The University of Michigan
School of Social Work

S.W. 642 - Social Work in Educational Settings
Fall Term 2003

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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 Objectives
Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Describe the social, economic, and demographic changes that influence the development and educational performance and needs of infants, children, youth, and young adults at various learning levels.
- Describe the processes of educational policy formulation, especially those related to needs and problems experienced by populations at risk.
- Analyze at least one major issue or policy in contemporary education in the U.S. and develop implications for social work intervention.
- Explain the various roles and functions of social workers working in educational settings; these may include: conflict mediation, advocacy on behalf of students and their families, treatment and interdisciplinary treatment planning, referral, outreach, cultural adjustment, and leadership in the enhancement of educational policies and programs.
- Describe federal and state programs that offer possibilities for enhancement of local school programs.
- Work effectively with professionals and lay persons in other social agencies, such as juvenile courts, health and mental health, child welfare, and public social services.
- Discuss typical ethical concerns related to social work in educational settings.
Relationship of the Course to Four Curricular Themes:

- **Multiculturalism and Diversity.** This course will review the recent national, regional, and local demographic shifts that have increased the ethnic and cultural diversity of children and families in educational institutions. A culturally sensitive, developmental perspective will be presented ranging from infancy through secondary education and culminating in the transition from school to the world of work. In addition, the particular policies and services regarding children and youth with illnesses and disabilities, and gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender persons will be reviewed.

- **Social Justice and Social Change.** Social workers in educational settings strive to maximize educational opportunities for individuals, groups, neighborhoods, and regions, and promote progressive local, state, and national policy. Relevant legislation and policies that seek to meet these goals will be reviewed, as well as the social justice implications of private and public schools. The role of the worker as a change agent will be reviewed and discussed in the course.

- **Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation.** These approaches are incorporated at all levels of practice in educational settings. This includes programs for the student and family, the organization and positive organizational culture in schools, and educational climates overall that promote children’s development to their maximum potential. Additionally, characteristics of at-risk children and youth and their particular vulnerabilities will be highlighted. These risks will include school failure, suspension, and expulsion, “dropping out,” unplanned pregnancy, insufficient preparation for the work force, family roles, and group and individual violence. Related concerns will include prevention of substance abuse, prevention of the transmission of disease (especially sexually transmitted diseases), and promotion of healthy lifestyles and development. Characteristics that buffer children from these stressors and research on resilience will also be examined.

- **Behavioral and Social Science Research.** The role of the social worker as a consumer of research will be emphasized. Relevant sources will include not only those in social work, but also the theories and empirical studies in interdisciplinary fields, such as human development and education. In addition, relevant theories and findings regarding accountability for service, empirical validation of interventions, and overall evaluation of practice in educational settings will be covered.

Relationship of the Course to Social Work Ethics and Values:

Professional social work ethics will be reviewed focusing on their application to educational settings. Particular issues may include confidentiality of and access to records and services provided, especially to minors, access to independent services by children and youth without parental consent, appropriateness of service delivery with regard to the age and developmental stage of the target group, parental permission and knowledge regarding sex education, mandated reporting of child abuse, neglect, and truancy, and policies regarding expulsion and suspension from school.

Accommodations for students with disabilities

If you need or desire an accommodation for a disability, I encourage you to contact me at your earliest convenience. Many aspects of this course, the assignments, the in-class activities, and the way that I teach can be modified to facilitate your participation and progress throughout the semester. The earlier you make me aware of your needs, the more effectively we will be able to use the resources available to us, such as the services for Students with Disabilities, the Adaptive Technology Computing Site, and the like. If you do decide to disclose your disability, I will (to the extent permitted by law) treat that information as private and confidential.

Course Resources

1. **Course Pack.** Social Work in School Settings, 2003, will be our class workbook. You will be expected to bring it to every class session. It is available at the Michigan Union Bookstore. A copy of the course pack 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.
2. **Readings** from the following texts, will be required and/or recommended throughout the semester. (Depending on your interests and resources, you may want to purchase some of the following relevant books):

- *There Are No Children Here* by Alex Kotlowitz. Doubleday

3. **Course Tools site** available for students registered in this class. You will be expected to check the site on a regular basis. Many resources will be made available on this site.

4. The **NASW Journal, Children and Schools**, available in our library.

**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 one class session will likely make an A grade out of reach.**

2. **Assignments** (70% of your final grade)

   **Reflection Papers.** 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.

   **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.

   **Final Project.** This participatory, group activity will offer you opportunities to meet practitioners, to assess and develop interventions for school buildings, and to learn about specific school policies and practices. More in class.