The University of Michigan  
School of Social Work

S.W. 642 - Social Work in Educational Settings  
Fall Term 2001

Tony Alvarez  
Class: Friday, 2-5 p.m.  
Room 2302 SEB  
Office: 2784 SSWB  
Office Phone: 936-4949  
Home Phone: (734) 572-1832  
E-mail: aalvarez@umich.edu  
Office hours: Wednesday mornings, other times by appointment

Course Outline

This class offers an overview to social work practice in the school setting. Students will be introduced to the educational system from the national, state and local levels. The complexities of working in a host setting will be discussed. Special emphasis will be placed on understanding the laws, the rules and the procedures that pertain to special education. The course will address methods for prevention and intervention with children of all ages and ability levels. The course will also pay special attention to looking at the tools that social workers have available to them as school social workers. Emerging trends in the field,(including inclusion, experiential learning, violence prevention, charter schools,) and current policies (including zero tolerance, privatization, voucher system, State takeover of school districts, weapons legislation) will also be included in our discussions.

An experiential approach to teaching will be a primary teaching tool in this class; come prepared to actively engage in class discussions, activities and presentations in small groups.

Course Competencies

Students completing the requirements for this class will:
- gain knowledge in the history of school social work
- begin to understand the complex role that the school social worker can play in the school setting
- identify opportunities and skills for effective school social work practice
- distinguish the difference between school social work and social work practice
- increase one's knowledge of the laws pertaining to special education
- understand the influence of national, state and local mandates on school policies and practices in the local school building
- learn approaches to assessments, interventions and evaluations pertinent to school social work practice
Relationship of the Course to Four Curricular Themes:

- **Multiculturalism and Diversity.** Recent international, national and local shifts in ethnic and cultural diversity of children and families will be reviewed. Policies and services for children and youth with disabilities will be a strong focus of the course. Special attention will be provided to working with children of color as well as with children considered "at-risk."

- **Social Justice and Social Change.** School Social Workers strive to promote optimal learning opportunities for all children and youth. The role of the worker as a change agent will be reviewed and discussed in the course. Relevant legislation and policies that seek to promote this egalitarian view will be reviewed and discussed.

- **Promotion, Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation.** This course will offer the perspective that intervention can and will occur with all client systems, namely with the individual, the family, the classroom, the school building, the school district and the community. Approaches will be demonstrated for all levels of practice. Building-wide prevention programs, promotion of peaceful solutions to conflict resolution, promotion of skills and values through character education, are some topics that will be reviewed and discussed.

- **Behavioral and Social Science Research.** Relevant theories and findings regarding service accountability, empirical validation of interventions and evaluation of practice will be covered.

Relationship of the Course to Social Work Ethics and Values:

Professional social work ethics will be reviewed focussing on their application to the school setting. Particular attention will be placed on issues of confidentiality, access to records, access by minors to services without parent consent, mandatory reporting of abuse and neglect, and exclusion from services of children.

Course Resources

The text, *Social Work Services in Schools* by P. Allen-Meares, R.O. Washington and B. Welsh, Third Edition, 2000, by Allyn and Bacon is required. There is also a coursepack, *Social Work in Educational Settings-Fall 2001*, that will serve as our class session workbook. It is required for purchase, and is available at Grade A notes (Michigan Union). A copy of the coursepack as well as some of the other written resources will be made available in the Social Work Library. The "Alvarez" library also will have personal copies available for perusal.

Readings from texts, journals and articles will be required or recommended throughout the semester. Depending on your interests, you may want to get a hold of the following relevant books:


Other relevant books, manuals, etc. will be available through the library reserve system or through the instructor.

**Course Expectations**

This three credit class will meet for thirteen sessions. Every session will offer an abundance of information. Out of class reading and preparation is essential. These are my expectations:

1. **Attendance and participation** (This will account for 30% of your final grade)

   Due to the experiential nature of the class format, many learning opportunities will be offered in the classroom. Therefore, your attendance is as mandatory as I can make it. I define participation as one's ability to involve oneself in all aspects of the class, in lectures and discussions, in small group activities, in experiential challenges, in the readings and in the assignments. Your presence and how you interact in the class will strongly influence how much you learn.

   Note: Missing more than two class session will likely make an A grade out of reach.

2. **Weekly class activities and journals** (30% of your final grade)

   2a. 4 Reflection/ Journal Entries. (Also called "what's your weather" paper) I find great value in reflection papers. Having you reflect allows me to take a peek at how you learn from experiences you partake in and how you are able to write about them. The goal here is to have the writer analyze her/his feelings and thoughts about an issue of significance in our profession. More in class.

   2b. Completing and correcting the Exam. This take home exam will cover legislation, rules and processes affecting the education of the child with disabilities as discussed in the text, in supplementary readings as well as in lectures and discussions. More on the process in class.

3. **The Final Project** (40% of your final grade)

   The final paper will follow the format of an I-Search paper. Early in the term you will work on a question that you will attempt to answer by the end of the semester. Part of the assignment should involve participation in an experience related to answering the question you have posed. The paper will present the journey that you have traveled to get the question answered. More in class.

**Grading System**
Attendance and participation up to 65 points 30%
attending* a 3 hour class...................... 5 points per class
* being present
keeping abreast on the readings
involved in discussions
participation in role plays, small group activities, class activities

Weekly class activities and journals up to 80 points 30%
Reflection papers up to 15 points each
Exam up to 20 points

Final Project up to 50 points 40%

An example of figuring out one’s grade follows:
Assuming one has attended all fourteen 3-hour class sessions, and one has satisfactorily completed all other requirements, then one will receive the following points/final grade:

Attendance and participation 13x5 points x 30% = 19.5
Weekly activities and journals (15x4)+ 20 x 30% = 24.0
Final Paper/Project 50x40% = 20.0

59.5 - 63.5 = A
55.5 - 59.5 = A-
51.5 - 55.5 = B+
47.5 - 51.5 = B
43.5 - 47.5 = B-
39.5 - 43.5 = C+
below 39.5 = C

Further note:
I am currently developing an alternative assignment that will replace Journal #3 as well as the Final Paper/Project. This assignment will be available primarily to those of you who are not currently placed in a school setting. More in class.