

## **Creating and Sustaining Positive Secondary Learning Environments I Syllabus** **Framingham State College**

Division of Graduate and Continuing Education

**Course:** SPED 905: Creating and Sustaining Positive Secondary Learning Environments I (4 master's degree level graduate credits) This course will be offered via the Moodle course management system on the Massachusetts Online Network for Educators (MassONE) as part of the Massachusetts FOCUS Academy project. It is appropriate for middle school and high school general education and special education teachers, and other educators interested in developing a deeper understanding of ways to create and sustain positive learning environments.

### **Course Description**

Participants will develop a framework for creating and sustaining positive school and classroom learning environments through the use of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention and intervention strategies within a school-wide positive behavior support system. Part I of the two course sequence will focus on the primary and secondary prevention levels, but introduce and begin to address the tertiary level, as well. Participants will examine factors contributing to positive classroom and school environments, including physical space, use of procedures and routines, social skill development, and active student engagement. Participants will identify causes or risk factors for the development of challenging behaviors and the behavioral characteristics of specific disorders. They will examine the purpose and structure of the functional behavior assessment (FBA) process, and they will develop skill in collecting behavioral information through the use of ABC analysis, interviews and rating scales, and in using data to plan primary and secondary level interventions. Participants will examine behavioral expectations in cultural contexts different from their own and/or their schools' and will analyze the implications for developing behavior interventions and teaching social skills.

**Face-to-face meetings:** The class will meet 3 times over the course of the semester. Typically, these meetings are scheduled on Saturdays from 9-1. Lunch is provided. Two or three location choices will be available each semester (Framingham plus one or two other options). This course is a 4 credit master's degree level graduate course. Participants may take the course for 90 PDPs (no charge) or for 4 graduate credits (\$260/course). If graduate credits are selected, the course may be applied to Framingham State College's master's degree program in special education. A decision (credits or PDPs) must be made at the first face-to-face meeting; payment for graduate credits is due within two weeks of the first face-to-face meeting.

### **Pedagogical Framework**

All students bring to the courses diverse backgrounds and unique experiences that form their beliefs, prior knowledge, skills and experiences. These can serve as building blocks for constructing new knowledge, contributing to others' learning, and for enhancing, clarifying and refining existing understandings about creating and sustaining positive learning environments for all students in middle school and high school. This course will incorporate reflection, individual study, collaborative learning, choice, theory-to-practice application activities, self-assessment, and small group and whole class activities and discussion, which are aligned with constructivist and social constructivist instructional practices. Participants will be able to access content information and activities through a variety of media and technology resources, including text/print (book, journal articles), interactive web sites and web-based tutorials, video/audio clips, visual representations (e.g. pictures and graphs), online discussions, and face-to-face activities. They will use reflection and self-assessment, and they will have opportunities to identify topics relevant to their personal and professional interests. These topics will then guide portions of the course content. Theory-to-practice assignments are designed to be individualized to each person's interests and needs. Participants are encouraged to seek and provide peer tutoring and consultation support throughout the course, as well. Participants will also have opportunities to work individually and in groups. Participants will have choices within and across assignments, such as contributing to the selection of study topics within a unit, ways of using technology, and assignment product formats they might prepare (e.g. web page, paper, ebook).

## Course Goals/Outcomes

This course provides participants with opportunities to further develop their knowledge and skills in many of the areas addressed in the Professional Standards for Teachers, with a focus on building and sustaining positive classroom and school environments for middle school and high school students. Throughout the course, the standard (e) *Meets Professional Responsibilities*:

(#3) *Maintains interest in current theory, research, and developments in the academic discipline and exercises judgment in accepting implications or findings as valid for application in classroom practice* is continually addressed. Additional connections to the Professional Standards are included with each goal statement.

At the conclusion of this course, successful participants will have demonstrated their ability to:

1. Describe risk factors, types and causes of difficult to manage externalizing and internalizing behaviors, including those associated with specific disorders such as conduct disorder, attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), Asperger syndrome, reactive attachment disorder, and bipolar disorder,
  - Assessment: Disability study project, case study discussion
  - Professional Standards Connection: Promotes Equity (#3)
2. Identify and describe the components and essential features of classroom and school-wide positive behavior supports (SWPBS) including primary and secondary prevention and tertiary prevention/interventions and present specific examples for each level.
  - Assessment: The SPICE Project
  - Professional Standards Connection: Manages Classroom Climate and Operation (#1-4)
3. Working with peers as consultants, analyze their current middle or high school classroom environments and classroom management practices; identify areas for change to enhance the positive classroom community they are creating; prepare and implement a plan for making changes; and monitor progress. (Focus is on primary interventions.)
  - Assessment: The SPICE Project, consultation discussion area, face-to-face meetings [through observation of discussions, participant reflection]
  - Professional Standards Connection: Manages Classroom Climate and Operation (#1-4); Meets Professional Responsibilities (#4 and 6)
4. Identify and describe the elements and processes used to complete the steps in a functional behavior assessment (FBA)
  - Assessment: FBA data collection practice (face-to-face), FBA data collection project
  - Professional Standards Connection: Delivers Effective Instruction (#4a)
5. Collect and analyze behavioral information and data through the use of ABC analysis and semi-structured interview using FBA data collection tools
  - Assessment: FBA data collection practice (face-to-face), FBA data collection assignment
  - Professional Standards Connection: Delivers Effective Instruction (#4a and 4b)
6. Critically examine current issues at the middle and high schools classrooms and schools, such as bullying, cyber-bullying, drop-out rates, self-determination, and effectiveness of SWPBS to address these issues
  - Assessment: Journal article discussions, small group topic discussions
  - Professional Standards Connection: Meets Professional Responsibilities (#4)
7. Compare/contrast general behavioral expectations from a variety of cultures with their own classroom and/or school's expectations and identify potential mismatches, implications for planning/teaching, and possible solutions [cross-cultural competence].
  - Assessment: The SPICE Project, case study discussion
  - Professional Standards Connection: Promotes Equity (#3)

## Textbooks

The textbooks for this course are provided to each participant free of charge.

- Lynch, E. W., & Hanson, M. J. (2004). *Developing cross cultural competence: A guide for working with children and their families*. Brookes.
- Scheuermann, B. K., & Hall, J. A. (2008). *Positive behavioral supports for the classroom*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

**Readings:** Others will be added as new volumes are published over the course of the semester.

- Carbone, E. (2001). Arranging the classroom with an eye (and ear) to students with ADHD. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 34(2), 72-81.
- Horner, R. & Sugai, G. (2007). *Is school-wide positive behavior support an evidence-based practice? A research summary*. OSEP Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports.
- Irvin, L. K., Horner, R. H., Ingram, K., Todd, A. W., Sugai, G., Sampson, N. K., & Boland, J. B. (2006). Using office discipline referral data for decision making about student behavior in elementary and middle schools: An empirical evaluation of validity. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 8, 10-23.
- Lane, K. L., Wehby, J. H., Robertson, E. J., & Rogers, L. A. (2007). How do different types of high school students respond to schoolwide positive behavior support programs?
- Characteristics and responsiveness of teacher-identified students. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 15, 3-20.
- Lassen, S. R., Steele, M. M., & Sailor, W. (2006). The relationship of school-wide positive behavior support to academic achievement in an urban middle school. *Psychology in the Schools*, 43, 701-712.
- Overton, T. (2004). Promoting academic success through environmental assessment. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 39,147-153.
- Severson, H. H., Walker, H. M., Hope-Doolittle, J., Kratochwill, T. R., & Gresham, F. M. (2007). Proactive, early screening to detect behaviorally at-risk students: Issues, approaches, emerging innovations, and professional practices. *Journal of School Psychology*, 45, 193–223.
- Sprague, J., Nishioka, V., & Smith, S., (2007). Safe schools, positive behavior supports, and mental health supports: Lessons learned from three safe schools/healthy students communities. *Journal of School Violence*. 6(2) 93-115.
- Sugai, G. (2007). Promoting behavioral competence in schools: A commentary on exemplary practices. *Psychology in the Schools*, 44(1), 113-118.
- Trussell, R. P. (2008). Classroom universals to prevent problem behaviors. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 43, 179-185.
- Vaughn, B. J. (2007). The wave of SWPBS: Who is left behind? *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities (RPSD)*, 31(1), 66-69.

### **Instructor Participant Responsibilities**

We each come to this course with responsibilities in our role as instructor or participant. Because the course is offered in the online environment, some responsibilities differ slightly from those in an on-campus course. If you have any questions about these, please contact your course instructor as soon as possible.

**Instructor Responsibilities:**

The instructor will:

- Respond to emails from participants in a timely and professional manner. Participants can expect a response to emails sent during the week within 48 hours and to emails sent on the weekend within 72 hours.
- Respond to questions posed in the online office area in a timely and professional manner.
- Participants can expect a posted response within 48 hours during the week and within 72 hours on weekends. The instructor will email the participant individually rather than posting a response in the discussion area if the reply includes information that is sensitive or confidential.
- Provide constructive feedback and grades on assignments and exams in a timely manner.

- Use the grading materials provided with assignments to give feedback, make recommendations and provide a numerical grade for each assignment. Assignments and feedback will be returned to participants either electronically or via mail (postal system). Assignments will be graded and returned in a timely manner; shorter assignments will be graded within one week of receipt (unless late); longer assignments may take longer to grade.
- Provide tutoring and other support as needed. The instructor will be available for tutoring sessions (online, via email, or in some other format) to assist participants who are having difficulty with particular aspects of the course. The instructor may also recommend tutoring and other support services offered through Framingham State College.
- Maintain participants' confidentiality.
- Provide accommodations identified in a participant's written Accommodation Plan from the Center for Academic Support and Advising (CASA).

#### Participant Responsibilities:

The participant will:

- Participate fully in all aspects of the course. The participant will use and study the course materials, follow the course calendar, meet group responsibilities, and participate in online asynchronous discussions.
- Submit assignments on time. To help ensure consistent and fair grading, and to ensure that participants develop the knowledge and skills needed to complete each unit, the participant will submit assignments according to the due dates listed in the course calendar. Assignments that are submitted late, if accepted, will be graded by the first day of the final examination for this course.
- Maintain confidentiality. Assignments and activities in this course may involve observing or and interacting with individual students in educational settings. We must make all efforts possible to protect the privacy of that student and any other person whom we observe. To that end, the participant will change any and all potentially identifying information about a student or other person included in any written work, online discussion or other conversation in order to protect the identity of the person. Recommended practices include: (1) inventing a fictitious school and town, (2) using only first names, and (3) changing the name of the student. *If you have any questions about this, please contact the course instructor.*  
**NOTE:** If you work with children/adolescents who are in DSS/state custody and/or who are emancipated minors, please contact the course instructor for specific safeguards appropriate for the individual student
- *Submit assignments that demonstrate appropriate writing quality for graduate work using Standard English (unless another format is appropriate).* Participants will submit quality written work. Participants will edit work carefully. CASA (Center for Academic Support and Advising), located on campus, provides a wide variety of support services for all Framingham State College students.
- *Be proactive and seek assistance when needed.* Peers, the course instructor and the teaching assistant are valuable resources for understanding the course material and using the course site. Participants are encouraged to seek (and provide) assistance.
- *Adhere to the College's academic integrity policies.* Participants will use APA format for referencing (e.g. internal citations, references). Because participants are not preparing manuscripts for publication, a modified format for the cover page for each assignment will be provided. Participants will adhere to all other academic integrity policies of the College, as well.
- *Submit written request for accommodations to the course instructor in a timely manner.* For assistance establishing an accommodation plan, participants should contact Mrs. LaDonna Bridges, Center for Academic Support and Advising (lbdbridges@framingham.edu, 508-626-4906).

#### **COURSE ORGANIZATION AND PRESENTATION**

The course is organized into four units. The units are:

Unit 1: Introduction to Positive Behavior Supports

Unit 2: Understanding Students' Behaviors

Unit 3: Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA): Part I (continued in course #2)

Unit 4: Culture and Behavior (continues in course #2)

Each unit is available at the course's Moodle space at MassONE. Each unit includes an introduction that presents the "big picture" of the topic being studied. Specific objectives and key terminology are also identified. This is followed by smaller components/lessons that will help participants study about the topic and develop and expand their knowledge and skills. Materials used within the components include readings from the textbooks and journal articles; links to specific web sites that provide examples, video clips, and other ways of accessing the information; web-based interactive tutorials; small and whole group discussions; and individual progress checks. When appropriate, materials such as narrated PowerPoint slide shows may be included within a component. Graphic organizers are provided within the unit introduction and/or specific components to help participants organize their understanding of the information.

You will access materials from the Internet through the MassONE/Moodle site. You will also find readings from your textbooks and journal articles incorporated into the unit materials. There will be frequent checks such as quizzes or guided practice/feedback available for you to assess your own progress and understanding as you work with the materials. These are optional activities, though they are recommended. (They are not part of your course grade.) Assignments and grading tools are also presented via the course site and are described below.

### **Unit 1: Introduction to Positive Behavior Supports**

This unit presents information about positive behavior supports used to create positive classroom and school wide learning environments. Students will examine the components of the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of positive behavior supports, will read and discuss research articles about the efficacy of positive supports, and will study examples of primary, secondary and tertiary interventions/prevention strategies. After developing understanding of the three levels, participants will study primary prevention strategies in depth. (POSSE2: predictable, organized, structured, safe, engaging environment).

- Participants will begin their work with the SPICE Project (described below) and will participate in small group journal article discussions, as well.
- Participants are encouraged to consult with peers in the class for assignment support and assistance.

Assignments and assessment: The following assignments and assessment activities are part of the Unit 1 activities. They are described in more depth below.

- The SPICE Project (**S**ustaining **P**ositive Interventions in the **C**lassroom **E**nvironment)  
Journal article online discussion

### **Unit 2: Understanding Students' Behaviors**

Using participant-identified topics of interest, this unit will explore why students engage in behaviors that interfere with their learning and/or social engagement. After examining the big picture and reviewing theories of "typical" social/emotional development of middle school and high school age students, participants will use the Group Investigation model of cooperative learning to examine specific issues (Understanding Behavior Project). The areas of study may be disability-related (e.g. bipolar disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) or they may be topic related (e.g. cutting, truancy). As part of the Understanding Behavior project, participants will also examine specific primary, secondary and tertiary intervention strategies recommended to address the behavioral issue they are studying. Projects will be shared via the course threaded discussion and will become the basis for a whole class discussion. At the second face-to-face meeting, students will participate in small group case study discussions using.

Assignments and assessment: The following assignments and assessment activities are part of the Unit 2 activities. They are described in more depth below.

- Understanding Behavior Project
- Case Study Discussion

### **Unit 3: Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)**

Unit 3 presents the process of conducting a functional behavior assessment (FBA) and provides participants with opportunities to develop data collection skills. The “big picture” will present why we use FBA, with whom we use it; how general and special education teachers are involved in the process; and how results are used in planning supports and interventions. During the face-to-face meeting, participants will practice defining behavior and using ABC (antecedent behavior-consequence) analysis data collection tools. Participants will practice their skills through the data FBA Data Collection assignment and the planning case study discussion.

Assessments and assignments:

- FBA data collection practice (face-to-face)
- FBA Data Collection assignment
- Case study discussion (online)

### **Unit 4: Culture and Behavior**

In Unit 4, participants begin to examine how different cultural expectations and rules can impact a student’s behavioral performance in school. After defining culture and cross cultural competence, students will use Lynch and Hanson’s self-assessment to first examine their own cultural expectations and experiences. In small groups, participants will investigate general traditions, beliefs and values about education and behavior. At the final face-to-face meeting, a common prompt will be presented for discussion. Each group will discuss the prompt from the perspective of working with a family from the cultural group they studied. (NOTE: Some portions of this unit will be continued in the second course.)

Assessments and assignments:

- Online discussions
- Face-to-face case study discussion

### **Assessment and Graded Learning Activities**

A variety of graded learning activities are used as assessments in this course. Some are completed individually; others are completed in small groups. Within many of the activities, participants will find choices about presentation formats and/or study topics. Participants are encouraged to challenge themselves to make selections that will give them the greatest opportunities to learn new information, concepts and skills. Participants are also encouraged to act as resources for their peers. The list below briefly summarizes the activities that are graded in this course.

### **The SPICE Project (Sustaining Positive Interventions in the Classroom Environment) (40 points)**

This semester-long project asks participants to deeply analyze their current classroom learning environment. After thoughtful analysis and intensive reflection, participants will design, implement and evaluate an action plan for revising their classrooms to create/enhance a positive learning environment. This project focuses primarily (though not exclusively) on primary prevention strategies at the classroom level, though participants will also examine school-wide practices in relation to their classrooms. At the conclusion of the course, students will present their projects in a technology-enhanced poster session format. Areas to be examined include, but are not limited to:

- Expectations and Messages
- Procedures and Routines/Schedules
- The Physical Environment
- Teaching Practices
- Students’/Families’ Cultures

### **Understanding Behavior Project (25 points)**

Working collaboratively in groups of 2 or 3 people, participants will use the Group Investigation model of cooperative learning to research a disorder or behavioral issue selected from a list generated by participants. Each group will prepare a product to be shared with the class (e.g. paper, booklet or e-book, web site, interactive PowerPoint) to help the whole class understand the behaviors we observe in students. As part of their assignment grade, each student will self assess their participation and collaboration as a group member.

### **FBA Data Collection Practice (15 points)**

After completing the face-to-face activities and working with the FBA materials online, students will conduct two data collection activities and will analyze their findings. Participants will work in their discussion groups to consider a case study about using FBA data and planning [Note: Participants will build on this assignment in Course #2, by expanding their data collection skills, completing a full FBA and planning/implementing/evaluating a secondary or tertiary intervention.]

### **Discussions: Online and Face-to Face (20 points)**

Online Participants are expected to participate in online discussions by posting meaningful responses that extend, deepen, and/or broaden the discussion. Discussions will take place asynchronously in the course discussion areas. Online discussions may include the following:

- Whole class: Getting to know you, problem solving, peer support, online office and small group: Journal article and case study discussions; topic/issue-specific discussions for each unit; other topics identified by instructors/teaching assistants/participants
- Consultation Teams Interdisciplinary teams will be created to serve as consultants to each other for Project SPICE and any other assignment
- Face-to-Face: There will be three face-to-face meetings scheduled over the course of the semester. They will be held in two locations each time: Framingham and Chicopee.

#### Meeting #1: Get-to-know-you activities

- Establishing our online learning communities
- Procedures, routines, and problem-solving mechanisms
- Identifying personal learning goals (KWL)
- Moodle orientation
- Introduction to the three-tier PBS model
- The SPICE Project

#### Meeting #2: Case study discussions

- Introduction to FBA and data collection practice-ABC analysis, rating scales, checklists and structured interviews
- Share a success story
- Project check-ins and peer/instructor support

#### Meeting #3: Cross-cultural competence case study discussion

- Project presentation using a poster session format
- Reflection, goal setting and looking ahead to Part II
- Participants will also be asked to complete a posttest and course evaluation, either during the final face-to-face meeting or shortly after the course ends. The Project Coordinator will also conduct follow-up activities (via the web, email and/or telephone) to learn more about the extent to which participants were able to use information from the course in their own teaching practice. Participants may also volunteer to host the Project Coordinator for a classroom visit as part of the project follow-up activities.

### **Summary of Assignment Points**

- Project SPICE 40 points
- Understanding Behavior Project 25 points
- FBA Practice Collecting Data 15 points
- Discussions: Online & Face to Face 20 points

**TOTAL 100 points**

**Points to Letter Grade Conversion**

95-100 A 87-89 B+ 77-79 C+ Below 70 F

90-94 A- 83-86 B 73-76 C

80-82 B- 70-72 C

**Quality of Assignments:** All written work should be presented in a professional manner. Please make sure you plan adequate time in your schedule for editing and revisions. Do not rely on spell check alone; re-read your work carefully. Do feel free to engage in peer editing as part of your writing process. CASA (Center for Academic Support and Advising), located on campus, provides a wide variety of support services for all students. Online and face-to-face tutoring are available at no cost to students.

**Course Accommodations and Accessibility:** Your course instructor fully supports course accessibility for all participants who are eligible to enroll in the course. At Framingham State College, the Disability Services Office and CASA (Center for Academic Support and Advising) offer a variety of services and resources for students who have identified disabilities. In order for students to request accommodations, they must:

1. Register with the Disability Registry (contact LaDonna Bridges at 508-625-4905 or [lbridges@framingham.edu](mailto:lbridges@framingham.edu))
2. Put any requests in writing to the appropriate faculty member. (CASA will provide a written plan for each student to share with his/her faculty members each semester)

Any participant in this course who has an accommodation plan is encouraged to contact the course instructor as soon as possible so that the plan can be implemented in a timely manner.

**Religious Observances**

If course due dates conflict with religious observances, please contact the course instructor as soon as possible so that appropriate adjustments can be made. Late penalties will not be applied to assignments due dates that are adjusted to accommodate religious observances. Students who do not meet the adjusted due dates may be subject to the late penalties described in the assignment grading rubrics and checklists. This course is provided through support from a grant awarded by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RFR #09 SEPLT 1). Questions should be directed to Dr. Katherine Hibbard, Project Coordinator ([khibbard@framingham.edu](mailto:khibbard@framingham.edu)).