

Policy Analysis Sample Syllabus

Course Description

This doctoral-level course examines the foundations, development, and implementation of education policy as it relates to early intervention and early childhood special education (EI/ECSE). Students will analyze historical and contemporary legislative frameworks, explore the intersection of disability rights and educational policy, and develop advocacy skills to influence policy and practice. Through readings, case studies, and applied projects, learners will gain expertise in policy analysis, program design, and evidence-based decision-making to support inclusive and equitable educational systems.

Course Learning Objectives

As a result of active participation and successful completion of course requirements, students will be able to:

1. Critically analyze historical and contemporary education policies and legislation impacting EI/ECSE, including IDEA, ADA, and Section 504.
2. Evaluate the role of advocacy in shaping educational policy and identify strategies for influencing policy at local, state, and federal levels.
3. Apply policy analysis frameworks to assess the effectiveness and equity of current practices in early childhood special education.
4. Design evidence-based recommendations for improving policy implementation and compliance within educational systems.
5. Demonstrate leadership skills in promoting inclusive practices through policy development, stakeholder engagement, and collaborative decision-making.
6. Integrate ethical and legal considerations into policy analysis and advocacy efforts to ensure equitable access for children with disabilities and their families.

Recommended Texts

Rothstein, L., & Johnson, S.F. (2020). *Special Education Law* (6th ed.). Sage Publishing.

Yell, M. L. (2025). *The law and special education* (6th ed.). Pearson

Readings:

Cook, B. G., & Cook, L. (2013). Moving research into practice: Can we make dissemination stick? *Exceptional Children*, 79(2), 163–180.

Cook, B. G., & Cook, S. C. (2011). Unraveling Evidence-Based Practices in Special Education. *The Journal of Special Education*, 47(2), 71-82. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022466911420877>

Nagro, S. A., Shepherd, K. G., West, J. E., & Nagy, S. J. (2018). Activating Policy and Advocacy Skills: A Strategy for Tomorrow's Special Education Leaders. *The Journal of Special Education*, 53(2), 67-75. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022466918800705>

Birnbaum, R. (2000). Policy Scholars Are from Venus; Policy Makers Are from Mars. *The Review of Higher Education* 23(2), 119-132. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2000.0002>.

Empopia. (2021, October 25). *Leading with empathy & Allyship EP59: Demystifying disability with Emily Ladau* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/spaOVP9BRlo?si=Xsdw5HoiBj3Djdl4>

Freeman, R., & Maybin, J. (2011). Documents, practices and policy. *Evidence & Policy*, 7(2), 115-170. <https://doi.org/10.1332/174426411X579207>

Carey, M. P. (2021, March 19). An overview of federal regulations and the rulemaking process (IF10003). Congressional Research Service. <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IF10003>

Bowers, K. R. (2021, April 19). Agency use of guidance documents (LSB 10591). Congressional Research Service. <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/LSB10591>

Wiegand, S. L., Citta, C., Vail, C. O., Lieberman-Betz, R. G., & Brown, J. A. (2022). Recommendations to promote high-quality inclusion for infants and toddlers with disabilities. *ZERO TO THREE Journal*, 42(Supp.), 1-6. <https://www.zerotothree.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Wiegand-et-al.-2.pdf>

Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (n.d.). State and Jurisdictional Eligibility Definitions for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities Under IDEA Part C. <https://ectacenter.org/topics/earlyid/state-info.asp>

Thayer, S., Coffey, M., Hebbeler, K., and Spiker, D. (2022, February). *IDEA Part C and Part B 619 State Data Systems: Current Status and Changes from 2013 to 2019*. DaSY Center, SRI International. https://dasycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/DaSy_2019StateOfTheStates_Acc.pdf

Peters, D. L. (1980). Social science and social policy and the care of young children: Head Start and after*. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 1, 7-27. [https://doi.org/10.1016/1093-3973\(80\)90059-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/1093-3973(80)90059-3)

Fisher, K., & Miller, K. M. (2020). Legislative advocacy for special educators. *TEACHING Exceptional Children*, 53(3), 244-252. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0040059920970988>

Whitby, P. J. S., & Wienke, W. (2011). A special educator's call to action for advocacy in national education policy. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 47(3), 191-194. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1053451211423815>

Stryker, M. E., Fettig, A., Alexander, J., Hardy, A., & Burke, M. M. (2025). Enhancing meaningful parent participation engagement: Exploring roles and perceptions of parent representatives on state interagency coordinating councils. *Journal of Early Intervention*, 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/10538151241311921>

National Commission on Educational Excellence. (1983). A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform. *The Elementary School Journal*, 84(2), 112-130.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1001303>

Martin, E. W., Martin, R., & Terman, D. L. (1996). The legislative and litigation history of special education. *The Future of Children*, 6(1), 25-39. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1602492>

Schneider, A., & Ingram, H. (1993). Social construction of target populations: Implications for politics and policy. *The American Political Science Review*, 87(2), 334-347.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2939044>

Education Deans for Justice and Equity. (2017, January). Public education, democracy, and the role of the federal government: A declaration of principles. National Education Policy Center. <https://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/deans-declaration-of-principles>

U.S. Department of the Interior. (n.d.). Disability history: The disability rights movement (U.S. National Park Service). National Parks Service.
<https://www.nps.gov/articles/disabilityhistoryrightsmovement.htm>

WGBH Educational Foundation. (2025) The Roots of the Disability Rights Movement | The American Experience [video]. <https://opb.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/amex37cnc-soc-roots/the-roots-of-the-disability-rights-movement-american-experience/>

Neuhaus, R., Smith, C., Burgdorf, M. (2014). Equality for people with disabilities, then and now. *GPSolo*, 31(6), 46-51. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44736835>

Valentino, A. (2006). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act: Changing what constitutes an appropriate education. *Journal of Law and Health*, 20(1), 139-168.
<https://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?public=true&handle=hein.journals/jlah20&div=13&collection=journals>

Zirkel, P. A. (2020). An updated primer of special education law. *TEACHING Exceptional Children*, 52(4), 261-265. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0040059919878671>

Mueller, T. G., & Carranza, F. (2011). An examination of special education due process. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*, 22(3), 131-139. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1044307311392762>

Wrightslaw. (n.d.). *Back to school on civil rights: II grassroots perspectives on noncompliance and federal enforcement of IDEA*.
https://www.wrightslaw.com/law/reports/IDEA_Compliance_2.htm

Turnbull, H. R. (2005). Individuals with Disabilities Education Act reauthorization: Accountability and personal responsibility. *Remedial and Special Education*, 26(6), 320-326.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/07419325050260060201>

Zaks, Z. (2024). Changing the medical model of disability to the normalization model of disability: Clarifying the past to create a new future. *Disability & Society*, 39(12), 3233-3260. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2023.2255926>

Accommodations

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the American with Disabilities Act of 1990 require the institution to provide academic adjustments or accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students seeking academic adjustments or accommodations must self-identify with the Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities on the appropriate campus.

Attendance

Since many of the classes involve activities, videotapes, discussion, etc., regular attendance is vital to gain maximum benefit. Because this is a 12 weeks course, each class member needs to make every effort to be in attendance at each class. Anyone who misses more than one class will lose 5 points for each class missed after the first absence. Significant tardiness or early departure beyond 15 minutes will count as an absence. If you know ahead of time you will not be in class, please contact the instructor the day before the class.

Communicating with the Instructor

All correspondences from the instructor to the students by way of announcements, updates, assignments, and so forth, will be communicated via school email or online learning management system if not verbally in class. It is the student's responsibility to ensure their university e-mail is corrected, provided, and valid. Failure to do so may result in missing important information that could negatively impact your grade. Please be mindful of professionalism.

Course Outline

The following schedule is subject to change. For any course syllabuses posted prior to the beginning of the semester, the course instructor reserves the right to make changes prior to or during the semester. The course instructor will notify students, via e-mail or verbal announcements when changes are made in the requirements and/or grading of this course. ***The course instructor reserves the right to revise the schedule/assignments if needed.***

Week	Topics	Reading	Activities
1	Foundations of Disability	Zaks (2024)	Activity 1: Exploration of the World Health Organization's 2022 Global report on health equity for persons with disabilities Activity 2: Exploration of Willowbrook State School



			Activity 3: Exploration of Section 14(c)
2	Foundations of United States Educational Policy	Schneider & Ingram (1993); Education Deans for Justice and Equity (2017)	Activity: Exploring Educational Policy Analyses
3	Disability Rights Movement	Neuhaus et al. (2014); WGBH Educational Foundation (2025)	Activity 1: Disability Rights Timeline Activity 2: Crip Camp Activity 3: Advocacy to Access: Policy Influence Map
4	Legislative Foundations in ECSE – Historical	Peters (1980); NCEE (1983); Martin et al. (1996)	Activity 1: The Beginning of Headstart Activity 2: The Education of Students with Disabilities: Where Do We Stand?
5	Legislative Foundations in ECSE – Contemporary	Valentino (2006); Turnbull (2005)	Activity 1: IDEA Mandates Activity 2: Congressional Hearings in Preparation for IDEA 2004 Reauthorization Activity 3: No Child Left Behind and Every Student Succeeds Act
6	Key Rights and Provisions under IDEA	Mueller & Carranza (2011); Zirkel (2020)	Activity 1: Case Study of Rights and Provisions Activity 2: Parental Rights an Exploration of Resources
7	IDEA Rules & Regulations	Freeman & Maybin (2011); Carey (2021); Bowers (2021)	Activity 1: Understanding the Process of Federal Rulemaking



			Activity 2: The Role of Public Engagement Activity 3: Dear Colleague Letter
8	Noncompliance: Litigation, Policies & Procedures, Part 1	Yell (2025)	Activity 1: Writing a District Memo Activity 2: Gallery Walk
9	Noncompliance: Litigation, Policies & Procedures, Part 2	Wrightslaw (n.d.); Rothstein & Johnson (2020); Yell (2025)	Activity 1: Mock Debates Activity 2: Diagramming IDEA, ADA, and Section 504
10	Implementation of IDEA	Wiegand et al. (2022); ECTA (n.d.); Thayer et al. (2022)	Activity 1: Part C and Part B Role Playing Activity 2: Federal and State Responsibilities Activity 3: Federal Oversight
11	Advocacy in Policy	Fisher & Miller (2020); Whitby & Wienke (2011); Stryker et al. (2025)	Activity 1: Case Study of Grassroots Advocacy Activity 2: Visual Map of Professional Organizations Activity 3: Designing an Advocacy Campaign
12	Roles of Faculty in Advocacy		Activity: Advocating for Evidence-Based Policy

Major Assignment

Final Assignment: Comprehensive Policy Analysis and Advocacy Plan

1. This culminating assignment integrates the course objectives by requiring students to apply policy analysis frameworks, legislative knowledge, and advocacy strategies to a real-world issue in EI/ECSE. Students will demonstrate their ability to critically analyze

policy, design evidence-based recommendations, and develop an actionable advocacy plan.

2. Part 1: Policy Analysis

- a. Select a Current Policy Issue: Choose a federal or state-level policy impacting EI/ECSE (e.g., IDEA Part C implementation, inclusion mandates, funding allocations).
- b. Conduct a Comprehensive Analysis
 - i. Include:
 1. Historical context and legislative foundations (IDEA, ADA, Section 504).
 2. Stakeholder analysis (families, educators, policymakers).
 3. Equity and ethical considerations.
 4. Strengths, weaknesses, and gaps in implementation.
- c. Apply a Policy Analysis Framework: Use frameworks discussed in class (e.g., Schneider & Ingram's social construction model, evidence-based decision-making).

3. Part 2: Evidence-Based Recommendations

- a. Propose 3–5 actionable recommendations to improve policy implementation and compliance.
- b. Justify recommendations using
 - i. Research from course readings and journals.
 - ii. Data from credible sources (e.g., DaSy Center reports, ECTA resources).
- c. Address feasibility, cost, and potential barriers.

4. Part 3: Advocacy Plan

- a. Develop a strategic advocacy plan to promote your recommendations:
 - i. Identify target audiences (legislators, agencies, professional organizations).
 - ii. Outline advocacy strategies (grassroots campaigns, testimony, coalition building).
 - iii. Include a timeline and measurable outcomes.
- b. Incorporate ethical and legal considerations for inclusive practices.

Course Grading

Assignments are due by 11:59pm on the indicated date. Late assignments without previous written approval of the instructor will incur a 50% penalty for the first time and lost all points beyond. This instructor and learners are required to adhere to the University's Academic Integrity policy. Any plagiarism will not be tolerated and referred to the Academic Integrity Office. And the learners will be given an "F" in the course and be recommended to the Student Conduct Office.

Learners will be evaluated based upon the assignments described below. The plus/minus grading system and scale is as follows:

Letter Grade	Grade Range
A	93 and above



Creating Leaders in Intensive Interventions for Infants, Young Children and Their Families

Letter Grade	Grade Range
A-	90-92
B+	88-89
B	83-87
B-	80-82
C+	78-79
C	73-77
C-	70-72
D	60-69
F	59 and below

Course Grading Systems

Component	Weight for final grade
In-Class Activities	40%
Discussion	20%
	40%

Resources

Resources to supplement the Syllabus:

- CEC Policy Fact Sheet: Federal v. State Role in Special Education (found at: <https://exceptionalchildren.org/sites/default/files/2025-03/Policy%20Fact%20Sheets%20-%20Federal%20vs%20State.pdf>)
- The Government Affairs Institute at Georgetown University, Recommended Reading List: <https://gai.georgetown.edu/recommended-reading-list>
- Empovia. (2021, October 25). *Leading with empathy & Allyship EP59: Demystifying disability with Emily Ladau* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/spaOVP9BRlo?si=Xsdw5HoiBj3DjdI4>
- The ADA Legacy Project. (2015). Behind the scenes in the Reagan and Bush administrations – stories from no pity. <https://mn.gov/mnddc/ada-legacy/ada-legacy-moment25.html>
- Minnesota Olmstead Implementation Office. (2025, March 12). Wheels of justice march and the capitol crawl. <https://mn.gov/olmstead/blog/blog/index.jsp?id=1143-672298>
- ADAPT. (n.d.). The ADAPT community: 25 years of activism and counting. <https://adapt.org/adapt-25-years/>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2025, August 5). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) - History & Evolution [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=89_PTxKGvbl
- Center for Parent Information and Resources. (2022, August). Placement, short-and-sweet. <https://www.parentcenterhub.org/placement-overview/>
- Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center. (n.d.a.). State examples of Part C information for families and services providers. <https://ectacenter.org/topics/procsafe/stateonlineC.asp>



Creating Leaders in Intensive Interventions for Infants, Young Children and Their Families

- Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center. (n.d.b.). State examples of Part B information for families and service providers.
<https://ectacenter.org/topics/procsafe/stateonlineB.asp>
- Office of Special Education. (2020, June 30). Slip law vs. code citations. U.S. Department of Education. <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/slip-laws-vs-code-citations/>
- Wrightslaw. (n.d.) Special Education Case Law.
<https://www.wrightslaw.com/caselaw.htm>
- Center for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education. (2022). IDEA dispute resolution parent guides and companion videos.
<https://cadreworks.org/resources/cadre-materials/idea-dispute-resolution-parent-guides>
- Almazan, S., & Saideman, E. (2024, November 4). U.S. Supreme Court decision in Perez v. Sturgis: Practical implications. COPAA Blog.
<https://www.copaa.org/blogpost/895540/502907/U-S-Supreme-Court-Decision-in-Perez-v-Sturgis-Practical-Implications>
- Council for Exceptional Children. (2023, September 5) *Quick take: Advocacy*. [Video] Vimeo. <https://vimeo.com/861390409?fl=pl&fe=vl>
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Journals in EI/ECSE

Below are examples of journals that publish topics about education policy and EI/ECSE. Faculty may want to explain how to use articles to support practice and to examine current research. Clarify the difference between practitioner-based journals and research-based journals.

- *Child Development*
- *Journal of Early Intervention*
- *Journal of Pediatrics*
- *Journal of Intellectual & Developmental Disability*
- *Journal of Developmental and Physical Disabilities*
- *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*
- *Journal of Pediatric Nursing*
- *International Journal of Early Childhood Special Education*
- *Pediatric Research*
- *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*
- *Young Exceptional Children*



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