

Teaching Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders

EDSE 218D

Spring 2026 Section 82 Fully Online 3 Unit(s) 01/22/2026 to 05/11/2026 Modified 01/21/2026

Contact Information

Dr. Heather Erba

- Email: heather.erba@sjsu.edu
- Office: Remote

Office Hours

- By appointment: [Dr. Erba 20-Minute Check-In \(https://calendar.app.google/7mbcpSMPDRN1eht16\)](https://calendar.app.google/7mbcpSMPDRN1eht16)

Course Information

Course Description and Requisites

Theoretical foundations and application of evidence-based best practices for students with ASD including social language interventions, social stories, integrated playgroups, positive behavior support, self-advocacy skills, recreation and leisure skills, collaboration with parents and siblings, and special interventions for young children. The course emphasizes inclusive education for students with ASD.

Prerequisite(s): Department or Instructor Consent.

Letter Graded

Classroom Protocols

Program Information

We prepare candidates to be transformative leaders in the field, and lifelong learners who respond to racism, ableism, bigotry, and prejudice in their schools and communities. To this end, we center anti-racist and anti-ableist policies and practices in our teaching, research, and service to disrupt systemic racism that has historically prevented full inclusion and equity for students with disabilities including our BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) students, staff, and faculty. We engage culturally sustaining pedagogies and the principles of UDL in our coursework and fieldwork, partnering with our local districts to push for the success of students with disabilities in inclusive settings.

LCOE Department of Special Education Program Learning Outcomes

- **PLO 1** Assess and identify the educational needs and strengths of students with disabilities from diverse socioeconomic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
- **PLO 2** Critically evaluate pedagogy, curricula and instructional materials grounded in quality indicators of evidence-based practices for students with disabilities.
- **PLO 3** Plan, design, implement, and monitor linguistically and culturally appropriate instruction that meets the unique needs of students with disabilities.
- **PLO 4** Apply knowledge of the purpose, characteristics, and appropriate use of different types of assessments used for special education eligibility, placement, and service selection.
- **PLO 5** Utilize research-based knowledge and theoretical, conceptual and evidence-based practices related to individuals with disabilities to improve services and instruction in the field.

[Link to Education Specialist TPEs \(pps 13 – 42\) \(\[https://www.ctc.ca.gov/docs/default-source/educator-prep/standards/education-specialist-standards-pdf.pdf?sfvrsn=729750b1_45\]\(https://www.ctc.ca.gov/docs/default-source/educator-prep/standards/education-specialist-standards-pdf.pdf?sfvrsn=729750b1_45\)\).](https://www.ctc.ca.gov/docs/default-source/educator-prep/standards/education-specialist-standards-pdf.pdf?sfvrsn=729750b1_45)

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Articulate the unique characteristics and core challenges of learners with autism spectrum disorders and the impact of these characteristics and challenges on student success in the general curriculum.
2. Implement evidence-based instructional strategies as put forth by the National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders for teaching students with autism spectrum disorders in a variety of settings including, antecedent based interventions, visual supports and schedules, video modeling, peer mediated interventions, and social narratives.
3. Describe the benefits of understanding the “culture of autism,” listening to voices and perspectives of autistic advocates, and awareness of the current neurodiversity movement.
4. Implement systematic instruction, including task analysis, appropriate data collection measures, and prompting and reinforcement systems, and will be able to use these systems so that students with ASD are successful in academic and community settings.
5. Demonstrate an understanding of typical and atypical social cognition and how it applies to building social competencies and social success in students with ASD.

6. Articulate the current trend toward Naturalistic Developmental Behavioral Interventions and be able to discuss the evolution and ongoing challenges around this evidence based practice.
7. Discuss the immediate and long-term impact of ASD on families across the lifespan as well as articulate best practices for working with families including person-centered planning and self-advocacy, communication and collaboration, family training, and multicultural perspectives.
8. Explain their roles as special education professionals in program planning and service delivery, demonstrate collaboration skills with families and other professionals, and deliver professional development
9. Establish collaborative strategies for inclusive education, modify general education curriculum and instruction for individuals with ASD included in general education and employment settings, and develop strategies for students with ASD to participate in all aspects of the education community.
10. Understand and be able to respond to conversations in the field of autism regarding areas of controversy including the vaccine controversy, ABA, and social skills.

Teaching Performance Expectations

In this course students will develop competencies toward meeting the following Teaching Performance Expectations as set forth by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing:

Universal

- 1.2 Maintain ongoing communication with students and families, including the use of technology to communicate with and support students and families, and to communicate achievement expectations and student progress. (Practiced)

Mild Moderate Support Needs

- 1.6 Facilitate and support students in assuming increasing responsibility for learning and self-advocacy based on individual needs, with appropriate transitions between academic levels in programs and developing skills related to career, college, independent living and community participation. (Introduced)
- 2.1 Develop accommodations and/or modifications specific to students with disabilities to allow access to learning environments, which may include incorporating instructional and assistive technology, and alternative and augmentative communication (AAC) procedures to optimize the learning opportunities and outcomes for all students, and move them toward effective inclusion in general education settings. (Practiced)
- 2.5 Demonstrate knowledge of the communicative intent of students' behavior as well as the ability to help students develop positive communication skills and systems to replace negative behavior. (Introduced)
- 2.10 Implement systems to assess, plan, and provide academic and social skills instruction to support positive behavior in all students, including students who present complex social communication,

behavioral and emotional needs. (Practiced)

- 3.3 Demonstrate knowledge of atypical development associated with various disabilities and risk conditions (e.g. orthopedic impairment, autism spectrum disorders, cerebral palsy), as well as resilience and protective factors (e.g. attachment, temperament), and their implications for learning. (Assessed)
- 4.3 Demonstrate the ability to identify and use behaviorally based teaching strategies with the understanding that behaviors are communicative and serve a function. (Introduced)
- 6.1 Demonstrate the ability to coordinate and collaborate effectively with paraprofessionals and other adults in the classroom. (Introduced)

Extensive Support Needs

- 1.7 Demonstrate the ability to identify the appropriate supports of students with complex communication needs and design strategies in order to foster access and build comprehension, and develop appropriate language development goals within the IEPs for those students. (Introduced)
- 1.8 Demonstrate knowledge of students' language development across disabilities and the life span, including typical and atypical language development, communication skills, social pragmatics, language skills (e.g. executive functioning) and/or vocabulary/semantic development as they relate to the acquisition of academic knowledge and skills. (Practiced)
- 2.8 Demonstrate knowledge of the communicative intent of students' behavior as well as the ability to help students develop positive communication skills and systems to replace negative behavior. (Introduced)
- 2.9 Demonstrate the ability to identify if a student's behavior is a manifestation of his or her disability and, if so, to develop positive behavior intervention plans inclusive of the types of interventions and multi-tiered systems of supports that may be needed to address these behavior issues. (Introduced)
- 2.13 Implement systems to assess, plan, and provide academic and social skills instruction to support positive behavior in all students, including students who present complex social communication, behavioral and emotional needs. (Introduced)
- 4.1 Identify and utilize behaviorally based teaching strategies in the design and implementation of instruction to effectively serve students with extensive support needs with the understanding that behaviors are communicative and serve a function. (Introduced)

Course Materials

Learners on the autism spectrum; Preparing highly qualified educators (3rd ed.)

Author: Buron, K.D. & Wolfberg

Publisher: Routledge

Edition: 3rd

Year: 2023

ISBN: 10: 103242818X

Book Club

Uniquely Human: A Different Way of Seeing Autism

Author: B. Prizant & T. Fields-Meyer (2015)

ISBN-10: 978-1-4767-7623-1

Additional Readings

Steinbrenner, J. R., Hume, K., Odom, S. L., Morin, K. L., Nowell, S. W., Tomaszewski, B., Szendrey, S., McIntyre, N. S., Yücesoy-Özkan, S., & Savage, M. N. (2020). Evidence-based practices for children, youth, and young adults with Autism. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, National Clearinghouse on Autism Evidence and Practice Review Team

Report can be retrieved online from the [National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders](#).

Uniquely Human Podcast: <https://uniquelyhuman.com/>

- Episodes: 25 & 65

Supplemental Readings: Research Journal Articles (to be assigned weekly via Canvas)

Course Requirements and Assignments

Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of 45 hours over the length of the course (normally **three hours per unit per week**) for instruction, preparation/studying, or course related activities. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus. Students are strongly encouraged to plan ahead to complete assignments in a timely manner and seek assistance from the course instructor early in the process.

1) Online Autism Focused Intervention and Resources Modules (AFIRM) Assignment: 60 points - 10 points per module

Participants will view the Autism Focused Intervention and Resources Modules (AFIRM) available at: [Modules – AFIRM](#)

These Modules are free of charge and you no longer need a password to access the modules. Students are to view the assigned modules and complete the post-test at the end of the module. The post-test should be saved and submitted to the instructor **on or before** the due date. Students must earn a

minimum of 90% correct on each post-test. Students are to complete the following modules:

- Selecting an Evidence Based Practice - due Feb 13, 2026
- Antecedent Based Interventions -due Feb 27, 2026
- Naturalistic Interventions - due Mar 13, 2026
- Self Management - due Mar 13, 2026
- Visual Supports - due Mar 27, 2026
- Peer Mediated Instruction - due Mar 27, 2026

2) Uniquely Human Book Club Discussions: 40 points - 10 points per discussion

Students will participate in virtual reflections & discussions related to Uniquely Human.

Book Club Discussions:

- #1 -due Feb 13, 2026
- #2 -due Feb 27, 2026
- #3 - due Mar 13, 2026
- #4 - due March 27, 2026

3) Evidence Based Practice (EBP) Toolkit: 80 points

Students will choose an EBP, complete a detailed example of the EBP including an accompanying data collection sheet, and submit to a class wide tool kit. Selection process will be discussed during Module 2, and templates will be shared.

Due: Apr 10, 2026

4) Professional Development Project & Presentation: 85 points

As an education specialist you will be called upon many times to share your expertise on ASD. To prepare for your role as a specialist, you will create a short professional development project that could be used in your fieldwork placement setting. The PD project should include a short Presentation or Prezi for a 45-minute PD session and include a maximum of 12 slides (including title slide and reference slide) and one handout. The purpose of the PD is to provide information about ASD (topic of your choice) to general education teachers, paraprofessionals, or administrators (choose one focus group). All information in the PD must be evidence-based and presented from a strengths-based, neuro-affirming language.

Due: Apr 24, 2026

5) Case Study Final Project: 100 points

Each student will choose ONE evidence-based practice to implement with an individual with autism in a school, home, or community setting. Suggested strategies include the following but you may choose another EBP if desired:

- Self Management
- Visual Supports
- Naturalistic Interventions
- Antecedent Based Interventions
- Peer Mediated Instruction

Following the steps outlined in *Selecting an Evidence Based Practice* module, the student should identify the behavior or skill to address with the evidence-based practice, collect baseline data, implement the strategy and collect data with the use of the strategy. Each student will prepare a written paper that includes the following information:

- Description of the case study individual to include strengths, interests, and challenges
- Description of the behavior or skill to be addressed
- Rationale for the chosen evidence-based strategy
- Description of how the strategy was implemented
- Data sheet with baseline data and implementation data
- Graph that includes baseline data and implementation data
- Discussion of the results of the implementation and how you would communicate this information to parents
- Reflection of how implementation of this strategy informs candidate's practice as a special educator

Due: May 8, 2026

5) Module Exit Tickets: 35 points - 5 points per module

Upon completion of each 2-week module, students will complete a reflection on the readings/videos/progress in assignments.

- Module 1 Exit Ticket: due 1/30
- Module 2 Exit Ticket: due 2/13
- Module 3 Exit Ticket: due 2/27
- Module 4 Exit Ticket: due 3/13
- Module 5 Exit Ticket: due 3/27
- Module 6 Exit Ticket: due 4/10
- Module 7 Exit Ticket: due 4/24

Note on Artificial Intelligence Tools

The proliferation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools present both interesting new opportunities for educators and raise concerns regarding developing a teaching practice. Students should be aware of the following:

- AI platforms rely on language patterns to predict what an answer to a prompt should look like. They aren't "thinking" about the right response in a way a student would.
- AI platforms excel at predictive text and pattern recognition but struggle with accuracy. ChatGPT will even make up things (it "hallucinates" information) that sound convincing but aren't true. Internet-connected platforms have not solved this problem. If the user is looking for factual information, assume every output includes stuff that is made-up.
- AI platforms have bias. They have been trained on datasets that contain worldviews and assumptions and will replicate those ways of thinking about the world. Critical thinking strategies are especially important when engaging with AI-generated text.
- Apps such as ChatGPT depersonalize your writing. Overreliance may lead to a lack of voice and distinctive style—rhetorical strategies that are crucial for effective writing.

With this being said, AI use is encouraged with certain tasks, especially to help with preparation and editing. Students are invited to use AI platforms to help *prepare* for assignments and projects, e.g., to help with brainstorming or to get ideas for how to start a project. You are also welcomed to use AI tools to help *revise and edit* your work, e.g., to help identify flaws in reasoning or spot confusing or underdeveloped paragraphs. When using AI for these purposes I ask that you include an AI statement that reveals which model you accessed (Poe.com, You.com, Copilot, ChatGPT-o, DALL-E-3, Claude, Bard, Perplexity, etc.), how you used the model (organization, editing, both), and correct citation (you can ask the AI to cite itself in APA7 to help you). Finally, because the AI does not and cannot know your students, you must use your professional knowledge to refine the output to reflect the needs of the very real children in your classroom.

✓ Grading Information

Grading Information

Assignment	Points	Percentage of Grade	Course Learning Objectives	Teaching Performance Expectations
AFFRIM Modules	60 pts	15%	CLO 1-5	TPE MM1.6 Introduced TPE EX 4.1 Introduced TPE ECSE 4.7 Introduced
Book Club Discussions	40 pts	10%	CLO 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 10	TPE MM 1.6 Introduced TPE MM 3.3 Applied TPE EX 1.7 Introduced

EBP Toolkit	80 pts	20%	CLO 2-6	TPE MM 2.1 Practiced TPE MM 4.3 Introduced TPE EX 2.13 Introduced TPE EX 4.1 Introduced
Professional Development Project	85 pts	21%	CLO 7-10	TPE MM 6.1 Introduced TPE ECSE 6.10 Assessed

Case Study Project	100 pts	25%	CLO 1-10	<p>TPE U 1.2 Practiced</p> <p>TPE MM 2.10 Practiced</p> <p>TPE MM 4.3 Introduced</p> <p>TPE EX 2.13 Introduced</p> <p>TPE EX 4.1 Introduced</p> <p>TPE ECSE 1.6 Assessed</p>
Module Exit Tickets	35 pts	9%	CLO 1-10	<p>TPE U 1.2 Practiced</p> <p>TPE MM 2.10 Practiced</p> <p>TPE MM 4.3 Introduced</p> <p>TPE EX 2.13 Introduced</p> <p>TPE EX 4.1 Introduced</p> <p>TPE ECSE 1.6 Assessed</p>
Total	400 pts	100%		

Determination of Grades

A+ = 98 – 100%

A = 92 – 97%

A- = 90 – 91%

B+ = 88 – 89%

B = 82 – 87%

B- = 80 – 81%

C = less than 80%

University Policies

Per [University Policy S16-9 \(PDF\)](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on the [Syllabus Information](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php) web page. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

Course Schedule

Course Format

This course follows a remote only format. Students should have access to the internet to view course materials and submit assignments. Course materials including the syllabus, handouts, notes, assignment instructions, etc. can be found on Canvas Learning Management System at <http://sjsu.instructure.com>. Students are responsible for regularly checking with the messaging system through MySJSU at <http://my.sjsu.edu> and their SJSU email account to learn of any updates. Students are encouraged to take advantage of instructor's in-person or remote office hours.

The course is organized in 2-week modules. Students are responsible to checking Canvas to confirm all readings, assignments, and due dates. The instructor reserves the right to modify assignments based on student requests/feedback and will provide appropriate communication of any changes.

Modules & Dates	Assigned Readings/Videos/ Podcasts (check Canvas for recorded lectures and additional readings)	Assignments Due: (all assignments are due the final Friday of the module)
Module 1: An Interesting Time: The Neurodiversity Movement, Neuro-affirming Education, and the Culture of Autism 1/22 - 1/30	Text Chapter 1 Uniquely Human Podcast : Episode 65 The Reason I Jump – Official U.S. Trailer	Welcome & Introductions Discussion Exit Ticket #1

<p>Module 2: Understanding Characteristics of Autism, the Diagnostic Journey, and Personal Stories</p> <p>2/2 - 2/13</p>	<p>Uniquely Human</p> <p>Chapters 1 - 3</p> <p>EBP Report (in entirety)</p> <p>Text: Chapters 2, 10, & 18</p>	<p>Book Club Discussion #1</p> <p>AFFIRM Module #1: Selecting an Evidence Based Practice</p> <p>Evidence Based Practice Toolkit Tool Selection</p> <p>Exit Ticket #2</p>
<p>Module 3: The Evidence Based Practice Movement & a Brain Aligned Understanding of Regulation in Autism</p> <p>2/16 - 2/27</p>	<p>Uniquely Human</p> <p>Chapters 4 - 6</p> <p>Text: Chapter 3 & 12</p> <p>Why We Misunderstand Behaviors in Autistic Children— And How We Can Get It Right - Mona Delahooke, Ph.D. - Pediatric Psychologist - California</p>	<p>Book Club Discussion #2</p> <p>AFFIRM Module #2</p> <p>Antecedent Based Intervention</p> <p>Exit Ticket #3</p>
<p>Module 4: The Story of Applied Behavioral Analysis & Autism</p> <p>3/2 - 3/13</p>	<p>Uniquely Human</p> <p>Chapters 7-9</p> <p>Text Chapters 5 & 8</p> <p>Naturalistic Developmental Behavioral Interventions: Empirically Validated Treatments for Autism Disorder</p>	<p>AFFIRM Module #3</p> <p>Naturalistic Interventions</p> <p>AFFIRM Module #4</p> <p>Self Management</p> <p>Book Club Discussion #3</p> <p>Exit Ticket #4</p>

<p>Module 5: Methods for Supporting Emotional Regulation & Social Communication</p> <p>3/16 - 3/27</p>	<p>Uniquely Human Chapters 10 - 12 Text Chapters: 11, 14, & 16</p>	<p>Book Club Discussion #4 AFFIRM Module #5: Visual Supports AFFIRM Module #6: Peer Mediated Instruction Exit Ticket #5</p>
<p>Module 6: Understanding and Supporting Sensory Profiles</p> <p>3/30 - 4/10</p>	<p>Text Chapter 4 Additional reading TBD</p>	<p>Exit Ticket #6 EBP Toolkit Assignment</p>
<p>Module 7: Neuroaffirming Application of EBP in School Settings</p> <p>4/13 - 4/24</p>	<p>Text Chapters 6 & 7</p>	<p>Exit Ticket #7 PD Assignment</p>
<p>Module 8: Co-occurring Diagnosis and Mental Health Considerations in Autism</p> <p>4/27 - 5/8</p>	<p>Readings TBD</p>	<p>Final Case Study Assignment</p>