



Bridging the Gap Between Special Education and General Education

With Universal Design for Learning (UDL) &
Specially Designed Instruction (SDI)

30 Continuing Education Hours

Option for 3 Continuing Education Grad Credits*

Course Designer



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Zach Smith was born and raised in Fresno, California. Growing up with siblings with disabilities and siblings from Ethiopia, Zach saw first hand the impact of exclusionary and non-culturally responsive instructional practices. After graduating from Fresno State, he began his career as a special education teacher. He worked for eleven years in a small rural district named Sanger Unified. In his last three years with Sanger, he moved outside the classroom to co-lead the implementation of UDL for all teachers in the district. Zach has extensive knowledge in UDL; presenting, coaching, planning, and building organizational capacity around this initiative. In the fall of 2019, Zach started a new chapter in his professional journey as a student in Harvard's Doctorate of Education Leadership program. Zach lives with his wife and best friend Dorothy, as well as their four daughters, Grace (10), Amy (8), Isabella (6), and Sydney(3). Zach is a passionate advocate for the power of inclusion to revolutionize the way teachers teach and as paramount for closing opportunity gaps and creating classrooms inclusive of students farthest away from justice.

Course Description

This course is designed to give participants the needed mindset and skills for facilitating high quality inclusive instructional experiences that blend targeted Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) with rigorous standards based instruction that utilizes the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). This course is meant to be a resource for special education teachers, general education teachers, service providers, paraprofessionals, and/or district and site leaders.

In this course we will be working to cross the unfortunate and often under discussed chasm that is general education and special education. The course design very much sees the two areas of educational thought, practice, and specialization as complementary to each other and an integrated approach as the way forward to a more personalized, adaptive and yet rigorous experience of American public education. This course is built on a framework centered on ways to design systems and steer educational practice toward fully inclusive educational environments in efforts to reorganize schools as problem solving entities.

Thank you so much for joining us! Your thoughts and ideas are critical for moving this work forward. We welcome new perspectives, disagreement, and each other's best collective thinking to make schools a better place for all students, especially those needing specially designed instructional practices.

Legal Disclaimer

Any and all recommendations made by either Zach Smith or Novak Educational Consulting related to students' legally binding Individualized Education Plan (IEP) must be first subject to your Local Education Agency (LEA) or State Education Agency (SEA) legal counsel specializing in disability educational law. Any recommendations for educational practices related to a students' IEP are made as practitioners in the field and not as a legal advisor. It is up to each course participant to do their due diligence to seek legal counsel related to changes to the IEP practices.

Course Texts

There are **no required texts** for this course. Below you will find some recommended texts I use to help guide my thinking related to building inclusive settings and programming. All other course materials will be freely embedded within the module content.

Optional Texts:

- [Effective Inclusive Schools: Designing Successful Schoolwide Programs](#), Dr. Thomas Hehir, Jossey-Bass Publishers (2012)
- [Building Inclusive Schools: Tools and Strategies for Success](#), Dr. Ann Halvorsen and Dr. Thomas Neary, Pearson (2008)

Course Objectives & Learning Outcomes

- **Global Objective:**
 - Educators (regardless of role) learn how to bridge the gap between special education and general education practices making for more inclusive, rigorous, and individualized learning outcomes for all.
- **Course Benchmarks:**
 - Educators will understand the mindset and values needed for creating accessible, compassionate, and rigorous learning outcomes for students.
 - Educators will understand how to work together across differing areas of expertise to create universally designed AND differentiated learning experiences.
 - Educators will develop the skills for creating robust Individualized Education Plan (IEP) based learning experiences and supports relevant both to the needs of individual students and families and to the expectations of a modern universally designed standards based classroom.
 - Educators will understand their role within educational systems for creating equitable and inclusive learning environments and systems.

Discussion


Each module will come with an optional discussion post prompt. We feel these prompts are a wonderful way to further your learning and help you form community by connecting with your peers, but we know the nature of participating in an asynchronous course can make this hard to navigate. Since you are an expert in your own learning, we encourage you to consider your goals for the course and find the different avenues for engagement that will most work for you and your community.



Note: The discussion forum accepts all file types, so you can contribute in writing or scale your voice by starting a blog or a podcast or video blog, and then posting the link. You can also post infographics, PDFs, audio and video files, and/or multimedia presentations. The options below may support you in creating your discussion postings.

- Write a traditional discussion post.
- Record a video or audio clip (please keep it to 3 minutes or less).
- Post student work and reflect on the contribution
- Create a multimedia presentation or visual representation like a vision board or sketch notes or use Canva to create an infographic.

Course Modules

The course is broken into a series of eight modules covering a wide span of material. Each module builds on the previous module's learning objective. If you respond to each module's discussion, please reference the course materials that impacted you or sparked new ideas related to your response. Also you should feel totally comfortable to respond in a way that works for you! The goal is to have fun, take risks, be creative and enjoy the process!

MODULE	Topics
	<p>Module 1: Mindsets for Success</p> <p>Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participants will evaluate their own mindset related to ability and disability, finding the areas they might be perpetuating unhelpful ways of thinking. <p>Essential Question</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tell a story of a time a student surprised you with what they were able to accomplish - blowing away your expectations. How does this story connect with this module's content? <p>Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Write a blog or written reflection• Do a vlog or stand alone video• Draw something or create an infographic• Do a twitter thread

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a storyboard • Self-Assessment • Or dream up another way!
	<p>Module 2: Forming Inclusive Education Partnerships</p> <p>Objective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants will learn how to facilitate healthy inclusive education partnerships. <p>Essential Question/Task</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dream up a tool, strategy, or protocol that takes steps to build cross collaboration opportunities between general education and special education stakeholders. <p>Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a tool that could easily be employed toward this task • Create a webinar to describe a new strategy • Record a planning session with a peer brainstorming solutions to this task • Write a new protocol for teaming between special education and general education practitioners • Create a visual or infographic to represent a new way of doing practice • Self-Assessment • Or dream up another way!
	<p>Module 3: Universal Design for Learning: The Foundation</p> <p>Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants will be able to identify how UDL lays the groundwork for truly inclusive instructional practices. <p>Essential Question</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways does a classroom grounded in Universal Design for Learning create access points for students with disabilities? <p>Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do a screencast of a digital classroom built on UDL and describe the ways it promotes access • Provide a model universally designed lesson that highlights where accessibility is built into the experience • Record a captivating conversation • Create a blog post or written reflection • Record a video or vlog post • Self-assessment • Or dream up another way!

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Module 4: Thinking about Specially Designed Instruction

Objectives

- Participants will discover how to connect SDI to both students' needs AND standard's based prerequisite skills.

Essential Question

- How specifically are you going to work to improve the SDI practices within your sphere of influence?

Activities

- A sample of IEP language (with no identifying descriptors) that draws from new ways of thinking from the module content
- A sample lesson plan with embedded SDI connections
- A completed IEP Matrix
- An infographic showing a standard's prerequisite skills
- A vlog or stand alone video
- A written reflection or blog post
- Self-Assessment
- Or dream up another way!

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Module 5: The Individualized Education Program (IEP) Process

Objectives

- Participants will learn how to connect IEP documentation to a student and family's needs using language that translates to general education contexts.

Essential Question

- How specifically can we use the IEP process to empower students and families

Activities

- A sample of IEP language (with no identifying descriptors) that draws from new ways of thinking from the module content
- An interview on this topic with a family or student whose receives supports and services on an IEP
- A vlog or stand alone video
- A written reflection or ongoing blog post
- A drawing, slide deck, or infographic to share
- Self-Assessment
- A sample student led IEP
- Or dream up another way!



Module 6: Co-Teaching - What is it?

Objectives

- Participants will understand the core components of Co-Teaching.

Essential Question

- In what specific ways do you see Co-Teaching as fostering inclusive partnerships?

Activities

- Write a blog or written reflection
- Do a vlog or stand alone video
- Draw something or create an infographic
- Do a twitter thread
- Create a storyboard
- Self-Assessment
- Or dream up another way



Module 7: High Quality Paraprofessional Support

Objective

- Participants will learn how to support the ongoing professional development of paraprofessionals in order to create higher quality and more inclusive learning experiences for students.

Essential Question

- How are you going to think about paraprofessionals and their support differently as a result of this module?

Activities

- Write a blog or written reflection
- Do a vlog or stand alone video
- Draw something or create an infographic
- Do a twitter thread
- Create a storyboard
- Self-Assessment
- Or dream up another way



Module 8: Inclusive Lesson Planning

Objective

- Participants will tie all the learning together to create a high quality and inclusive universally designed learning experience.

Essential Question/Task

- Create a universally designed standards based learning experience for a set of real or imagined learners.

	<p>Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Share a sample lesson plan ● Create a screencast around a set of slides ● Create a lesson storyboard ● Share the results of a flexibly designed assessment ● Or dream up another way!
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*Graduate Credits

You have the option to receive 3 continuing education graduate credits with the course. Register for the course + graduate credits or add on the graduate credit section at any time. Upon successful completion of the course and graduate final project, you will receive 3 accredited continuing education graduate credits from your choice of one of our university partners ([University of Massachusetts Global](#) or [Teachers College of San Joaquin](#)) and a completion certificate for 15 additional continuing education hours (in addition to the 30 hours you received for the course).

Final Project

For your final project you will describe something you are going to change about your practice based on the material from the course. The expectation for this change is that it would increase the connection between special education and general education practitioners AND will have a clear connection to better learning outcomes for students. It is intentionally open ended so that you can determine how you achieve this connection.

Core Elements:

- **Vision Casting** - This is the portion of your project where you describe the goals of your project and how it furthers general education and special education partnerships and collaboration.
 - You have complete choice in how you share your vision below are some parameters for your work.
 - Written pieces should be between 1000-1500 words and connect to each element of the rubric
 - Videos or audio responses should be between 4 to 5 minutes in length and grounded in the elements of the rubric
 - Any graphic representations should be robust enough to cover all elements of the rubric
- **Tool & Resources** - Within this section of your final project you'll share artifacts you and your teammates will use that support your collaborative vision.
- **UDL Application** - In this portion of your assignment, your use of your UDL lens will be examined.

- Looking at some core questions:
 - How are you engaging those around you in this work?
 - In what ways are you representing your big ideas related to collaboration in different ways?
 - How does your vision allow for options in how you build collaborative partnerships?
- **Bibliography** - Within all your planning for your final project, you'll need to connect your ideas with materials from the course. The rubric will supply you with different amounts of connections.

The Rubric

Assignment Goal

The goal of this assignment is to create systems, tools, IEP protocols, and/or lessons that allow special education and general education educators to collaborate around the needs of students in an inclusive model. You'll need to describe your vision for assignment, some sample artifacts and/or tools relevant to your vision, and model UDL in the process.

Goal Unpacked

Thinking about your context (teacher, administrator, coach, or specialist), think of a way you could expand your practices to build connections between general education and special education practitioners. This project is all your own and you should feel free to interpret this goal in a way that connects to your contexts. Use the rubric below as a guide. Please do not hesitate to reach out with questions!

Example Projects:

- A revamped master schedule with built in cross collaboration time
- An example professional development experience that is built around special education and general education participants
- An inclusive lesson plan that involves learning experiences for students needing SAI and students needing universally design standards based instruction
- A sample (without student identifying information) of IEP changes that would incorporate more connections with general education IEP participants
- A suite of collaboration documents created to foster peer to peer communication
- And much more!!