



Course Syllabus: A House is Not a Home: Students From Non-Traditional Families

Number of Credits: 1*

Course Instructors: Mark Busch and Dana VanRenterghem

Course Description: The concept of family has changed dramatically over the last few decades. The “traditional” model—that being one which includes a father, mother, and children—is slowly decreasing in numbers to a growing number of single-parent families, cohabiting parents, families of divorced parents, and same-sex families. While it is generally presumed that families live in single-family homes, there are number of families experiencing homelessness and undocumented status in the county. As educators are responsible for the wellbeing of all students in their classrooms, schools need to ensure that they are providing the necessary supports for students who do not fall under the definition of a “traditional family.”

This purpose of this course is to address the social, emotional, and academic barriers affecting students from nontraditional families. Participants will first analyze the privileges associated with growing up in a traditional family and understand the growing demographics of nontraditional families. Participants will then explore resources describing the experiences of students in nontraditional family situations, including adoption, foster care, divorce, homelessness, living with relatives, undocumented parents, and same-sex parents. At the conclusion of the course, participants will develop an action plan to be implemented in their classroom and school to advocate for students from nontraditional families.

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

- Understand the privileges associated with children who live in “traditional” family settings
- Analyze the emotional, social, and academic barriers affecting students who are in foster care, have been adopted, have divorced parents, experience homelessness, and live with relatives
- Describe the unique barriers affecting children of undocumented parents and same-sex parents
- Create a classroom lesson plan or school action plan to be implemented to advocate for non-traditional families in the classroom.

Resources: No texts are required for purchase to complete this course.

Lamb, M. (1998). **Parenting and Child Development in Nontraditional Families**. ISBN-10: 080582748X

This text addresses nontraditional families and its affects on child development. It describes the unique distinctions in parenting styles and subsequent effects of child development of dual-career families, families characterized by divorce, families defined by remarriage, single-parent households, adoption, same-sex families, neglectful parents, and families living in poverty. This text provides practical answers to how these family structures affect children and their growth

Martin, C. (2018). **10 Things I Wish I Knew Before My Parents Got Divorced and Remarried: 10 Things**. ISBN-10: 1723836508

This text provides helpful steps to assist students coping through the divorce and/or remarriage of their parents. Written with the teenager and adult in mind, it outlines challenges associated with experiencing the divorce of parents and the helpful advice to arise out of the experience positively.

Course Requirements: To receive full credit for the course, participants must complete ALL assignments and respond to specific questions outlined in each assignment. Failure to complete all assignments will result in a disqualification in the course and a failing grade.

Other Course Information:

Getting Started

- After registering for the course, you will be sent an email with the website address, password and course key you need to access your online course, along with log in instructions.
- Access each assignment through the course home page. All assignments will be submitted through the Moodle platform on each respective assignment page.

Participation

- You are not required to be present (i.e. online) specific days or times. You will work at your own pace. The course is structured in 3 Weekly Units, however all assignments will not be due until the final day of the course.
- You may work collaboratively and submit similar responses on all assignments except final projects, which must be individually authored.

INTASC Standards that are addressed in this course:

- 2. The teacher understands how children learn and develop, and can provide learning opportunities that support their intellectual, social and personal development.
- 3. The teacher understands how students differ in their approaches to learning and creates instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners.
- 4. The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage students’ development of critical thinking, problem solving and performance skills.
- 5. The teacher uses an understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.
- 6. The teacher uses knowledge of effective verbal, nonverbal, and media communication techniques to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.
- 7. The teacher plans instruction based upon knowledge of subject matter, students, the community, and curriculum goals.
- 9. The teacher is a reflective practitioner who continually evaluates the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (students, parents, and other professional in the learning community) and who actively seeks out opportunities to grow professionally.

Check the Iowa Teaching Standards that are addressed in this course:

X	1. Enhance Student Achievement		5. Monitoring Student Learning
	2. Content Knowledge	X	6. Classroom Management
X	3. Planning and Preparation	X	7. Professional Growth
X	4. Instructional Strategies	X	8. Professional Responsibilities

Topic/Activity	In Class	Out of Class
Getting to Know the Class; Additional Readings: Take the time to get to know the class layout, read over the Help section, and review any other materials present in the class to get started. Take your time!		3 hours
Week 1 – What is Family?		
Discussion: Introductions – Participants will introduce themselves to the class and talk about what they hope to gain from the course.	1 hour	1 hour
Discussion: What Is Family? – Participant will reflect on the idea of family and the privileges afforded to families who fit in the “traditional” model. Participants will reflect on their own families and share their thoughts in a discussion post.	1 hour	2.5 hours
Discussion: Students in Adopted Families – Participants will reflect on the educational and social barriers that exist when students are adopted or are in the midst of adoption through multiple articles and online resources. Participants will share their understanding in a discussion post.	1.5 hour	2.5 hours
Discussion: Students and Foster Care – Participants will analyze how students in the foster care system experience difficulties in the classroom. They will also review resources on how to best support foster students. Participants will share their understanding in a discussion post.	1.5 hour	2.5 hours
Week 2 – Understanding Non-Traditional Families Part I		
Discussion: Students with Divorced Parents – Participants will analyze the emotional and social ramifications of students who live with divorced parents. Participants will examine first-hand accounts of how this affects their academic performance. Participants will reflect on these resources through a discussion post.	1.5 hours	2.5 hours
Discussion: Students in Single-Parent Homes – Different from families with divorced parents, participants will read multiple articles on the barriers affecting families with one parent. Participants will share their thoughts in a discussion post.	1.5 hours	2.5 hours
Discussion: Students Experiencing Homelessness – Participants will analyze the accounts of families who experience homelessness and the effects that can have on youth. Participants will share their understanding in a discussion post.	1.5 hours	2.5 hours
Discussion: Students Living with Relatives – Participants will learn about the varied reasons why youth might live with a relative as opposed to their birth parents and the effects that can have on children. In a discussion post, participants will share their thoughts.	1.5 hours	2.5 hours
Week 3 – Understanding Non-Traditional Families Part II		
Discussion: Students from Undocumented Families – Participants will learn about the unique challenges of undocumented families and the work schools do to advocate for these children. Participants will reflect on their understanding in a discussion post.	1.5 hours	2.5 hours
Discussion: Students with Same-Sex Parents: Participants will learn about the barriers affecting children who have parents of the same gender. Participants will read legislation and policies advocating for same-sex parents and the attempts to remove these rights. Participants will reflect on their understanding in a discussion post.	1.5 hours	2.5 hours
Implementation Plan – Participants will design an action plan to advocate for non-traditional families and promote diversity in their classroom and schools.	1 hour	3.5 hours
Total Time	15 hours	30 hours

Coursework: Participants can earn up to 75 points total for the course. The following table depicts the breakdown of points possible for the required coursework

Activity	Points
10 Discussions (5 points each)	50
Final Implementation Plan/Paper	25
Total	75

Grading Scale – Graduate Credit

100-90% (75-68 points)	A
89-80% (67-60 points)	B
79-70% (59-53 points)	C
69-60% (52-45 points)	D
59%-Below (<45 points)	F

Grading Scale - License Renewal Credit

100-80% (70-60 points)	P
79%-Below (<60 points)	NP

Student Requirements: Students are required to:

- Participate in all discussion forums
- Complete a final implementation plan

Americans with Disabilities Act: If you are a student with a disability and require any auxiliary aids, services, or other accommodations for this class, please see the instructor to discuss your accommodation needs.

Statement of Plagiarism: Academic dishonesty results in failure of this course. Give credit where credit is due. Use the APA Publication Manual to cite references when needed. Not crediting ideas or words of others is unacceptable scholarship as is submitting work that was done for a previous course or that is not your own origin in design or completion. Submit original assignments. Do not submit work for this course that you have done for other courses.

Grading Rubrics for Individual Activities

Discussion Forums (50 points possible): Discussion Forums are asynchronous ways to engage in class discussions. They require you to submit an answer to a question and respond to the posts of other peers. Because they are an integral part of sharing strategies, analyzing research, and sharing ideas, discussion forums in this course comprise a significant percentage of your final grade. It's highly recommended that you read and respond to more than the required two peer postings because greater participation will facilitate a greater depth of understanding. Additionally, it's important to make posts in a timely manner to benefit from peer responses.

Grading Rubric for Discussion Forums		Points
Critical Thinking	Makes connections to the other content and real-life that are supported by reference(s) and example(s)	1
	Offers new ideas, connections, or applications	1
	Expresses and justifies personal opinion	1
Assignment Specific Criteria	Addresses all parts of the assignment, cites sources	1
Participation (Responses to at least 2 peer posts)	Responds to other posts (when available)	1
Total Points Possible		5

Implementation Plan (25 points possible): The implementation plan is a critical part of this course. Participants must complete a one-page implementation plan. The paper is meant to be a reflection as well as a chance to state what you will use going forward. The rubric below will be used to grade the Implementation Plan, but additional details will be provided within the course.

Grading Rubric for Implementation Plan		Points
Critical Thinking	Highlights any new knowledge gained as a result of course.	5
	Offers new ideas, connections, or applications	5
	Expresses and justifies personal opinion	3
	Discusses Overall Implications	2
Assignment Specific Criteria	Addresses all parts of the assignment, cites sources	2
Mechanics	Writing is clear, well developed, and organized, No or few grammar and spelling errors	2
Implementation	Clearly states ideas to use in the future	2
	States resources to be used	2
	Is realistic in their approach – understands limitations may exist	2
Total Points Possible		25