacts on child rearing, expectations for adolescent and young adults, beliefs about education and decision making. They will also evaluate their own cultural practices. Candidates will learn evidence-based practices for promoting partnerships with students and families from diverse cultural backgrounds. Candidates will be able to distinguish between cultural awareness, cultural knowledge and cultural competence.

**Week 8 Communication & Trust  March 26, 2015**
In this session, candidates will explore the role of trust as the keystone in family-professional partnerships, considering issues at the individual and building level. Candidates will learn strategies for fostering open communication and how to maintain transparency in the IEP and transition process. Candidates will also learn how to effectively communicate with families regarding the education of their child, how to discuss student challenges with families and how to better partner in the IEP process.

**Week Nine Communication & Collaboration**  April 2, 2015

In this session, candidates will learn specific methods for effective, positive communication and conflict resolution, and increase their repertoire of communication strategies. These are strategies that will build candidate’s skills in negotiation and dispute resolution in the IEP process.

**Week Ten Issues in Adolescence – Partnering for Life**  April 9, 2015

In this session, course candidates will learn about six success attributes for students with disabilities and recognize how to foster resilience and motivation to learn. Candidates will learn about adolescent concerns of students with special needs and how they may interfere with learning. Candidates will consider how to share this knowledge with students and parents as they encourage them to partner for success.

**Week Eleven Issues in Adolescence- Part Two**  April 16, 2015

In this session, candidates will learn strategies for partnering with families in order to foster student self-determination. This includes self-determination assessments by students.

**Spring Vacation April 20-24, 2015**

**Week 12 Transition and Post-Secondary Options**  April 30, 2015

The introduction of this course makes reference to the end goal of transition for students with disabilities, which is to prepare them for further education, employment and independent living. It is important to remember that the development of the transition form (please refer back to Module 2- Why partner? It’s the law) must encompass discussion with the student and family as well as exploration of the community resources needed to help make the process and end goals viable.

If you are working with students and families in middle school, this module will still be helpful to you. The transition process from middle to high school is a critical step and helps to set the stage for the transition at the end of secondary school. Families of these students can begin to consider some of the ideas covered in the module.

**Week Thirteen Learning at Home**  May 7, 2015  Final Projects Due

In this session, course candidates will learn how to partner with families around curriculum-related activities that take place at home, thus increasing parents’ participation in their youth’s education. Candidates will help parents and students make connections between learning at home and in school.
Week 14 Partnering with Parents and the Community May 14, 2015 Last class
In this session, course candidates will further explore partnering with parents through creating and supporting opportunities for parent leadership. Partnering with families includes parents taking on meaningful, decision making roles within their schools. Strategies for partnering with the community are also discussed.

Online forum discussion of final projects (optional) May 21, 2015
Respond to one of your colleagues (or more) with comments on their project (reflection and constructive comments only)

FITCHBURG STATE UNIVERSITY
DISTANCE LEARNING & EXTENDED CAMPUS LIBRARY SERVICES

The Gallucci-Cirio Library at Fitchburg State University provides a full range of library services including borrowing privileges; document delivery (books and articles mailed to your home); Interlibrary Loan; reference assistance via: phone, email, IM, Blackboard’s Collaboration and Elluminate tools, Skype and in-person; library instruction; research help and more. Any questions relating to library services should be directed to the Linda LeBlanc, Access Services Librarian, at 978-665-3062 or dllibrary@fitchburgstate.edu. There is also a special section for Distance Learning and Extended Campus Services at http://fitchburgstate.libguides.com/dlservices outlining the wide range of services available to you and how to access them.

Students who are currently registered with the university may access any of the library’s subscription databases, including an increasing number with full-text, by visiting the Gallucci-Cirio Library’s homepage at http://www.fitchburgstate.edu/academics/library and clicking on the Research Databases button in the center of the page. Select the resource you want to access from the alphabetical or subject listing. Once you click on the database title you will be prompted for your Falcon Key logon information; this is the same logon you will use for your Fitchburg State email account and if you have any online Blackboard courses. If you do not know your Falcon Key username and password or if you have any problems logging in, contact the university’s Technology Help Desk at 978-665-4500 or helpdesk@fitchburgstate.edu. The Library can issue you a temporary guest Falcon Key to use while the Technology Department is setting up your account: contact us at 978-665-3062 or dllibrary@fitchburgstate.edu

All registered Fitchburg State University students are eligible for a Fitchburg State University OneCard ID which also serves as his/her library card. If you have not received your OneCard yet, you can still access all of our online services as long as you have activated your library account. Activate your library account online at http://www.fitchburgstate.edu/librarycf/cardrequest.cfm or in person at the Circulation Desk. After activation by the Gallucci-Cirio Library and receipt of your OneCard, students may also use any Massachusetts State College/University Library as well as participating libraries in the Academic and
Research Collaborative (ARC) during the current semester. OneCards are available on campus all year round. Students wanting a OneCard must either complete the online Extended Campus OneCard request form [http://web.fitchburgstate.edu/technology/onecard/photoless/index.cfm](http://web.fitchburgstate.edu/technology/onecard/photoless/index.cfm) or present a course registration confirmation at the OneCard Office in the Anthony Building, main campus. Please call 978-665-3039 for available times or if you have any questions about your OneCard.

**UNIVERSITY AND EDUCATION UNIT POLICIES**

**Policy on Disability**

Disability Services is the primary support system for students with disabilities taking classes in the day and evening divisions. The office is located on the third floor of the Hammond Building and can be reached at 978-665-4020 (voice/relay). If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medication information, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment at the beginning of the course to talk with me. It is important that the issues relating to disabilities be discussed with me as soon as possible.

**Attendance and Participation**

1. As an emerging professional, you are expected to attend every class session, to be on time, and to communicate with the instructor regarding any absences. Absences and tardiness may result in a permanent grade change. Attendance at all pre-practicum sessions is mandatory.

2. Participation in class discussions and cooperative groups is expected. All candidates are responsible for meeting required deadlines on projects and assignments; your ability to complete tasks in a timely fashion demonstrates professional maturity and an ability to organize and manage time. Completion of assigned reading is imperative to your individual development as a professional.

3. All of these behaviors regarding attendance, preparation, and meeting deadlines are critical for successful teaching and thus are factored into the final grade.

**Education Unit Computer Literacy Requirement**

All assignments must be typed, doubled-spaced; follow the Department Writing Guide; and use APA format when appropriate.

You are expected to use word processing for all assignments (unless otherwise instructed). [If your course has other requirements list those also, e.g., ‘You are expected to use e-mail for dialogues with other class members, to examine the use of software in the field, and to use the Internet to obtain information, ideas and resources.’]

**Cellular Telephones and Other Devices**

Kindly turn-off cellular telephones during class time and field experiences and place them in book bags or purses. Please no texting in class. It reflects negatively upon you as a developing professional. Once class begins and if use of the laptop is not required, all laptops should be closed during class time so that your full attention can be focused on your colleagues and the discussion or lecture in progress. If you prefer to take class notes on your laptop, please inform the instructor. You are on your honor to be focused on note
taking and not on e-mail, Facebook or other technological enterprise not germane to the class in progress. Thank you in advance for your consideration of colleagues and students.

**Grade Appeal**
If you disagree with the evaluation of your work or believe an improper grade has been assigned, an appeal may be followed. Please discuss the matter with the instructor and refer to the Fitchburg State University Grade Appeal Policy in your Student Handbook.

**Academic Integrity Policy**
The faculty in the Education Unit at Fitchburg State University that work submitted in fulfillment of course requirements will be solely that of the individual candidate and all other sources will be cited appropriately. University Academic Integrity Policy, as outlined in the University Catalogue, will be strictly adhered to.

**Copyright Policy**
You are reminded that, in preparing handouts for peers or the instructor, reproduction of copyrighted material without permission of the copyright owner is illegal. Such unauthorized copying may violate the rights of the author or publisher. Fitchburg State University adheres to federal laws regarding use of copyrighted materials. See the Student Handbook for more details.