
Please note this is a **sample syllabus** provided to give prospective students a feel for the class. Specific assigned readings have been removed (as that may change). Please also note the sequence of the classes may change, and learning goals, assignments, and activities are updated annually.

Introduction to Special Education Advocacy – SEAT 1.0

Instructors: Gretchen Adams, Missy Alexander, Eileen Crumm, Cynthia Daniels-Hall, David Jefferson, Shenikwa Medlock, Paula Senigar,

Course Description: This course is intended as an introduction to advocacy for education services for children/youth with disabilities. It is designed for people new to advocacy, who want to increase their understanding of the field of special education advocacy; critical provisions of the federal laws that govern education to students with disabilities; and, their knowledge and skills to take the first steps to becoming a special education advocate for students and their families. This class can be taken ‘stand-alone’ or used as a pre-requisite to SEAT 2.0.

Textbooks:

Pam Wright and Pete Wright, From Emotions to Advocacy, second edition.
Lawrence Siegel, The Complete IEP Guide: How to Advocate for Your Special Ed Child, Nolo Press, 9th edition.

WEEK 1: Education is a Civil Right!

Learning goals:

Students will be familiar with:

1. the role of the special education advocate in the IEP/504 process;
2. parent and student rights in the IEP process;
3. a brief history of special education in the United States and some of the laws impacting children in education; and
4. key laws concerning children with disabilities in education.

Assigned Reading: The assigned readings for this week is usually around 3 chapters and an online video.

Topics Covered:

- Skills and tools needed to become a special education advocate
 - Relationship of disability rights to other civil rights movements
 - Introduction to laws protecting those rights: 504, ADA, IDEA, FERPA, McKinney Vento
 - Role of advocate in advancing those rights
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WEEK 2: What makes Special Education Special? What is the difference between IDEA and 504 and Student Study Teams?**Learning goals:**

Students will understand:

1. the concept of special education;
2. differences between SST, RTI, 504 and IDEA; and
3. factors that influence the decision between 504 and IDEA.

Assigned Reading: The assigned readings for this week is usually 3 chapters and one section of another chapter.

Class Activity: Class discussion

Topics Covered:

- Specialized Instruction
 - Eligibility Categories
 - Placement, Services, Accommodations and Modifications
 - Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 – FAQ and comparison of differences and similarities with IDEA
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WEEK 3: Eligible Child's entitlement to FAPE (Free and Appropriate Public Education) in LRE (Least Restrictive Environment)**Learning Goals:**

Students will be familiar with:

1. the concept of FAPE;
2. the ideas of procedural and substantive FAPE; and
3. the concept of least restrictive environment.

Assigned Reading: Assigned readings are usually about 40 pages for this week (portions of different chapters/sections).

Class Activity: IEP role play on LRE

Topics Covered:

- Procedural FAPE
 - Substantive FAPE
 - Definition of Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)
 - Determining LRE for a student
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WEEK 4: The IEP Process

Learning Goals:

Students will understand:

1. all parts of the IEP process and the timelines; and
2. procedural safeguards.

Assigned Reading: The assigned readings for this week is usually 2 chapters and one section.

Class Activity: Anatomy of a Compliance Complaint

Topics Covered:

- Tasks/Timelines of the IEP Process
- Prior Written Notice (PWN)
- Compensatory Education
- Compliance Complaints
- Mediation
- Resolution Session
- Due Process

WEEK 5: The IEP Document and Special Education Services

Learning Goals:

Students will comprehend:

1. the required components of the IEP document; and
2. the significance of the components.

Assigned Reading: The assigned readings for this week is usually about 6 chapters.

Class Activity: Hide and Seek, finding components in different areas IEP documents

Topics Covered:

- Parent Concerns
- Categories of Eligibility
- Evaluations
- Present levels of performance
- Special Factors
- Extended School Year
- Accommodations and Modifications
- The importance of documentation and preserving records

Assignment: Midterm

Week 6 – Tests and Measurements

Learning Goals:

Students will comprehend:

1. the purpose and use of evaluations—psychological, educational, neuropsychological, psychiatric neurological; and
2. what these evaluations measure and how to apply results to advocacy for an individual child.

Assigned Reading: The assigned readings for this week is 2 chapters. Specifics are included in the actual syllabus students receive. This syllabus is designed to give prospective students an idea for the class.

Topics Covered:

- Purpose and utility of evaluations
 - Differing evaluation tools
 - Interpreting and applying results of evaluations
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WEEK 7: Basic Advocacy: Written Communications

Learning goals:

Students will understand:

1. the rule, “if it is not written down it does not exist”.
2. how to write clear, professional and persuasive letters in advocating for children.

Assigned Reading: The assigned readings for this week is usually about 3 chapters.

Class Activity: Critiquing sample letters

Topics Covered:

- Components of a professional letter
- Writing the ‘right’ amount
- Telling the story
- Writing good evidence letters

Assignment: Students create a letter documenting an event to a district on behalf of a family (with data on the event provided in assignment).

WEEK 8: Basic Advocacy: Managing the IEP Conversation

Learning goals:

Students will comprehend:

1. a variety of advocacy strategies to apply in IEP meetings.

Assigned Reading: The assigned readings for this week is usually about 6 chapters.

Class Activity: Simulated IEP Conversation

Topic Covered:

- Image and Presentation
 - Agenda Control
 - Preparation
 - Organization
 - Meaningful Parental Participation
 - Informed Consent
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WEEK 9: Spotting and researching legal Issues

Learning goals:

Students will understand:

1. some basic methods of accessing information about legal issues; and
2. the concept of unlicensed practice of law.

Assigned Reading: The assigned readings for this week is usually about 2 chapters.

Class Activity: Spotting legal Issues

Topic Covered:

- Spotting Legal Issues
- Dear Colleague Letters from OCR and OSEP
- Letters of Finding from OCR