CURRICULUM FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION SPECIALIZATION
SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE AREA MODULE 6
INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXTS FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION: LEADERSHIP, LEARNING,
AND ACCOMMODATION

Introduction

In this era of rapid social change, educational institutions are constantly challenged to reexamine their purpose and restructure their models for effective delivery of services. Given the ever-changing population demographics and cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity in the K-12 population, this challenge becomes increasingly serious when it comes to meeting the individual needs of "special education students" in our schools. Compounding this challenge is the federal legal mandate to provide "Free and appropriate Public Education" (FAPE) under the provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

In general, leadership imperatives for educational reform demand a new vision to look at schools as effective learning institutions where "principle-centered" leadership replaces "power-centered" leadership. As time goes by this imperative will become increasingly a moral rather than a legal one when it comes to delivering special education services in compliance with the law of the land.

Overall Learning Objectives of this KAM

When you have completed this KAM, you will be able to:

1. Compare, contrast, and evaluate effective leadership paradigms.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the disciplines of "learning organizations."
3. Articulate the role of leadership and management in creating "communities of learning" in schools.
4. Identify and critically examine the challenges posed by changing demography and increasing cultural and ethnic diversity in American schools.

5. Obtain a comprehensive overview of the specific and diverse needs of the special education population and examine issues concerning eligibility criteria for services and accommodation under IDEA and Section 504.

6. Understand the dynamics of the evolution of the Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) and its critical role in establishing procedural safeguards and streamlining the placement and delivery of services.

7. Describe such legal responsibilities of special education as community responsibility, parent/student rights, and institutional/personal accountability.

Breadth Component

EDUC 8611: Organization, Goals, Purposes, and Mission of Learning

Organizations (5cr)

The focus of this section will be to gain the broadest possible philosophical and conceptual background on the leadership imperatives for restructuring institutions that are delivering special educational services. You may draw principles and examples from state-of-the-art management and organizational theories to develop a more innovative system for organizational thinking and to substantiate your vision of effective organizational development for the delivery of special services.

The following questions may stimulate your critical thinking about the issues related to this KAM. (Your ideas should not be limited to the following suggested list.)

1. What are the operating principles of an effective learning organization, and can we create such an organizational environment in our school and district?
2. What will it take to make to insure success of “Special Education students” in accordance with “No Child Left Behind” while still upholding the student’s rights under IDEA, ADA, and Sec. 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

3. What are the key elements needed to build a community of shared vision out of the human resources currently available in our schools?

4. What is the impact of external organizations such as school boards, unions, funding and granting agencies, and other vested and accrediting agencies in actualizing the overall mission, purpose, and goals of IDEA?

5. Does one have to compromise between moral/ethical imperatives and legal imperatives in providing leadership and decision making?

**Demonstration of Competence**

Using the readings and resources you have chosen and reviewed, write a 25-30-page scholarly paper demonstrating your understanding of the institutional concerns and issues in delivering special education services and what kinds of changes in leadership and management can be envisaged at any one or all levels in the delivery system. As an advanced KAM demonstration, the paper should reflect high levels of critical thinking skills and originality in conceptualization; it should not be limited to summarizing, analyzing, or evaluating the authors reviewed or cited. Keep in mind that your paper represents the equivalent of a 5 quarter-hour credits earned through a traditional doctoral seminar.

**Learning Resources**

A bibliography of possible references for this KAM can be found at the Walden Library site accessed through the faculty or student personal start page/campuscruiser. Once in the Walden Library site, click on Get KAM Research Help and look for the appropriate program or KAM. The Resources links will take you to general references that will provide an overview of
the field or key thinkers. The Bibliography link will take you to a list of possible writings. The books and authors listed here are meant only to provide examples of the kind of literature you should be accessing. You can compile your own bibliographic references using this list as a starting point. If you have difficulty compiling a bibliography or choosing relevant readings, consult with your faculty mentor or KAM assessor and the Walden librarians.

Depth Component

EDUC 8621 Due Process in Special Education: Legal and Moral Implications (5 cr)

The purpose of this section will be to demonstrate the relevance and utility of the broad philosophical and theoretical perspectives in leadership and management paradigms that are generalizable for restructuring special education educational delivery models in accordance with the purpose, mission, and intent of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

Reflecting on the following issues/ideas as examples may stimulate your process of critical thinking in designing alternative models of effective educational leadership and planning for special services. (Do not be limited by these suggestions.)

1. How do present eligibility criteria for providing special services and existing assessment instruments for determining present and preferred performance levels limit or enhance the effectiveness of the Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) in providing services that are in the best interest of the child?

2. How can we enhance the roles of both general and special education personnel for greater collaboration in providing needed services?

2. What are the critical elements of a well-designed IEP, and how can the principles of "cooperative governance" and team-building actualize learner potential while maintaining
institutional compliance with the law?

3. How do the provisions of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act differ from those of IDEA, and how can "accommodations" under this provision be exploited favorably to benefit to the learner?

4. What are some empirically validated alternative approaches for therapies beyond the prescriptive use of stimulant medication? How do the cultures outside the United States manage ADD/ADHD?

5. How can we provide a continuum of alternative placements with existing resources to meet students' individual needs? How do we define, morally and legally, "least restrictive environment" and from whose point of view?

6. What are the legal and moral implications of establishing different rules for disciplining regular and disabled students?

7. What principles can be applied to differentiate between school rights and parent/student rights in order to avoid litigation? What are the dynamics of collaborative problem-solving? What are some problem-solving options besides mediation and litigation?

8. What are the basic elements of "due process"? Where do we draw the line between moral and legal implications? How do institutional and political realities compromise or enhance the basic intent of the law?

Learning Resources

Resources can include recent peer-reviewed professional journal articles, monographs, dissertations, and reviews of your own choice

Demonstration of Competence

1. Create an annotated bibliography of at least 15 sources published in professional journals
during the last 5 years that relate specifically to the Depth component of this KAM.

Empirically based sources are the priority. The annotated bibliography should include at least two recent doctoral dissertations in your area of research. This is an excellent opportunity for you to gain familiarity with the scope and designs of dissertations in your field. Each annotation must include a summary with an analysis of the article, book, or chapter contents. Refer to the KAM introduction section for a detailed description of expectations for the Depth section. The bibliography must be arranged in alphabetical order.

2. Write a scholarly doctoral-level paper demonstrating higher-level thinking skills and your understanding of transformational leadership in delivering special educational services in a context that is of professional interest to you. Use the literature read for this KAM as reference materials. The expected length of this paper is approximately 25-30 double-spaced typed pages.

Application Component

EDUC 8631: Practical Issues in Placement and Service Delivery (4 cr)

The purpose of this Application component is to apply an appropriate theory or theories to an actual situation in a educational organizational setting—school, district, or state level. Your paper should reflect your ability to utilize the content learned in the Breadth and Depth components to develop an innovative model for delivery of services in a special education setting. You have an opportunity in this section to integrate your vision of effective leadership with contemporary theory and your current professional practice.

Learning Resources

There are no specific suggested readings for the application component of KAM 6. Learning resources should include those obtained in the Breadth and Depth components along
with your personal and professional experiences.

*Demonstration of Competence*

To demonstrate mastery of the Application component you may opt to complete a project in consultation with your faculty mentor or KAM assessor. Your role in the project must be highlighted. This component is equivalent to 4 quarter-hour credits earned through a traditional doctoral program. The following are some options:

1. Design a project that effectively applies the concepts of effective leadership and change explored in the first two components in a special education context.

2. Conduct or evaluate action research on an existing model of delivery involving persons with special needs.

3. Plan and implement a case study that evaluates an institution or program undergoing change in its effort to streamline special education services. Investigate the roles of individuals, their leadership style, and policies involved in the process.

4. Analyze and comment critically on a specific controversial court decision regarding noncompliance with special education legislation. Provide an alternative scenario suggesting a proactive "predict and prevent" plan, based on what you feel may be an innovative leadership paradigm.