



**EDUC 604: FAMILY, CHILD AND TEACHER INTERACTION IN DIVERSE
AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS
JUNE 2010**

Rena Rice, Instructor

COURSE GOALS

This course will be conducted as a seminar. We will examine the role of the teacher in the classroom and school community with the intention of developing insight, understanding and professional expertise which will support the teacher in his/her interaction with families.

The goal is maximum teacher effectiveness in communication between home and school, and as a sensitive member of the larger school community. This will include establishing positive relationships with families; developing strategies for optimal family involvement; and developing specific skills in parent conferencing with particular attention to the issues of parents whose children have special needs. The class will study the techniques of family-school collaboration, constructive methods of evaluation, and the parameters of the federal law (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act).

NOTE TO STUDENTS

Bank Street has both a legal obligation and a philosophical commitment to making reasonable accommodations in order to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Any student requiring specific academic accommodations should contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disabilities Services, Olga Romero, at (212) 875-4468. E-Mail address: olgar@bankstreet.edu. If you are already registered with the Office of Disabilities Services, let your instructor know what your particular needs are.

REQUIRED READINGS

Fadiman, A. (1998). *The spirit catches you and you fall down*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

The following required articles and chapters are in the course packet:

- Barrera, I., & Corso, R. M. (2003). *Skilled dialogue: Strategies for responding to cultural diversity in early childhood*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes.
- Casper, V., & Schultz, S. (1999). *Gay parents/straight schools*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Cook, D. A., & Fine, M. (1995). "Motherwit": Childrearing lessons from African-American mothers of low income. In B. B. Swadener & S. Lubeck (Eds.), *Children and families "at promise": Deconstructing the discourse of risk* (pp. 118-142). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Lee, H., & Ostrosky, M. (2004). Toward successful collaboration: Voices from families of children with developmental delays and disabilities. In D. B. Hiatt-Michael (Ed.), *Promising practices connecting schools to families of children with special needs* (pp. 101-127). Greenwich, CT: Information Age.
- Margolis, H. (1991). Listening: The key to problem solving with angry parents. *School Psychology International*, 12, 329-347.
- Phelan, P., Davidson, A. L., and Yu, H. C. (1993). Students' multiple worlds: Navigating the borders of family, peer, and school cultures. In P. Phelan and A. L. Davidson (Eds.), *Renegotiating cultural diversity in American schools* (pp. 52-88). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Wasow, E. (200). Families and schools: New lenses, new landscapes. In N. Nager & E. K. Shapiro (Eds.), *Revisiting a progressive pedagogy: The developmental-interaction approach* (pp. 275-290). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

The Following Required Articles Are On-Line:

- Moll, L. C., Amanti, C. A., Neff, D., & Gonzalez, N. (1992). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms, *Theory Into Practice*, 31(2), 132-141.
- Spielman, J. (2001). The Family Photography Project: "We will just read what the pictures tell us." *The Reading Teacher*, 54(8) 762-770.

[The family photography project: "We will just read what the pictures tell us"](#)

RECOMMENDED READINGS

- Buzzell, J. B. (1996). *School and family partnerships: Case studies for regular and special educators*. Albany, NY: Delmar.
- Cohen, B. (2008) *Front of the class*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin.
- Comer, J. (1989). *Maggie's American dream: The life and times of a Black family*. New York: Plume.
- Ehrenreich, B. (2001). *Nickel and dimed: On (not) getting by in America*. New York: Metropolitan Books.
- Epstein, J. L. (1995, May). School/family/community partnerships: Caring for the children we share. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 701-712.

[School/family/community partnerships](#)

- Gottman, J. (1998). *Raising an emotionally intelligent child*. New York: Fireside.
- Kranowitz, C. S. (1998). *The out-of-sync child: Recognizing and coping with sensory processing disorder* (rev.) New York: Perigee.
- LeBlanc, A. N. (2003). *Random family: Love, drugs, trouble and coming of age in the Bronx*. New York: Scribner.
- Levine, M. D. (1996). *A mind at a time*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- McEwan, E. K. (2005). *How to deal with parents who are angry, troubled, afraid, or just plain crazy*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Swap, S. M. (1993). *Developing home-school partnerships: From concepts to practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.
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ASSIGNMENTS

WEB-BASED ASSIGNMENTS

You are required to post **one message per week** (for each of the four weeks of class) on the "general discussion" board. You may respond to a discussion prompt, respond to a classmate, or initiate a new thread. Of course, it is always appreciated if you post more than the required minimum.

Additional web assignments are indicated on the **Course Outline** for the session at which they are due.

PLEASE NOTE: The same standards for style, grammar, spelling, etc. for papers will not be expected for web assignments and postings. However, please proofread your

postings so that they are as clear and intelligible as possible, for the benefit of all.

ASSIGNMENT #1: PARENT INTERVIEW
due Wed., June 9th

Interview a parent or set of parents (not related to or well known by you) who is currently parenting a child between the ages of one and twelve. NOTE: If there is more than one child in the family, focus on a "target" child of the age you work with or would like to work with.

Try to choose a family from a different cultural and/or socioeconomic background from your own, and/or the parent(s) of a special needs child. Please collect the following data:

- * Description of parent(s) and affect during interview. (Include ethnicity and socioeconomic status.)
- * Number, sex, and age of children in the family.
- * Language(s) spoken at home.
- * Parental employment outside the home and work distribution within the family.
- * Support system for family (e.g., grandparents, friends, other relatives).
- * Child care arrangements or school attended.
- * Age and educational background of parents (ask at end of interview if you feel it is appropriate).

Here are some sample interview questions:

- 1) Tell me about your child.
- 2) How has your child impacted upon your life (lives)?
- 3) What are the most positive aspects of parenting this child? The most challenging?
- 4) What are some of the activities you do with your child?
- 5) What types of behavior would cause you to discipline your child? How do you discipline him/her?
- 6) If the child has siblings, what is the nature of their relationship?
- 7) What are your strengths and weaknesses as a parent?

8) What are some of your concerns or questions about your child and his/her development? What do you worry about?

9) If your child is currently in child care or school, what is your relationship with the child care provider or teacher? What is the nature and extent of your involvement with the school or program? What do you like about the school or child care? Any concerns or problems?

DIRECTIONS: Your stance as an interviewer should be to LISTEN, *without* offering your opinion, advice, etc. The questions above are suggestions for "prompts." If you don't understand something the parent says, you may ask for clarification. You may also EXPLORE an issue that the parent brings up (if you feel it is appropriate) if you need further information or clarification.

In small groups, be prepared to:

1. Briefly describe the child and the background information. (Always use pseudonyms to protect confidentiality.)
2. Briefly summarize the parent's or parents' responses, i.e., the general content and tone of the interview.
3. Discuss the most salient issue, from the parent's point of view, or your extrapolation, that arises from the interview. Give examples of what the parent said that led you to identify this issue.
4. As a group, discuss the implications of the issues raised for your own practice, and for teachers, schools, and communities on a broader level. In other words, after hearing about these parents' experiences, thoughts, and feelings, how can you as a teacher respond to the families' needs? How can the school respond? Also think about what policy makers could do to support families with these issues.

HAND IN a paper (3 to 5 pages). In NARRATIVE FORM:

1. State your relationship to the parent. Briefly describe the child and the background information. (Always use pseudonyms to protect confidentiality.)
2. Briefly summarize the parent's or parents' responses, i.e., the general content and tone of the interview.
3. Continuing to use narrative form, discuss the most salient issue that arises from the interview. Use direct quotations to support your discussion, but do not give a transcript of the interview.
4. Finally, discuss the implications of these issues for your own practice and for schools. In other words, after hearing about this parent's experiences, thoughts, and feelings, how can you as a teacher respond to the family's needs? How can the school respond?

NOTE: Reference citations are not required for this paper, but may be used if they support and enhance your discussion.

IMPORTANT NOTE: PLEASE CHOOSE EITHER ASSIGNMENT #2 OR #3

ASSIGNMENT #2 - A CRITIQUE OF YOUR SCHOOL'S POLICIES AND PRACTICES OF FAMILY INVOLVEMENT - (8-12 pages)

IMPORTANT GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS:

- **Paginate (number the pages) in upper right-hand corner**
- **Double space**
- **Use at least one-inch margins**
- **Follow APA style. (Please consult the Writer's Handbook for information about APA style. For a fuller description, see the Publications Manual of the American Psychological Association, in the reference section of the library.)**
- **PROOFREAD your paper carefully. Leave it for a day and then proofread it again. If you are not a strong writer or editor, give it to someone who is a good writer/editor to read. NOTE: *I will make comments on content in the right margin, and comments on style, grammar, etc. in the left margin.***

This paper will be submitted in two sections. Section 1 (2 - 3 pages) is due on Wed., June 16th.

1. Choose a school that you are most familiar with, i.e., the school in which you teach, your child's school, or the school in which you did your longest student teaching placement.

Indicate the age or grade level of the children in your class.

Describe the type of school (public, private, urban, suburban, etc.) Describe the demographics of the setting: the nature of the community (both the community in which the school is located and the communities of students who attend it, if different); ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds of the families; nontraditional families; languages represented; special needs children, etc.

2. **Briefly** describe the administrative structure of your school. Describe the role of parents, if any, in the governance of the school. Include the organizational chart you did for the class exercise.

Section 2 (6 - 9 pages) is due on Mon., June 28th

3. **Read the NATIONAL PTA STANDARD at <http://www.pta.org/2757.asp>**

Choose **ONE** of the standards, for which you have adequate information regarding your school, and click on that standard on the left. State the initial wording of the standard you have chosen.

Using the “main goals” under the standard, assess the patterns of interaction between family and school, as well as expectations, attitudes and policies (written and unwritten,

In your paper, discuss the following:

A) How are you as a teacher addressing the assessment question? How is the school as a whole addressing it? Give specific examples of each. Include ways in which the demographics of the school influence patterns of family involvement.

B) In what areas is there room for growth? How would you change or develop your own practice in the future, in order to better meet the particular assessment question? How could your school as a whole improve in meeting the standard for each assessment question? Give specific examples.

C) Be sure to include well-integrated references to the readings that support your ideas and analysis. Your reference list should include at least three (3) of the required readings (*in addition to the National PTA Standards*).

IMPORTANT THINGS TO CONSIDER:

1) If you are critiquing your cooperating teacher and a school you student taught at; or your head teacher and a school where you were an assistant or associate teacher; or your child's school and teacher, make sure that your recommendations for practice (item A above) are for **YOUR OWN CLASSROOM PRACTICE** in the future, when you are a head teacher. In other words, use the critique of the teacher and school as a basis for reflecting on how you will implement "best practice" in the area of family-school partnerships, and how the school in which you will work can implement optimal policies and practices.

2) Make sure to read the assessment questions carefully and specifically, accurately address the content of the question. For example, if the assessment question asks about *informal interaction among the adults* in the school, don't describe and critique formal events and/or events centering around the children. If the assessment question asks about how information about parent-child relationships is disseminated in the school, don't discuss how information about school-wide events or an open-door policy is disseminated.

SUGGESTED FORMAT FOR SECTION 2:

1) State the first part of the standard and give a brief introduction as to why you chose it.

2) State the first assessment question. Discuss how you are or how the teacher is addressing it. Discuss how the school is (or is not) addressing it. Give specific examples of each. (Be sure to indicate how the demographics of the school affect the school's policies and practices, and, if applicable, your own practice.)

3) Discuss what **YOU** will do to address the assessment question (and your critique) using "best practice" in your classroom. Discuss what the school administration could do to improve. Give specific examples for each.

4) Repeat for each of the remaining two assessment questions.

5) End with a brief conclusion.

Along with Section 2, please submit your original copy of Section 1, with my comments, as well as your revised/corrected version of Section 1 (if indicated). Please do not repeat the same stylistic errors in Section 2 that were noted in Section 1!

ASSIGNMENT #3: DESIGNING A WEBSITE FOR FAMILIES – due Mon., June 28th

This is meant to be a very practical and useful assignment. You will be responsible for designing the pages of a website for the families **in your class**. Because of the short length of the summer semesters and students' varying levels of technological expertise, you will not be required to upload the pages to a working site. I've found that best results are obtained by using a web design program, especially iWeb on the Mac. PowerPoint is also an option, though usually less successful. (Tech Fellows may be available to provide a tutorial.) I would hope that some of you might actually upload your site to use in your school this coming year.

Please note that you should design the site for a real or hypothetical class that you will be teaching in the fall. You may not submit existing web pages, newsletters from last year, or any other already existing material. All the "pages" are to be newly designed by you, reflecting "best practice" that you have learned from this course.

It is important to keep in mind that a website is a different medium from a printed text. Your challenge in designing your site is to translate the necessary and appropriate content (information) into an easy-to-read, visually appealing format. Photos and graphics are an important part of the design, but should not overwhelm it. Your completed design should not look like a series of text-based documents.

YOU WILL NEED TO PRINT OUT A HARD (COLOR) COPY TO HAND IN.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

Besides following the directions for the assignment below, also look at the handout, "Website Assessment." When assessing your work, I will be using that form.

In designing your "website," please consider the demographics of your school community. If the families in your school do not have internet access, your website pages may be compiled as a handbook, or distributed as hard-copy handouts or letters to families.

DIRECTIONS FOR WEB DESIGN:

A. Rationale: This should be the introduction to your design, and submitted as a one- to-two-page narrative; it is not one of the web pages. State the type of school you are designing for (public, independent), the geographical location (urban, suburban, rural), and the age or grade of the class. Write a brief rationale for the content and format/design of your website, based on the demographics of your school. This should include literacy and educational levels of families, family structures, families of children with special needs, and any other demographic you deem significant. For example, if you have a number of adoptive families, you might want to include a web resource (see page 7) that offers information and support for those families.

B. Design the following eight (8) "web pages":

1. A home page. Include the school name, address, phone, your class, your name, contact information, and links to other pages.
2. A "welcome letter" from you to the families. Include some information about yourself, your ideas about bidirectional family involvement and information about how parents may communicate with you.
3. A calendar of class and school events for September through January. Be sure to include a variety of events: parent orientation or curriculum meeting, parenting education workshops, curriculum-related events and workshops, informal (non-school- or curriculum-related) social events for adults, social events for families, etc.
4. A page describing the first curriculum project of the year and **specific ways that families may be included in the curriculum**. You may include a time-line of activities, both for the curriculum in general and expectations for students' work, and activities that involve parents directly. **Briefly** describe the curriculum content; **the focus should be on how families may be involved, both in and outside of the classroom**.
5. A "newsletter page" describing activities in the first few weeks of school. This should include strategies for helping the children adjust to the new setting; community-building activities; other curriculum; items you request parents to send in; photos of children; children's early work; etc.
6. A page announcing and describing ONE special presentation, event, or service provided by the school, based on the demographics of your school as described in your rationale. This should be visually attractive, and eye-catching, motivating families to attend.
7. A page of 6 web resources in the form of "hot links" to services relevant to the demographics of your class and school. Include a variety of a) curricular/educational, b) parenting (child rearing, child development), and c) social services sites. Briefly annotate (describe) each site.
8. A teacher blog. Introduce a blog. Post your first topic and ask families to post their comments. Think carefully about the relevance and appropriateness of your first topic.

In addition to the above pages, you may also include any additional ones (up to 2) that you believe would be necessary or helpful for the families in your class and school. **If you do so, be sure to indicate in your rationale what the pages are and why you included them.** Also make sure that the titles on the additional page or pages are clear.

C. Post your web resources (in #6 above) on the "**Web Resources**" **discussion** page of the course website so that they may be accessed by the entire class. Use the "chain link" icon to make the URL active.

PRINT OUT A HARD (COLOR) COPY TO HAND IN.

PLEASE LET ME KNOW IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS!

METHOD OF ASSESSMENT

Students will be assessed on the quality of written work, web assignments, and classroom participation.

The (critique) paper should demonstrate thoughtful discussion of salient issues; clarity; good organization; integrated use of references to support your ideas; synthesis of theory and practice; good writing style (including grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, spelling, etc.); accurate use of APA reference style.

The website design should conform to the criteria on the handout. Form and style of text should also conform to standards above.

Important note: If you have any difficulty with writing, or any questions about assignments, please phone or email me to request an individual meeting.

Grades reflect the quality of work as follows (as described in BSC catalogue):

A = excellent

A- = very good

B+ = good

B = acceptable achievement; minimum grade for good academic standing

B- = below minimum for good academic standing

C+ = fair

C = poor

C- = very poor

NP = no pass

Students who receive a course grade below "B" will have the opportunity to redo their work after consulting with me. A change of grade will be made if significant improvement is shown. Please note that redoing a paper or assignment does not automatically guarantee a higher grade.

PLEASE CONTACT ME WITH ANY QUESTIONS by email, renarice@bankstreet.edu, or phone, 212.875.4508.

COURSE OUTLINE

Session One – Wed., June 2

Topic: Introduction to the Course

- Review of course outline, readings and assignments; demonstration of web-based component.
- Developing competency in working with families: Attitudes/dispositions; content knowledge; practice skills.
- Small group exercise: Reframing attitudes.

Session Two - Mon., June 7

Topics: • Learning From Our Own Experiences • The Culture of the School

- Exploring school climate: "Treasure Hunt."
- Learning from our own experiences: Small group activity. (Directions on hand-out.)
- Analyzing your school's structures of power and governance.

Assignments:

- Think about the questions (on hand-out) that we will discuss in class. If a parent, guardian or sibling is available, ask them about their perceptions.
- Bring in an organizational chart of your school. Where would you place parents and children on the chart?

Readings:

- * Moll et al. (in "Course Readings")
- * Phelan et al.

Session Three - Wed., June 9

Topics: • **Parents' Perspectives**
• **Home/School Communication**

- Parent interviews: small group discussions
- Assessing written communications
- Role-play: Initial family contact

Assignments:

- Bring in samples of written communication (letters, notes, notices, newsletters, etc.) that you or your cooperating teacher have sent to families. Please bring 4 or 5 copies of each if possible.
- Be prepared to discuss your parent interviews in small groups.

Readings:

- National PTA Standards (see "Webliography")
- Barrera & Corso, pp. 39-88
- Casper & Schultz, Chapters 1 & 4

Session Four - Mon., June 14

Topic: Parent and Teacher Advocacy in Special Education and Inclusion

Guest presenters:

Maggie Moroff, attorney, Advocates for Children, parent, and BSC graduate.
Kim McLeveighn, special education teacher, parent, BSC graduate

Readings:

- Lee & Ostrosky
- Materials for session 4 under "downloadable course materials and assignments."
- <http://www.vesid.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/policy/parentguide.htm>

Recommended for review (on course website):

Arise Coalition
Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Advocates for Children
NYC DOE Educator Resources
NYC DOE Parent Resources

Written Assignment: Parent Interview paper

Session Five - Wed., June 16

Topic: Parent-Teacher Conferences

Techniques for effective conferences, including examining one's own attitudes; empathy; active listening; normalizing; forming alliances; collaborative decision-making; arriving at a plan of action. Role-plays of conferences, using "3rd Space" concept.

Video: Parent-teacher conferences

Readings:

- Handout: Parent-teacher conference outline
- Caspar & Schultz, Chapters 6 & 7
- Cook & Fine
- Margolis

Web Assignment:

Find (and bring to class) a children's book on a nontraditional family structure (single parents, gay and lesbian parents, adoptive and foster parents, divorced/blended families, dual-career families). Post the title and author, the age group it is intended for, and a brief description and critique on the class website discussion page, "Family Diversity Children's Books." If the book you chose is already posted, please choose another.

Session Six - Wed., June 17

Topic: Social Challenges Affecting Children, Families, and Communities

Guest speaker: Nancy Fernandez, New York City Dept. of Education, Family Welcome Centers

Nancy will present her work with low-income immigrant families

Web Assignment:

Find (and bring to class) a children's book on a social challenge affecting families in your school (death and serious illness, AIDS, substance abuse and alcoholism, domestic violence, parental incarceration, poverty and homelessness). Post the title and author, the age group it is intended for, and a brief description and critique on the class website discussion page, "Social Challenges Children's Books." If the book you chose is already posted, please select another.

Reading:

Children's Programming Manual for Domestic Violence Service Providers (handout)

Written Assignment: Part 1 of Critique of Policies and Practices of Family Involvement

Session Seven – Wed., June 23

Topics: • Designing, Enacting, and Assessing Curriculum Using Funds of Knowledge • The Role of Parent Coordinator

- Exercise in designing, enacting and assessing curriculum using the "funds of knowledge" of families and communities, presented by Matthew Block, BSC graduate.
- Presentation by Suzanne Clement, Family Resource Center Coordinator, Bridgeport, CT

Readings:

- Moll (review)
- Spielman (online)

Recommended:

First three chapters of "Pedagogy of the Oppressed"

<http://www.marxists.org/subject/education/freire/pedagogy/>

Session Eight - Mon., June 28

Topics: • Schools as Family Support Centers • Creating a Class Website or Handbook

- School as community center: The role of family support in school reform.

- Small group activity: Designing a school for the twenty-first century.
- Exhibition of class websites.

Assignment:

- Bring in your class website, to be displayed on laptops. In addition, bring a hard copy, in color, to hand in.

Readings:

- Wasow

Written Assignment:

Sections 1 (revised) and 2 of Critique of Policies and Practices of Family Involvement.
(Include original Section 1 with my comments.)