Social Work in Educational Settings

Course Number: Social Work 642, Section 1  
Semester: Spring/Summer, 2006  
Day/Time: Tuesdays from 6 to 10 p.m., May 9th to July 25th  
Location: 3816 School of Social Work Building  
Instructor: Mike Woolley, Ph.D., DCSW  
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Course Description

This course presents foundation knowledge and skills essential to effective social work practice in school settings. Topics range from the evolution of social work in schools, school social work theory, assessment, and interventions for use in school settings. Education law, especially as it relates to special education eligibility and services, is a core aspect of the course. Content on multiculturalism, diversity, social justice, and social change are integrated into the course materials as those critical issues relate to practice in schools. Students will learn skills and abilities associated with various school social work roles and responsibilities; recognizing that the roles assumed by school social workers vary from state-to-state, district-to-district, and school-to-school.

Course Goals and Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students should have a comprehensive understanding and knowledge in five broad areas. Those five translate in the following goals: (a) knowledge of the history and role of social work in schools, (b) critical policy issues currently impacting education, (c) special education law and procedures, (d) theoretical frameworks for school social work practice, (e) prevention and intervention approaches in schools. These five areas are defined in more detail in the following course objectives.

1. Possess an historical perspective on the provision of social work services in schools.  
2. Be aware of school social worker roles and responsibilities, and recognize the multiple levels and systems that school social workers can address in their practice including: individual students and families, groups of students, consultation with teachers and other school staff, classroom and school-level interventions, and coordination and collaboration with youth serving agencies outside the school.  
3. Understand current critical issues being debated with respect to public schools, including: school reform, school-based services, competition, accountability, testing, vouchers, magnet schools, testing, charter schools, No Child Left Behind Act, etc.
4. Conceptualize a school as a complex social system, consisting of the interactions between the individuals within the school (students and staff), and individuals and organizations outside the school (families, neighborhood, community, county/city, state, etc.).

5. Understand conceptual models of social work practice used in the schools, including the ecological, family systems, risk and protection, resilience, and strengths-based approaches.

6. Understand the law, policies, and procedures addressing the provision of educational services to both special education and general education students.

7. Possess foundation knowledge about vulnerable populations of school children for whom school social work services are frequently targeted.

8. Be familiar with school social work professional practice standards and ethics.

9. Be able to identify personal and programmatic evaluative methods useful in school social work practice.

**Relationship of Course to Four Curricular Themes**

- **Multiculturalism and Diversity** are critical issues impacting both schools and the practice of social work in schools. These issues will be presented, discussed and critically analyzed as they relate to practice and policy.

- **Social Justice and Social Change** will be central to the topic of various roles assumed by social workers in schools. The focus of the course includes small or microsystem change (individual, families, and groups), and mid-level or mesosystem change (classroom and school), and awareness the issues impacting schools at the state and national level or exosystem level.

- **Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation** will be themes reflected in the models and approaches to school social work practice. In addition, this course will emphasize the use of evidence-based prevention and intervention activities.

- **Behavioral and Social Science Research** will be presented in this course to support school social work theory and practice methods. Assessment procedures, intervention planning, decision-making and intervention procedures will be directly borrowed from the behavioral and social sciences.

**Course Design and Teaching Methods**

The development of a supportive learning environment, reflecting the values of the social work profession, is essential for the success of this class. A supportive learning environment is fostered by listening to the ideas and views of others, being able to understand and appreciate a point of view which is different from your own, articulating clearly your point of view, and linking your experiences to the readings and assignments. We will appreciate your contributions to making this a safe and respectful class.

This course will use a variety of teaching and learning methods, including lectures, PowerPoint presentations, group exercises, case material, videos, and seminar techniques. The class format is based on the understanding that you are a prepared and active learner. Reading the assigned materials prior to the class session is a prerequisite to getting the most out of each class and successfully meeting the course objectives.
Required Text and Course Readings

There is one required text book for this course, it has been ordered at the UM bookstore.


All other course readings will be handed out in class or posted on the CTools site for this course. These readings can be downloaded, read electronically, and/or printed.

APA Format and Academic Honesty

Please refer to the American Psychological Association Publication Manual (often called the APA Style Manual) in the preparation of your writing assignments. The current edition is the fifth, but using an earlier edition is acceptable. You can find out more at:

http://www.apastyle.org/pubmanual.html

Another website that provides excellent information is:
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_apa.html

It is critical to reference all sources of information or ideas you use in your writing, to do otherwise is academic dishonesty. Direct quotes in particular should be identified as such. Situations of apparent plagiarism or academic dishonesty will be reported and handled according to University policy.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

I invite any class member who has a disability that may affect his or her participation in this course to let me know. We can discuss possible modifications or accommodations in instructional format, assignments, etc.

Policy on Incompletes and Late Assignments

A grade of “Incomplete” will be given in extenuating circumstances and in accordance with SSW and University policy. Assignments are due in class on the day as noted in the course outline. Late assignments, i.e., those not handed in to me in class on the day due, will be reduced one letter grade for each day they are late. Please plan your work to have things completed on time and keep me informed if any problems arise.
Course Assignments and Grading

Several methods will be utilized to assess your learning and progress toward the class objectives. You will have some choice as to what combination of assignments you complete. These methods will include participation, a quiz, a group presentation, a paper, and participation. The relative weight of each assignment will be as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Test</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group Presentation</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Attendance and Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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Class Participation

Participation and attendance will account for 15% of your final grade. Points will be deducted if you do not participate in class discussions and activities, miss class, come late, or are unprepared for class. Please try to let me know in advance if you are going to miss class.

Test – June 6th

The test will be 30% of your final grade. The test will be used to assess your learning in the areas of the history of school social work, school law, special education processes and procedures, and current policy issues. The test will be take-home and consist of multiple choice and short answer questions. The test will be open book, notes, handouts, and assigned articles. The test will be given in the second half of class on June 6th, graded and returned on June 13th.

Paper – Due June 20th

One paper, with 3 options, will account for 30% of your grade in this course, the options are described below. Please type or word process your papers and Use APA format including: (a) one inch margins, (b) double spaced, (c) 12 font, and (d) for providing in-text citations and the reference list.

**Option 1: Assessment and School Social Work Service Plan**

Choose a student and family you are working with in your field placement. In the form of a BioPsychoSocial assessment describe the student, the student’s social environment, and the presenting problem. Then present a plan/strategy for providing services to that client(s) with respect to the presenting situation. You may use any resources (people, literature) available to you to construct your plan. In your paper: (a) articulate at least 2 goals with objectives for that student, which might be included in the student’s IEP, (b) discuss the individuals, agencies, and referrals you would consult or collaborate with in the implementation of the plan, describe a session with this client (even give a brief process recording or an interaction) and discuss how the interaction relates to the plan, and (c) reference at minimum two relevant articles or books that informed the plan.

**Option 2: Write a School Social Work Policy**

Choose a potential school crisis or problem. Research approaches and strategies for responding to such a crisis or problem in a school. For example, search the literature, inquire
with schools about policies that may exist, review local, state, or federal related policy, and/or identify a situation/crisis reported in the media and use that for as an example of what to do and what not to do. Describe the important aspects and concerns in such a situation. Finish with a draft of a comprehensive policy focused on the school social work aspect of an effective response in such a situation that outlines a step-by-step response at the school and/or individual student level. School problems/crises that would be appropriate include: student suicide or suicide risk, suspected abuse or neglect, staff suicide, pervasive teasing/bullying, school shooting, school refusal/phobia, drug use/dealing, aggressive/violent student behavior, etc.

Option 3: Describe an Evidence-Based Intervention

Research and evidence-based intervention appropriate for use with students, families, or school staff in a school setting. In your paper do the following: (a) describe the intervention in your own words, (b) report on research supportive the efficacy of that intervention, (c) critique that research, and (d) describe how you might apply that intervention in your own practice as a school social worker.

Group Project – Vulnerable Student Population

Presentations will be on July 25th

Prepare and present to the class on a population of school students that are vulnerable to poor school outcomes, and are therefore the focus of social work services in schools. For example, such student populations include: immigrant, refugee, or ESL students, students from low income families, students who are members of discriminated race/ethnicity groups, or students with learning, cognitive, physical or psychological/emotional/behavioral struggles. This list is by no means exhaustive, if you have a vulnerable population of students in mind please get with me to discuss whether it is an appropriate group topic. These groups may include 3-5 students. You may be given class time to work on this project during the semester, but will be expected to meet outside of class to prepare. Below is a list of the group project expectations, which will also serve as the grading criteria:

1. Class presentation – The presentation should be five minutes in length per group member, followed by 10-15 minutes of class questions/discussion. The presentation may take on varied formats, PowerPoint, Role Play, Talk Show, School Meeting, etc. The presentation should define and describe the central concepts and issues related to the specific population of vulnerable students (25%), and then present either a more in-depth analysis of the issues or intervention/prevention strategies or practice principals for school social workers (25%). Provide the class with handouts related to your presentation (25%). Please provide me with materials from the preparation of your presentation such as: slides, speaker notes, handouts, etc.

2. One journal article per group member – The content of the presentation should draw from a minimum of one journal article per group member (25%). Please provide me with a reference list.
Course Outline

Course Introduction - Syllabus and Assignments, School Social Work Certification in Michigan, History and Roles of School Social Workers

Reading 1) Constable Chapter 1 & 25
Reading 2) Missing Links
Reading 3) Entry Level Tasks

Current Issues in Schools - School Funding, Vouchers, Magnets, School Reform, Testing, Accountability, No Child Left Behind

Everyone:
Reading 1) Constable Chapters 9 & 10
Reading 4) No Child Left Behind Act:

Assigned:


School and Special Education Law and Procedures

Reading 1) Constable Chapters 7, 8, 11, 12, 22, 23, 24 & 29
Reading 6) A Guide to the Individualized Education Program.
   i. http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS
Reading 8) Michigan IEP Manual
Reading 13) (Autism Primer) Autism: A Medical Primer
Reading 14) Creating Useful IEPs
Reading 15) IDEA 2004
Reading 16) Michigan IEP Manual
Reading 17) (Special Needs) Students With Special Educational Needs
Reading 18) IEP Guide

Theory and Research Informing School Social Work Practice

Reading 1) Constable Chapter 2, 4 & 13
Consultation and Collaboration

Reading 1) Constable Chapter 20 & 32

School Climate and Vulnerable Populations

Reading 1) Constable Chapter 15, 36, 38
Reading 6) (R13-OpenHearts) Open Hands, Open hearts: Working with Native Youth in the Schools. Garret, M. T., Bellon-Harn, E., Torres-Rivera, E., Garret, J. T., & Roberts, L. C.
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June 27th – Guest Speaker

July 11th – Guest Speaker

July 18th – What is School Social Work Really Like? Panel discussion with practicing school social workers

July 25th – Group Presentations, The Rhythm of the School Year, Termination and Course Wrap-up

Reading 8) Constable Chapter 6