DEPARTMENT OF COUNSELING AND SPECIAL EDUCATION

Kaprea F. Johnson, Ph.D.
Associate professor and interim chair

LaRon A. Scott, Ed.D.
Associate professor and interim co-chair

The Department of Counseling and Special Education blends top-tier, accredited programs in counselor education and special education and disability policy to create a unique, interdisciplinary academic environment for students and faculty. The department’s primary mission is to prepare graduates to be leaders, ready to make a difference in people’s lives. Courses emphasize applicable learning, incorporating the practical tasks and situations students will be faced with on the job.

The nationally recognized faculty members provide guidance and support, allowing students to fully explore their areas of interest. The department provides the tools that help students examine, refine and challenge current methods and scholarship and to use evidence-based research. Learn more by visiting the Department of Counseling and Special Education webpage (http://www.soe.vcu.edu/departmentpages/ counseling-special-education/).

- Special Education and Teaching, Bachelor of Science in Education (B.S.Ed.) (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/undergraduate/education/ counseling-special-education/based/)

SEDP 200. Characteristics of Individuals With Disabilities. 3 Hours.
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. This course focuses on characteristics and identification of individuals with learning disabilities, emotional and behavioral disorders, intellectual disabilities, developmental delay, the less severe autism spectrum disorders, traumatic brain injury, deaf-blindness, visual impairment and other health impairments, and knowledge of characteristics throughout the lifespan, as well as providing information on effects of educational, psychosocial and behavioral interventions that serve as adaptations to the general curriculum. The possibilities of co-morbid or multiple conditions, coupled with cross-categorical instructional settings, warrant a class that examines all eligibility categories of students served under the special education, general curriculum.

SEDP 201. Teaching Individuals With Mild and Moderate Disabilities. 3 Hours.
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. This course provides an understanding and application of learning principles and methodologies for instructing, communicating and enhancing student learning that will reflect culturally responsive curriculum and pedagogy. An introduction to instructional strategies and organization of activities, including curriculum, media, materials and physical environment for children in grades K-12; studies of students with high-incidence disabilities in inclusive classroom environments are included. Candidates will develop skills to plan and deliver instruction in a variety of educational settings such as inclusive classrooms, resource rooms, self-contained classes and residential programs.

SEDP 203. Special Education Law. 3 Hours.
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. This course provides an overview of historical and current federal and state litigation and legislation, including those pertaining to special education and related services. Throughout this course, students will have various opportunities to learn federal and state statutes that address the educational rights of children/students with disabilities and their parents. Students will gain a deep understanding of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act. Specifically, students will become familiar with federal statutes and regulations concerning assessment and evaluation procedures, due process and mediation, discipline, individualized education program, free appropriate public education, and least restrictive environment. Additional federal laws that are discussed include the Rehabilitation Act of 1973: Section 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students are also expected to read and discuss selected issues in Virginia special education law and selected passages from the state statutes and the relevant administrative and case laws.

SEDP 204. Trends in Special Education. 3 Hours.
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. This course provides an understanding of the historical, philosophical and sociological foundations of public education in the United States, as well as standards for Virginia education and teaching professionals and ethical and accepted professional standards. The course will cover general knowledge of the foundations of educating students with disabilities, including a general overview of legislation and case law pertaining to special education; characteristics of individuals with and without exceptionality, including growth and development from birth through adolescence; medical aspects of disabilities; family systems and culture; collaboration; integration/inclusion; transition; and classroom adaptations for educating students with disabilities in the least restrictive environments.

SEDP 216. Families and Professional Partnerships. 3 Hours.
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. This course is designed to increase the knowledge, skills and dispositions that are important for collaborating and communicating effectively with families of young children with special needs. This course will also emphasize understanding the role and responsibilities of community agencies and providers, and how understanding the role of members of the collaborative team can impact families in the education and transition of their children with disabilities to include education, training, employment, self-determination and other skills. During this course, students will explore the dimensions of family-centered services and person-centered planning, as well as the familial, ecological and cultural factors affecting young children with disabilities and their caregivers. Students will learn about theory, general principles and procedures for fostering collaborative partnerships among families, professionals and other stakeholders that lead to outcomes of individual and mutual empowerment.

SEDP 250. Special Education Elementary Supervision. 3 Hours.
Semester course; 2 lecture and 1 field experience hours. 3 credits. Enrollment is restricted to students with a minimum of 30 hours (sophomore, junior or senior standing). The purpose of this field experience is to provide teacher candidates with practical experiences within the classroom. The teacher candidate will be observed and evaluated based on demonstration of their knowledge and ability to meet performance standards measured by the Virginia Standards of Learning in any of the following areas: curriculum and instruction, assessment, classroom and behavior management, collaboration, professional and ethical behavior, characteristics, IEP development and implementation, instruction for reading, writing and mathematics, and transition.
SEDPA 282. Multicultural Perspectives in Education. 3 Hours.
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. This course is designed to enhance cultural competence in diverse classrooms and schools. Major considerations include race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, linguistic abilities, and gender and sexual orientation differences. Key concepts include structural, curricular and instructional facets of working successfully in diverse educational settings. Personal and theoretical constructs of race, ethnicity, culture, disability and other related concepts are explored. Through lectures, readings, group projects, class activities, videos and class discussions students will explore the impact of institutional "isms" on both Anglo students and students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

SEDPA 311. Secondary Education and Transition Planning. 3 Hours.
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. This course explores the literature, research, issues and trends that are relevant to children and youth with high-incidence disabilities (learning disabilities, emotional disabilities and/or mild intellectual disabilities) as they prepare for their transition to life after high school. Focus is on providing candidates with the ability to prepare their students and work with their families to promote successful transitions throughout the educational experience, including post-secondary training, employment and independent living, which address an understanding of long-term planning, transition assessments, career development, life skills, community experiences and resources, self-advocacy and self-determination, guardianship, and legal considerations. The full range of functioning is addressed in the areas of education, employment, social/emotional functioning and development, and personal and daily living issues. The overriding goal of this course is to promote candidates with the wherewithal for critical reflection in their professional practice to help individuals with disabilities develop, implement and achieve self-determined transition goals for their post-school years.

SEDPA 315. Classroom Management and Behavior Support for Students With Disabilities. 3 Hours.
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. This course will provide an in-depth analysis of theoretical models, research and strategies for supporting positive behavior of students with disabilities. Emphasis is on developing, implementing and evaluating behavior management programs in special education, including applied behavior analysis, functional assessment, positive behavioral supports and related classroom strategies. This course will help develop a candidate’s ideas about examining the behaviors of students with special needs in school settings, including an understanding and application of school crisis management and safety plans, classroom and behavior management techniques, and individualized behavioral interventions. Techniques and approaches taught will promote skills that are consistent with norms, standards and rules of the educational environment and will be culturally diverse and responsive based upon developmental (e.g., students’ ages and classroom management), cognitive, behavioral, social and ecological theory and practice. Students will learn to evaluate students’ behavior and environments, as well as reflect on their own role in contributing to mitigating behavior problems. Candidates will also learn strategies to prevent and/or intervene in those factors to students’ problematic behavior and facilitate their positive behavior.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. This course is designed to provide pre-service teachers with the opportunity to acquire advanced skills for effective planning, implementing and evaluating behavior strategies and supports. It will also present strategies available for management, communication and discipline at the introductory level. Students will examine a cross section of theories, models and legal and ethical variables relevant to orchestrating learning across school settings where individuals with disabilities are receiving instructional, social, behavioral and transition life-skills services. The use of positive behavioral interventions and functional behavior analysis will be discussed and students will demonstrate appropriate skills using these strategies. Students will also learn the process used to develop and monitor behavior support plans.

SEDPA 330. Survey of Special Education. 3 Hours.
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Presents an overview of the historical basis and regulatory requirements related to special education, including the individual education program as a legal document and the rights and responsibilities of parents, teachers and schools. The characteristics of learners with disabilities and their educational and medical implications are also examined, as well as the cultural, familial and ethical issues involved.

SEDPA 350. Special Education Middle School Supervision. 3 Hours.
Semester course; 2 lecture and 1 field experience hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SEDPA 250. Enrollment is restricted to students with a minimum of 60 hours (junior or senior standing). The purpose of this field experience is to provide teacher candidates with practical experiences within the classroom. The teacher candidate will be observed and evaluated based on demonstration of their knowledge and ability to meet performance standards measured by the Virginia Standards of Learning in any of the following areas: curriculum and instruction, assessment, classroom and behavior management, collaboration, professional and ethical behavior, characteristics, IEP development and implementation, instruction for reading, writing and mathematics, and transition.

SEDPA 378. Teaching Math to Students With Disabilities. 3 Hours.
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. This course is designed for prospective teachers in the special education program and addresses mathematics pedagogy for students with disabilities. The course will focus on selecting appropriate mathematics curricula and instructional methodologies; learning how to assess students and develop appropriate goals, including Virginia Standards of Learning across grades K-12; understanding of application of mathematics service delivery, curriculum and instruction of students with disabilities, including alternate ways to teach and adapt math content to students accessing the general curriculum across K-12 environments; and planning and integrating appropriate and evidence-based math strategies into students’ programming based on assessment data.

SEDPA 379. Assessment Practices in Autism and Developmental Disabilities. 3 Hours.
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. This course creates a structure for understanding and designing effective social interactions and communication strategies, social-emotional development, and behavior interventions for children with autism spectrum disorder and other developmental disabilities. The course focuses on the application of empirically validated social interaction/communication and behavioral interventions that are consistent with principles of ABA in designing the interventions.
SEDPA 380. Teaching Reading to Students With Disabilities. 3 Hours.  
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. This course provides  
empirically validated instructional procedures to address reading for  
students with disabilities. The focus will be on understanding state  
and national reading curriculum, pedagogy and assessments of students’  
reading skills; planning and implementing appropriate instructional  
procedures; and monitoring students’ progress. Development of age-  
appropriate language acquisition, reading and writing is included.  
Curriculum development that includes scope and sequence, lesson plans,  
instructional methods based on access to the general curriculum and  
Virginia standards, including alternate ways to teach reading and writing  
content, is applied.

SEDPA 389. IEP and Due Process in Special Education. 3 Hours.  
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. This course is designed to  
provide educational personnel with knowledge of the eligibility process  
and legal regulatory requirements for IEP development. Participants will  
apply knowledge of content standards, assessment and evaluations  
throughout the K-12 grades to construct IEPs; make decisions about  
student progress, instruction, program, accommodations, placement,  
teaching methods and transition; and complete hands-on IEP writing  
experiences that will address academic and functional needs of students  
with disabilities. Participants will engage in debate regarding due process  
and other regulatory requirements and measures, including the least  
restrictive setting for students with special needs, timelines and team  
member responsibilities.

SEDPA 401. Assessment in Diverse Settings. 3 Hours.  
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Enrollment is restricted to  
students admitted to a B.S. in Education program. This course explores  
all aspects of assessment that a teacher encounters in preK-12  
educational settings. The course will cover current assessment theories,  
approaches and instruments used to measure the performance of  
the children and students representing the diverse learners in today’s  
classrooms – including students with and without disabilities, English  
language learners and students representing a range of cultural  
backgrounds. Assessments at all stages of instruction (before, during  
and after), including formal and informal assessments and their  
applications in an inclusive educational setting, will be addressed.  
Particular attention is paid to the ways in which teachers can gather  
and use assessments to make data-informed decisions for effective  
instruction and intervention leading to optimal child development  
and student achievement. Specifically, the course will explore the  
relationships among content standards, instruction and assessment  
as well as ways to use a variety of assessments to monitor student  
progress. The course emphasizes making valid inferences from  
assessments in a variety of formats; understanding the legal and policy  
context of assessment; and the implications for appropriate grading  
practices and decision-making. Course content and assignments will  
promote critical-thinking and problem-solving skills. Crosslisted as:  
EDUS 401.

SEDPA 402. Exceptionality and Technology: Augmentative and Alternative  
Communication and Assistive Technology. 3 Hours.  
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. This course will provide  
students with foundational ideas and concepts regarding the selection  
and use of assistive technology and augmentative and alternative  
communication for students with disabilities. Students will recognize and  
plan for the uses of technology that will aid the student in their education,  
work and independent living. This course emphasizes the selection and  
use of AT and AAC in general and special education settings (K-12) for  
students across the continuum of disability.

SEDPA 404. Methods in Teaching Science and Social Studies for Students  
With Disabilities. 3 Hours.  
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Enrollment is restricted to  
juniors or seniors with a minimum of 60 credits. This course combines  
a process approach of science programs drawn from biological, earth  
and physical sciences with the study of social studies curriculum,  
materials and selected instructional strategies for teaching students  
with disabilities. An understanding of vocabulary development and  
comprehension skills in science and history will cultivate strategies  
for students to ask effective questions, summarize and retell both  
verbally and in writing strategies to impart an understanding of science  
and history standards of learning. The first half of this course will be  
dedicated to encouraging effective science instruction for diverse  
students, with the second half dedicated to encouraging effective social  
studies/science instruction.

3 Hours.  
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Enrollment is restricted to  
juniors or seniors with a minimum of 60 credits. This course is designed  
to help prospective general and special educators develop  
an understanding of collaborative and communication strategies,  
models and techniques to meet the educational needs of children with  
disabilities. Skills in consultation, case management and collaboration,  
including coordination of service delivery with related services  
providers, general educators, administrators, parents, students and  
other professions (e.g., paraprofessionals, community agencies) in  
collaborative work environments will be understood. Class activities,  
discussions and projects will concentrate on appropriately meeting  
the needs of children with disabilities within the context of the general  
education setting. Students will also study and practice a variety of  
instructional and organizational techniques for adapting the general  
classroom environments in order to address the needs of children with  
disabilities in the general education classroom.

SEDPA 410. Building a Community of Learners: Classroom Management. 3  
Hours.  
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. The course is designed to  
comprehend pre-K through grade 12 classroom management theory and  
application, motivation theory and application, diversity, socio-emotional  
development, trauma-informed care, and restorative justice for regular  
education and special education students. Crosslisted as: TEDU 410.

SEDPA 415. Action Research in Education and Special Education:  
Capstone Project. 3 Hours.  
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Enrollment is restricted to  
seniors with a minimum of 90 credits. This course will prepare students  
to be reflective practitioners by connecting theory, research and practice  
through the exploration of action research. The course will consist of  
three components that promote students’ capacity for putting research  
into action related to their direct work with children and youth with  
disabilities and their families. Students will first be guided to investigate  
a research-based intervention strategy or approach to teaching  
children and youth with disabilities or developmental delays through a  
structured literature review. Students will then develop a research plan  
to be implemented during one of their externships based on the results  
of the literature review. Finally, students will present their literature review  
summary and research plan via an online and/or face-to-face poster  
presentation format. Ongoing, interactive reflections from students are  
essential components throughout the course.
SEDPA 420. Special Education Leadership for Inclusive Schools. 3 Hours.
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Enrollment is restricted to students with a minimum of 90 credits (senior standing). This course will introduce participants to issues involved in leadership for creating inclusive environments in schools. These systems are aimed to fully include students with disabilities and ensure positive outcomes for students both academically and in functional skills needed for participation in the education environment, community, employment and for post-secondary success. Students will be challenged with assessing their own leadership styles, professional and ethical standards, personal integrity, and how beliefs and values shape actions. Students will also explore strategies to promote the importance of inclusive education as well examine Virginia standards and CEC standards for inclusive schools. Students will have a chance to see the impact of teacher leadership on special education and understand how to promote self-advocacy in students.

SEDPA 450. Special Education High School Supervision. 3 Hours.
Semester course; 2 lecture and 1 field experience hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SEDPA 350. Enrollment is restricted to students with a minimum of 60 hours (junior or senior standing). The purpose of this field experience is to provide teacher candidates with practical experiences within the classroom. The teacher candidate will be observed and evaluated based on demonstration of their knowledge and ability to meet performance standards measured by the Virginia Standards of Learning in any of the following areas: curriculum and instruction, assessment, classroom and behavior management, collaboration, professional and ethical behavior, characteristics, IEP development and implementation, instruction for reading, writing and mathematics, and transition.

SEDPA 460. Specialized Reading and Writing Interventions for Students With Disabilities. 3 Hours.
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SEDPA 380. This course will cover the complex nature of language and literacy to include assessment strategies and instructional procedures, curriculum and instruction alternatives, and program planning for the literacy development of students with reading and/or writing disabilities. Skills in the area of phonemic awareness, sound and symbol relationships, explicit phonics instruction, syllables, phonemes, morphemes, decoding skills, word attack skills, syntax and semantics will be developed. Students will learn teaching skills, remediating deficits, utilizing research/evidence-based interventions, providing explicit reading and writing instruction, implementing and evaluating individual and group management techniques and individual interventions that teach and maintain emotional, behavioral and social skills across ages and developmental levels. The course will focus on how, as a teacher, one participates in tiered support systems and facilitates/provides appropriately focused and intensive literacy instruction.

SEDPA 461. Specialized Math Interventions for Students With High Incidence Disabilities. 3 Hours.
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SEDPA 378. This course focuses on interventions for students with high incidence disabilities who may need additional instruction beyond their core mathematics class. The course is designed to increase student understanding and achievement by increasing time and intensity on grade-level standards. Strategies used in the intervention course should be different than strategies used in the core math course and are inclusive of all student populations, including general education, special education or English language learners. When done appropriately, this course will both build student confidence and reduce the likelihood of repeating their core mathematics course. In addition, students will explore research and evidence-based interventions. The class will be designed around the seven principles of effective intervention for students with mathematics disabilities.

SEDPA 492. Independent Study. 1-3 Hours.
Semester course; 1-3 lecture hours. 1-3 credits. Opportunities are provided for supervised independent study in selected areas. All work offered on an individual basis with the approval of instructor and department chair.

SEDPA 495. Universal Design for Learning and Transition. 3 Hours.
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. The purpose of this course is to provide students with evidence of each of the components of universal design for learning within access to the general academic curriculum – multiple means of representation, expression and engagement. Students will engage in an understanding of theories of learning and development, including cognitive and learning processes, social-emotional development, practices for culturally and linguistically diverse learners, such as English learners, gifted and talented students and students with disabilities, in individual and universal contexts. Additional focus is placed on UDL components linked to effective transition planning embedded within academic instruction targeting successful transitions to postsecondary educational settings. Emphasis is placed on beginning research on the use of this approach and its promising practice for addressing academic and transition goals as well as increasing student motivation and self-determination.

SEDPA 499. Student Teaching. 6 Hours.
Semester course; 6 field experience hours. 6 credits. The major goal of this course is to provide student teachers a challenging, relevant and rewarding experience, which will allow them to acquire professional competence. Student teachers will learn to respect and work effectively with students of varying backgrounds and disabilities; assume the various responsibilities of the classroom teacher; plan instruction and learning experiences that recognize the individual needs and differences of students; organize and manage the classroom environment to maximize learning; and practice being a reflective teacher.