Supporting At-Risk Young Learners & Their Families

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Introduction

Welcome to *Supporting At-Risk Young Learners & Their Families,* an interactive computer-based instruction course designed to help you identify and effectively teach At-Risk students under 8 years of age. This course discusses the reasons some children are considered at risk of not reaching their full potential and how educators can reverse negative trends. The course discusses the external situations that cause risk, such as poverty, family dysfunction, and environmental influences such as violence, in addition to the internal factors, such as temperament, being a second language learner, and having a disability or a mental health concern. A major emphasis for the class is on how to work with families to provide the resources the family needs to provide healthy and developmentally appropriate experiences for young children. Interventions for both the child and the family are included, as are the hallmarks of excellent early childhood programs.

This computer-based instruction course is a self-supporting program that provides instruction, structured practice, and evaluation all on your home or school computer. Technical support information can be found in the Help section of your course.

Course Materials (Online)

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Academic Integrity Statement

The structure and format of most distance-learning courses presume a high level of personal and academic integrity in completion and submission of coursework. Individuals enrolled in a distance-learning course are expected to adhere to the following standards of academic conduct.

Academic Work

Academic work submitted by the individual (such as papers, assignments, reports, tests) shall be the student's own work or appropriately attributed, in part or in whole, to its correct source. Submission of commercially prepared (or group prepared) materials as if they are one's own work is unacceptable.

Aiding Honesty in Others

The individual will encourage honesty in others by refraining from providing materials or information to another person with knowledge that these materials or information will be used improperly.

Violations of these academic standards will result in the assignment of a failing grade and subsequent loss of credit for the course.

Level of Application

This course is designed to be an informational course with application to educational settings. The intervention strategies are designed to be used for the remediation of At-Risk students ranging in age from birth to 8 years. Some alterations may be needed if working with specific populations such as gifted, ESL, or special education.

Expected Learning Outcomes

As a result of this course, participants will demonstrate their ability to:

- Understand the educator's role in identifying and providing interventions for at-risk young children
- Recognize the symptoms of a child and/or their family being at risk
- Understand what adverse childhood experiences are and how they affect a child's growth and development
- Understand the external and internal causes of a child's being placed at risk in families and society
- Understand the special learning needs these students bring to the classroom
- Gain techniques for supporting students and families affected by negative factors
- Learn intervention techniques applicable to early childhood settings
- Gain a wider knowledge of available outside resources and support systems
- Understand the educator's role in the intervention and prevention of developmental delays
- Understand how the family is the child's primary influence and the role their choices make in the child's early development

Course Description

This course is designed to help Early Childhood Educators gain strategies to reach and teach young children who are at risk of not meeting their potential. Participants will learn the internal and external factors that place a child at risk, how heredity and environment affect a child's development, the characteristics of various risk factors, and interventions for each risk factor. A major emphasis will be on the family's influence on the child's development and how Early Childhood Educators can work with families to support their child's growth in all areas of development.

The course is divided into four chapters. The first chapter defines "at-risk" factors, reviews early childhood development, and presents information about adverse childhood experiences. The second chapter presents the various external environmental and family factors that contribute to a child's being at risk. The third chapter discusses the internal, child-centered factors of risk. And the fourth chapter presents the problems trauma and abuse cause the developing child. The chapters are sequential and should be completed in the order in which they are presented. At the end of each chapter, there will be an examination covering the material. Students must complete the examination before proceeding to the next chapter. In some of the examinations, questions will involve case studies to provide further practice in the application of knowledge. This course is appropriate for educators who seek training in working with children ages birth to 8 years and for professionals who work directly with families.

Although this course is a comprehensive presentation of the educational issues surrounding adverse childhood experiences and their influence on a child's development, there is certainly a wealth of research and topics that are not covered in the scope of this course. The instructor highly recommends that you augment your readings from this course with further research to gain a fuller understanding of the complexities of this subject. However, the material presented in this course will give you a broader understanding of the topic. It will also give you information to apply directly to your work with students in the classroom and the community.

Student Expectations

As a student you will be expected to:

- Complete all four information sections showing a competent understanding of the material presented in each section.
- Complete all four section examinations, showing a competent understanding of the material presented. **You must obtain an overall score of 70% or higher, with no individual exam score below 50%, to pass this course**. ***Please note: Minimum exam score requirements may vary by college or university; therefore, you should refer to your course addendum to determine what your minimum exam score requirements are.**
- Complete a review of any section on which your examination score was below 50%.

- Retake any examination, after completing an information review, to increase that examination score to a minimum of 50%, making sure to also be achieving an overall exam score of a minimum 70% **(maximum of three attempts).** ***Please note: Minimum exam score requirements may vary by college or university; therefore, you should refer to your course addendum to determine what your minimum exam score requirements are.***
- Complete a course evaluation form at the end of the course.

Chapter Topics

Chapter One: The Early Years of Child Development
In Chapter One, the early years of child development are discussed in regard to the influences of heredity vs. environmental factors. How the environment influences brain development is a major focus. How adverse childhood experiences affect development is reviewed. Also, several child development theories that explain the influence of family and the needs of children are presented.

Chapter Two: Family Contributors to Potential Adverse Childhood Experiences
In Chapter Two, we examine how the family environment and the family's choices affect how a child develops their cognitive, social-emotional, language, physical, and adaptive skills and their personality. The external factors that can negatively affect a child's development include poverty, parental issues such as divorce, and dysfunctional families with addictions or mental illness. Interventions for removing school barriers for these families, along with interventions for both the family and the child, are discussed.

Chapter Three: Individual Factors Contributing to Potential Developmental Risks
This chapter will discuss child's internal factors that may contribute to developmental risk. These include such issues as school readiness, temperament/personality, mental health factors, having a disability, or being an English Language Learner. The final section of the chapter is a discussion on how to build resilience in both families and children.

Chapter Four: The Effects of Trauma: Child Abuse/Neglect, Domestic Violence, General Trauma
The final chapter examines the effects of trauma on children's development. Child abuse and violence both have devastating effects on the development of a young brain and leave lasting problems. Interventions for working with trauma-affected students is a major focus of this chapter, as is violence prevention.

Examinations
At the end of each chapter, you will be expected to complete an examination designed to assess your knowledge. You may take these exams a total of three times. Your last score will save, not the highest score. After your third attempt, each examination will lock and not allow further access. Your final grade for the course will be determined by calculating an average score of all exams. This score will be printed on your final certificate. As this is a self-paced computerized instruction program, you may review course information as often as necessary. You will not be able to exit any examinations until you have answered all questions. If you try to exit the exam before you complete all questions, your information will be lost. You are expected to complete the entire exam in one sitting.

Facilitator Description
Joan Halverstadt is a retired special services director and school counselor/psychologist. She has 20 years' experience as a school counselor working with at-risk preschool and elementary aged students. Ms. Halverstadt has 45 years of experience working in early childhood education with children and families, including working with children affected by family issues, abuse, or trauma. She also teaches graduate education counseling and special education courses for teachers and counselors. She received her National Certification and her School Psychology Educational Specialist degree from Seattle University, her School Counseling Educational Staff associate degree from City University, her master's in Education degree from George Mason University, and her BA in Psychology and Elementary Education from Whitman College. Please contact Professor Halverstadt if you have course content or examination questions.

Instructor Description
Pamela Bernards has 30 years of combined experience in diverse PK-8 and high school settings as a teacher and an administrator. In addition to these responsibilities, she was the founding director of a K-8 after school care program and founder of a pre-school program for infants to 4-year-olds. When she was a principal, her school was named a U.S. Department of Education Blue Ribbon School of Excellence. More recently, the school in which she serves as curriculum

coordinator was named a 2010 Blue Ribbon School. Areas of interest include curriculum, research-based teaching practices, staff development, assessment, data-driven instruction, and instructional intervention (remediation and gifted/talented). She received a doctorate in Leadership and Professional Practice from Trevecca Nazarene University. Please contact Professor Halverstadt if you have course content or examination questions.

Contacting the Facilitator
You may contact the facilitator by emailing Professor Halverstadt at joanh@virtualeduc.com or calling her 509-891-7219, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. PST. Phone messages will be answered within 24 hours. Phone conferences will be limited to ten minutes per student, per day, given that this is a self-paced instructional program. Please do not contact the instructor about technical problems, course glitches or other issues that involve the operation of the course.

Technical Questions
If you have questions or problems related to the operation of this course, please try everything twice. If the problem persists please check our support pages for FAQs and known issues at www.virtualeduc.com and also the Help section of your course.

If you need personal assistance then email support@virtualeduc.com or call (509) 891-7219. When contacting technical support, please know your course version number (it is located at the bottom left side of the Welcome Screen) and your operating system, and be seated in front of the computer at the time of your call.

Minimum Computer Requirements
Please refer to VESi's website: www.virtualeduc.com or contact VESi if you have further questions about the compatibility of your operating system.

Refer to the addendum regarding Grading Criteria, Course Completion Information, Items to be Submitted, and how to submit your completed information. The addendum will also note any additional course assignments that you may be required to complete that are not listed in this syllabus.

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